ADJUSTMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN EXPATRIATES IN DUBAI: A GESTALT APPROACH FOR FAMILY AND CHILD THERAPY

by

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I declare that **ADJUSTMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN EXPATRIATES IN DUBAI: A GESTALT APPROACH FOR FAMILY AND CHILD THERAPY** 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.

SIGNATURE

(Mrs S I Long).

DATE

ABSTRACT

The literature, for example, Black and Stephens (1989), as well as Marchetti-Mercer (2009), emphasise that mental health professionals may be increasingly faced with the challenges linked to migration and expatriate life. There is also a paucity of information regarding expatriate adjustment in South African psychological literature, and to this end, the aim of this study was to examine how South African expatriate families adjust to a foreign environment like the Middle Eastern city of Dubai.

In Dubai, many South African expatriates are employed in sectors such as hospitality, medicine, construction, education, including financial services and it is estimated that the number of South Africans living in Dubai are between 40 000 and 100 000 (The Homecoming Revolution, 2008:1). Expatriate families face the challenges of adjusting to different laws, climates, cultures, religions and social systems. They may experience lack of emotional support, grief, feelings of isolation and loneliness. Unfamiliar living conditions and a change of lifestyle may present as a crisis for certain families, manifesting in family conflict and financial hardship. Given the number of South African families living in Dubai, this study aimed to explore how these families adjusted to the living conditions of this region. A second aim of the study was to use the findings yielded from the data to formulate Gestalt therapeutic techniques, enabling family therapists to assist expatriate families with adjustment difficulties. A phenomenological system of enquiry was employed to study the experiences of six South African families and fifteen members of a focus group. Family members of the six family case studies were interviewed, their experiences audio-recorded, and then transcribed verbatim. Three children elected to provide drawings of their experiences. The focus group discussion was also audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Upon analysis, six common themes emerged, namely, *social support, personality factors, environmental conditions, acculturation, grief and disillusion.* The findings of the study assisted the researcher in formulating five therapeutic Gestalt techniques that would facilitate and optimise communication amongst expatriate family members. Three of the therapeutic techniques were designed by the researcher, and two were adapted from existing Gestalt techniques. It is hoped that the findings in the present study will assist in amplifying the existing knowledge base regarding Gestalt therapy techniques for families and children, including the current research on expatriate adjustment and the psychological ramifications related to this phenomenon.

KEY TERMS: Adjustment, expatriate, family, parents, children, Gestalt family and play therapy, Gestalt techniques, phenomenology.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW

1.   ORIENTATION

As a result of more organisations becoming globalised, there is a greater need for expatriates with specialised training and skills to assist in successfully completing international projects. (Chew, 2004:1). The International Organisation for Migration, a United Nations agency, estimates that 175 million people are presently involved in some form of migratory movement, in contrast to the year 1965, when it was estimated at 75 million (Moodie, 2002:3). Newmarch (2002:1) states that increasingly South African graduates and professionals are seeking employment in foreign countries, with the statistics indicating that 12 260 people emigrated from South Africa in 2001 and 7 423 emigrants left the country in the first half of 2002. Mitropolitski (2005:1) posits that 250 000 people left South Africa since the early 1990's. It is further stated, that with the emigration of skilled individuals, South Africa is a country with approximately 500 000 vacant positions for specialists.

A global destination that has attracted many South Africans, is the Middle Eastern city Dubai, of the United Arab Emirates. It is located on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, with coastlines of both the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Originally a fishing and pearl trading port, Dubai has over the last fifteen to thirty years developed into a prosperous city. In 1971, the rulers of Dubai and Abu Dhabi created a federation of the Emirates, consisting of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Fujeira and Ras Al Khaimah (Dubai History, 2008:1). Collectively, these areas or cities are known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE is a civil law jurisdiction and the sources of law include federal laws and decrees, local laws and Shariah-Islamic law (Dubai, Complete Resident's Guide, 2007:114). The UAE experiences extreme temperatures and high levels of humidity for most of the year. Expatriates may wear western clothing but need to be mindful of the local laws and customs, especially regarding the use of alcohol and the dress code in public venues (Al Tamimi, 2006:261-263).

Expatriates come to Dubai for many reasons; to advance careers, obtain a higher standard of living, or to experience living in a new culture. Salaries are tax-free and the UAE currency, the Dirham is pegged to the US dollar. In Dubai, many South Africans are employed in sectors like medicine, hospitality, construction, financial services, education, including management and it is estimated that the number of highly skilled South Africans living in Dubai are between 40 000 and

100 000 (The Homecoming Revolution, 2008:1). In a telephonic interview with the spokesperson of the Homecoming Revolution, Ms Megan Woods (2008) it was stated that the number of South Africans living in Dubai is currently not one of certainty, and that the estimates should be accepted as a guideline only. In a consultation with Ms Agnes Nyamande-Pitso, the South African Consulate General in Dubai (2008), it was reported that there are approximately 50 000 to 100 000 South Africans currently living in Dubai. It was further stated, that the reason for the lack of statistical certainty is due to the reluctance of South African expatriates to register with the Consulate upon arrival in Dubai (Nyamande-Pitso, 2008).

Pertinent to the current study, is *how* South African expatriate families adjust to an environment like Dubai, and the psychological consequences for all family members when adjustment is not optimal. Whilst many South Africans living in foreign countries may not be happy there, they are ambivalent about returning to South Africa due to political, economic or crime related factors and prefer to persevere in the new country regardless of any hardships they may experience (Woods, 2008). This begs the question as to how these families, particularly the non-working spouses and the children, cope with the ambivalence of living in an environment that may not be perceived as beneficial in the long term. Ms Megan Woods (2008) from the Homecoming Revolution, explains that Dubai is generally perceived as a short term destination, whereby many South Africans hope to gain new work opportunities and significant salary increases, whilst countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada are perceived as destinations of permanency. It was further stated, that some South African expatriates aimed at gaining entry into other countries after having experienced Dubai as a 'platform' for further international relocation. Many South African expatriates in Dubai are currently confronted with rapidly escalating housing and rental costs and face premature repatriation or adjustment problems resulting from unforeseen financial pressures (Nyamande-Pitso, 2008).

In a literature review regarding studies conducted on families and expatriate adjustment, the following findings are pertinent to the present study. Black and Gregersen (1991) as well as Riusala in Chew (2004:2) identified that one of the main causes of the premature return of expatriates, is the lack of cross-cultural adjustment by the spouse and the children. A lack of cross-cultural adjustment may not be the only factor that motivates expatriate families to return prematurely to their home countries. Marion (2003:1-4) contends that moving to a new environment or country is among the most stress-inducing experiences a family may be confronted with. One of the main reasons for expatriate unhappiness and premature repatriation, is the role that the *whole family* has in the adjustment process (Chew, 2004:8).

Research conducted by Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr and Christiansen (2001:1) revealed that the strongest predictor for expatriate adjustment to living conditions, was the spouse's general adjustment. Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) studied psychological withdrawal from international projects and found that family related variables impacted significantly on the success of the expatriate's completion of the project. The variables included spousal adjustment, overall satisfaction and living conditions. Sluzki (1979:379-390) posits that the strengths and weaknesses of the migrating family's coping resources may express itself after the first six months in the new country, or years after the migration has occurred. The difficulties may be expressed in the form of family conflict and would benefit from a therapeutic programme that befits the cultural origin of the family.

For children, moving home is similar to a loss like death or parental divorce and many children experience a great deal of anger and anxiety, not understanding their emotions and how to deal with them during and after a relocation (Marion, 2003:1). Children's academic progress may also be affected by a move to another country and teachers or schools can play an important role in assisting children to develop resilience to buffer the stress of the new environment (Marion, 2003:2). Studies reveal that children cannot be assisted in isolation especially regarding relocation and changes that affect the whole family (Hechanova-Alampay *et al.,* 2001:1; Pascoe, 2008:4; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Therefore, in order to help the expatriate child, the whole family needs to be understood and assisted therapeutically to cope with adjustment difficulties and family therapy is recognised as a very favourable modality of support for expatriates (Strier, 1996:370).

As a study in the field of psychology and Gestalt therapy, the researcher used a qualitative approach to explore how South African families experience living in Dubai, and investigated what Gestalt therapeutic techniques could assist families with adjustment difficulties. A Gestalt approach was identified for this study, in that Gestalt therapy theory allows for techniques that may be creative and beneficial in assisting all family members with adjustment difficulties. Furthermore, the Gestalt play therapy techniques for example, those provided in Blom, (2006) and Oaklander (1992), may be adapted for use in family therapy, in order to provide the child or children the opportunity to express their difficulties by communicating them in the form of play.

The following section provides the motivation for the study.

1.2.   MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Motivation is defined as "to give a reason or inspiration for a cause of action" (Collins Paperback Dictionary, 2003:529).   It is also described as "incentive ... inspiration, instigation, motive, persuasion, reason" (The Collins Paperback Thesaurus in A-Z Form, 1990:411).

As an expatriate residing in the city of Dubai, the researcher became aware of the many challenges that expatriates face in a new country. During her interactions with certain expatriate families, it was also revealed to the researcher that some family members struggled to adapt to their new lifestyle. The researcher was therefore inspired to conduct the present study, with the first task being a literature survey in order to establish the feasibility of the project.

Whilst doing the literature survey, the researcher did not encounter any studies conducted on the expatriate adjustment process of families living in the UAE, specifically the city of Dubai. Many studies regarding global expatriate adjustment (for example, Beaverstock, 2001; Black & Stephens, 1989; Chew, 2004; Mcnerney, 1996), are motivated by international human resource undertakings and emphasise the adjustment process of expatriate managers. The studies also tend to examine premature repatriation and its financial ramifications for organisations, rather than the psychological and emotional impact that adjustment difficulties present for all family members. However, various studies (for example, Chew, 2004; Melendez & Mcdowell, 2008) reveal the devastating impact that adjustment difficulties may have on expatriate families, manifesting in a decreased self esteem, financial losses, emotional difficulties and spousal conflict.   Although there has been an increase in research regarding expatriate coping, few empirical studies have examined individual variations in coping and adjustment processes, with existing surveys only providing the investigation of a few coping strategies (Caliguiri, 2005:603).

Pascoe (2008:1-4) found that family therapists who counsel expatriates, overlooked the importance of grief in the dimension of culture shock that is related to the relocation to a new country. It is further stated, that regressed behaviour is common in children who have undergone international relocation and that family members should work through feelings of loss and grief experienced in the process of relocation. Marion (2003:1) emphasises the stress that many children experience when relocating, struggling with the loss of friendships, pets and family which manifest in depression and anxiety. Many children who relocate, are least likely to obtain the help that they need due to the lack of support provided by families and schools (Marion, 2003:1). Studies indicate that relocated children often suffer from social fragmentation, which is associated with suicide risk for individuals as young as fifteen years (Mcleod, 2006:19-20).

With these findings in the literature, a significant motivation for doing the present study is to explore more fully what the children experience when relocating to a foreign country and to identify ways in which to *assist these children and their parents within a family therapy context*. Furthermore, the literature reveals (for example, Bester, 2007; Black & Stephens, 1989) that few researchers have examined how the adjustment experiences of spouses impact on the intention of expatriate families to persevere in the new country. There is also a paucity of research regarding the role of the family as a predictor of the outcome of expatriate assignments (Caliguiri *et al.,* 1998:599).

Strier (1996:370) contends that to optimally help children with relocation difficulties, the whole family needs to be understood and assisted therapeutically, therefore making family therapy a favourable method of support of expatriate families. Andreason (2008:1) studied the adjustment experiences of expatriate spouses and managers. It was found that the adjustment difficulties of one family member frequently impacted on the whole family's adjustment process. Furthermore, failure of the spouse to adjust, was found to be one of the key reasons for the failure of international assignments. In support of the aforementioned findings, Black and Stephens (1989) as well as Marchetti-Mercer (2009), emphasise that mental health professionals may be increasingly faced with the challenges linked to migration and expatriate life.

 In his classical work on Gestalt family therapy, Kempler (1974:19) states that the goal of Gestalt and experiential family therapy is to assist the family in returning to its main function as the primary resource for the needs of all family members. This central view in Gestalt family therapy, is therefore a compelling motivator regarding the researcher's objectives in formulating techniques in order to provide *all* members in the expatriate family the assistance they require. However, to accomplish this in families where very young children are included, may require techniques that are child friendly and allow the child, as well as the adults, to express themselves and to communicate optimally.   For this reason, the inclusion of play therapy concepts and techniques are motivated as an important part of family therapy in the present study.

In sum, the most important motivator in conducting this study, is to expand the current knowledge base regarding the adjustment difficulties that expatriate families may experience, and to explore what Gestalt techniques or methods can assist these families as a way of preventing premature repatriation that so often results in devastating consequences for these families.

This leads the discussion to the problem formulation of the study.

1.3   THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hurley (2003:22) indicates that effective research lies in the identification of the problem and defining the area of science where new information and insight is required.   The following discussion provides an overview of the evidence leading up to the formulation of the problem statement of this study.

Harvey *et al.* (in Edrom and Jervfors, 2007:7) contend that failed expatriate projects result in great financial losses, whereby some companies can spend up to $1 million on visits to the location, expatriate training, relocation and compensation.   This may also result in damage to the expatriate's career, thereby causing loss of self esteem and self-confidence.   The burden of failed relocation projects not only takes its toll on the recruiting operations with financial losses suffered by all parties, but creates a great deal of stress for the children in the families, many of whom have insufficient support from their parents who themselves, struggle to cope with the relocation. Lev-Wiesel and Shamai (1998:119) argue that relocation is perceived differently by various family members, to some it is a challenge, to others a disaster. Mcnerney (1996:5) record the following reasons why expatriate assignments fail:

- Family adjustment - 42%
- Lifestyle issues   - 24%
- Expatriate work adjustment - 18%
- Wrong candidate - 13%
- Other opportunities - 5%
- Business reasons - 4%
- Repatriation issues - 2%

With regards to family adjustment, factors specifically pertaining to the working spouses, the non-working spouses (usually the wives) and the children were identified in the literature. Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) investigated the psychological ramifications that an expatriate family experiences upon withdrawal from international assignments.   The sample consisted of 452 expatriates living in 45 countries.   It was found that apart from work satisfaction, the spouse's overall satisfaction or adjustment contributed significantly as to whether or not the expatriates completed their assignments.   In a study on expatriate coping styles in 116 male German managers on assignment in Japan, Caliguiri (2005:1) found that these managers faced significantly greater emotional and work environmental stress than their domestic counterparts.   Lev-Wiesel

and Shamai (1998:108-110) found that stress and uncertainty associated with relocation may impact on the way the family deals with normal daily stressors and can result in dysfunctional behaviours, poor communication patterns and even greater levels of stress.   Caliguiri, Hyland, Bross and Joshi (1998:598) studied the relationship between family adjustment and expatriate work adjustment. Data was obtained from 110 families that had been relocated for global assignments. It was found that communication skills, family support and family adaptability were strongly related to expatriate adjustment.

The stress of the adjustment process may also change the relationships within the family.   A study by Melendez and Mcdowell (2008) explored the experiences of a Peruvian family living in the United States of America. It was found that class, gender and race were variables that impacted on the family relationship. The study revealed that due to adjustment difficulties, the husband became violent towards his spouse and children. It was further discovered, that this was not his usual behaviour, and that the frustration regarding work and acculturation difficulties provoked the changes in his behaviour. The husband's lack of adjustment to the social norms and values of their new environment impacted on the whole family.

An area where children may remain silent for fear of ridicule, and therefore struggle to adjust to their new environment, is that of being bullied and ostracised at school. Jones (2008:1) reports that expatriate children are often the target of bullying in schools and states that, it is common in European countries where these children become the victims of physical violence, verbal abuse and social isolation due to their different culture. Specific techniques at building self-esteem, acculturation lessons and other coping skills could therefore be introduced by the school counsellor or family therapist. Other difficulties that children may encounter, include grief faced due to the separation from extended family members, friends and pets (Pascoe, 2008:1).

Culture shock and adaptation has been identified as a multifaceted experience arising from various stressors due to living in different cultural environments and occurs for immigrant groups, refugees and businessmen on international assignments (Winkelman, 2002:1). Culture shock may manifest in physiological and psychological reactions, including fatigue, depression, role stress and identity loss (Winkelman, 2002:2).   Furthermore, the awareness regarding the pathological aspects of culture shock allows for psychological support in providing a basis for change, adaptation and insight (Winkelman, 2002:2). Failed assignments or premature return to the country of origin is a *crisis* for the family experiencing a lack of coping or adjustment resources (Chew, 2004:9).   From the aforementioned findings in the literature, it would seem that

counselling and support programmes for expatriate families may well assist in preventing premature repatriation, and help to alleviate emotional suffering for these families.

The main problem area identified from consultations and findings in the literature, is the lack of adjustment skills many expatriate families may be confronted with when relocating to a new country. The studies also indicate that more information is required in the understanding of what expatriate families experience in the adjustment process. With reference to all the aforementioned findings, the problem statement is as follows:

Expatriate children and their parents face the challenges of adjusting to foreign conditions namely: different laws, social systems, possible lack of emotional support, different climate and living conditions and loss of the familiar lifestyles they are accustomed to. These challenges may be presented as a crisis for those families who do not have the coping skills or resources to adjust to their new lifestyle. As a result, many families are repatriated to their home countries at great emotional and financial cost. From the literature, therapeutic practice appears to lack specifically designed interventions, particularly those addressing the needs of expatriate spouses and children. Exploring the expatriate family's journey through the adjustment process in a foreign environment, may deepen our understanding of this life-changing event and assist therapists to provide expatriate families with the support that they need.

The formulation of the problem statement now allows for the aims, objectives and research questions to be presented.

1.4 THE AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 The Aims

Fouché (2002:107) defines aim as follows: "the words goal and aim are used interchangeably and means an end towards which effort or ambition is directed ... the terms goal, aim and purpose are frequently used interchangeably and implies an end towards which ambition or effort is directed". Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:15) defines 'aim' as an "intention or purpose ... to propose or intend". Fouché (2002:107) states that the terms goal, aim and purpose are frequently used interchangeably, and implies an end toward which ambition or effort is directed.

For the researcher, the aims further represented the 'idea' of what was perceived to be possible or feasible. The aims were as follows:

- The primary aim of the study was to qualitatively explore the adjustment process of a sample of South African expatriate families living in the city of Dubai.
- The secondary aim was to utilise the data yielded in the study to assist in formulating Gestalt family and child therapy techniques specifically tailored for expatriate families experiencing adjustment difficulties.

1.4.2 The Objectives

Fouché (2002:107) describes objective as a concrete, measurable aim. It is further stated that the goal may be differentiated as the purpose or aim, whilst the objectives are the steps that need to be taken within a time-span to achieve the 'dream'. Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:558) defines objectives as "aim or purpose". The objectives were as follows:

- To interview the members of six South African expatriate families and to hold a discussion with a focus group of fifteen South African women in order to obtain their phenomenological perspectives and experiences of their adjustment process in Dubai.
- Using the data yielded from the family case studies and the focus group, a further objective was to formulate Gestalt techniques, with the aim of providing therapists with creative methods or tools so that they may assist expatriate families regarding their adjustment difficulties.
- A final objective was to amplify the research base regarding expatriate adjustment and Gestalt therapy techniques, specifically the use of creative play methods in family therapy.

Flowing from the aims and objectives of the current study, the following research questions were provided.

1.4.3 The Research Questions

According to De Vos (in Cook, 2007:16), a research question is more important when the researcher is working within a qualitative paradigm that seeks to understand the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences. Flick (2009:103) states that "research questions are like a door to the research field under study. Whether empirical activities produce answers or not depends on the formulation of such questions". Mouton (2001:53) asserts that the research problem implicitly and explicitly embodies a research question.

The two research questions for this study were formulated as follows:

- How do South African expatriate families adjust to the living conditions in Dubai?
- What Gestalt family and child therapy techniques could be administered to expatriate families to optimise their adjustment process?

Importantly, the research questions also influence the *methods* and activities used to conduct the study (Bryman, 2008:395; Flick, 2009:103). In keeping with this process, the researcher needed to consider what qualitative research methods would assist in addressing the aforementioned research questions. The qualitative researcher is on a quest to understand rather than to explain, using naturalistic observation in place of 'controlled' measurements or statistical methods and obtaining data from small sample groups instead of the larger samples preferred in quantitative research (Fouché, 2002:79). With this description in mind, a phenomenological research approach was selected.

The following section discusses the research approach and procedures regarding the use of qualitative research methods selected for the current study.

1.5   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.5.1   A Phenomenological Research Approach

Phenomenology may be described as the study of human experience by focusing on the subjective experiences and observations of individuals (Hazler in Haley *et al.*, 2003:184). Fouché and Delport (2005:74-75) assert that the qualitative research paradigm has epistemological roots in phenomenology and involves the identification of the participant's values and beliefs that underpin the phenomenon.   To investigate the aforementioned research problem, it would require a research approach that befits a phenomenological paradigm, and assists in addressing the research questions and objectives of the intended study.   The aforementioned research questions refer to the 'how' and 'what' regarding the experiences of South African families living in Dubai.   To address these questions, the researcher identified that a phenomenological research approach would be most suitable.   Fouché and Delport (2002:265) support that in the research process, the first step is to select a paradigm and to contextualise it within the place of literature and theory.   The overall philosophical approach or 'paradigm' underpinning the present study is therefore phenomenological.

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:533) defines phenomenology as "a philosophical doctrine that advocates the scientific study of immediate experience be the basis of psychology. As developed by Edmund Husserl, the focus is on events, occurrences, happenings, as one

experiences them, with a minimal regard for the external, physical reality and for the so-called scientific biases of the natural sciences". Fouché (2002:273) describes phenomenology as the researcher being able to enter the participants' life world, or *Sitz im leben,* and place him or herself in the participant's shoes. Furthermore, this is achieved by naturalistic methods of study, analysing conversations and interacting with participants. Since the objective of the present study was to explore the adjustment experiences of South African expatriate families living in Dubai, the researcher intended to enter into a fellow expatriate's 'world' by utilising the most appropriate research method, that not only befitted the researcher's world view, but also enabled her to fulfil the research objectives by using naturalistic methods of study to gain insight into expatriate families' experiences.

A phenomenological system of enquiry was therefore selected as the most suitable method of obtaining the data from the participants. This entailed an in-depth description and analysis of the unique experiences of South African expatriate families living in Dubai. A description of the method used to access the data follows.

1.5.2   Overview of the Research Design and Procedure

Before commencing with the research procedure, a research design is formulated. A research design is described as a framework for the collection and analysis of data, also reflecting the essential aspects of the research process (Bryman, 2008:31). Flick (2009:128) posits that a research design reflects how the study is planned and how the research material will be collected in order to answer the research questions. The present study made use of the *collective case study design*, *field observations*, *children's drawings* and a *focus group*. The rationale for using these forms of qualitative research methods, was to attain in-depth information from the available sample groups in Dubai. Furthermore, the intention was also to achieve s*aturation* of data by using different qualitative research methods, thereby generating as much relevant data as possible. The use of various methods to obtain data was to achieve *triangulation* in the study. Flick (2009:444) states that triangulation is the combination of different research methods and is used to attain greater credibility or validity of the results.

A case study is defined as being a unit or a group, such as a family or class, school or community and is one that investigates these 'cases' so that specific research questions may be answered (Gillham, 2000:1). Flick (2009:134) supports that the expression 'case' is understood in research as pertaining to individuals, groups (for example families), social communities, organisations and institutions. The researcher used a qualitative multiple descriptive case study approach since it

facilitated the collection of data from several cases. In this approach, the researcher analysed each individual case and compared the results to similar cases, although the cases may have differed in certain ways. This approach may also be described as a collective case study. The *collective case study* entails a number of cases studied with the objective of investigating a specific phenomenon (Fouché, 2002:275; Silverman, 2005:127). The collective case study design is both *exploratory and descriptive* in nature, involving multiple sources of information, for example, interviews and observations (Fouché, 2002:275). Fouché (2002:108) posits that exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into situations, phenomenon, individuals or communities. The need for the research may be due to lack of sufficient information regarding the phenomena of interest. Exploratory research therefore addresses the 'what' question in the research process (Fouché, 2002:109). The descriptive nature of the present research addressed the 'how and what' questions of the study, and the researcher thereby aimed to gain in-depth meanings whereby the use of case studies are best used to obtain results (Bless & Higson-Smith in Fouché, 2002:109). The researcher therefore used a collective case study design for the current study, because it was hoped, that this approach would further the understanding regarding the adjustment process of expatriate families. In the collective case study, several cases are selected, so that comparisons can be made between the cases, thereby validating theories and concepts (Fouché, 2002:276).

Flick (2009:134) states that in case study research, the method of *purposive sampling* is used. The purposive sampling method was applicable in this instance. The sample group was obtained with the assistance of the South African Women's Association (SAWA) in Dubai, whereby members were invited to volunteer as participants for the study. SAWA had been formed to provide South African expatriates with general information about Dubai and to afford social support to its members. The collective case study consisted of a sample group of six families living in Dubai, including a focus group. A seventh family was used as a pilot study and aimed at providing the researcher with information regarding aspects that needed to be amended for the six family case studies that followed. The focus group included fifteen South African expatriate women who were to provide added information pertaining to their families' adjustment experiences in Dubai.

Yin (2003:89) contends that the interview is the most important source of information when conducting case study research. For the present study, a semi-structured interview was used to obtain data from the participant families and to facilitate the discussion in the focus group. Where children did not wish to verbalise their experiences in the interview with the family, they were invited to draw their impressions or experiences of their new life in Dubai. The researcher

interviewed five of the six families in their homes. One family chose to be interviewed at a different venue. Written consent letters were signed by the parents and the children (where possible) and a letter of introduction was presented to the participant families and focus group. With permission of the participants, the data was recorded with the use of a tape recorder, and thereafter transcribed for analysis. The researcher had a research assistant to validate the information obtained during the interviews. The participants were also asked for permission regarding the presence of the research assistant during the interview. All participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that any names used in the transcripts or discussions would be changed to ensure anonymity.

The participants for the focus group who were members of SAWA, were invited by electronic mail to attend the discussion, which was held at the SAWA club house at a time convenient for participating members. Each participant was fully informed of the purpose and nature of the research. Participants were informed that it was a voluntary process whereby individuals could withdraw at any given time if they wished to do so. The identities of the focus group members were also to remain anonymous.

Once all the data had been obtained from the case studies and focus group, it was transcribed and analysed. The procedure to analyse the data was guided by the literature on qualitative data analysis for example, Bryman (2008:554); Cresswell (1994:154-155), De Vos, (2005:334) and Silverman (2005:183).   The drawings provided by the children were analysed and compared to the other data and observations of the researcher. The researcher's observations and bracketing of her own perceptions were carefully recorded, and included in the analysis of the data. To ensure *trustworthiness*, the researcher obtained the help of an external independent coder who assisted her with the analysis of the transcripts of the families and the focus group.

Cohen and Daniels (2001:1) contend that phenomenological research in psychology is aimed at understanding 'ourselves and others' which requires a process of self-reflection by the researcher, whereby he or she needs to suspend his or her biases, notions and knowledge regarding the topic of investigation. Therefore, when the researcher analysed the material from a transcript, she needed to '*bracket*' her conceptions with the intention of addressing aspects that may have created bias in the data. The researcher also kept a journal and recorded all observations and experiences during the entire research process.

Once the data had been analysed and the results compared with the literature, the findings were presented in a research report. The ethical considerations of the study now follow.

1. 6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bryman (2008:118) contends that ethical principles in social research concern whether there is harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and whether deception was involved. The researcher included these four main principles as part of a measurement process regarding ethics in the study.   It remains the researcher's view, that ethical considerations need to be considered throughout the entire research and reporting process. The following discussion integrates the abovementioned ethical principles.

Harm to Participants

It is crucial that researchers aim at avoiding harm to participants by not inducing emotional pain or conflict when collecting data (Flick, 2009:41). During the interview process with families, the researcher was mindful of their needs and ensured that they were treated with courtesy and dignity at all times. Before each interview with the participants, the researcher explained the procedure of the interview and provided an explanation as to how the information would assist the research. Where the interview process evoked emotions or unfinished business for the participants, the researcher deemed it fair and ethical to arrange emotional support in this regard. This was accomplished with the help of a qualified counsellor whom the researcher had encountered during her research in Dubai, and who was willing to counsel any participants without monetary charge.

Informed Consent

Flick (2009:37-44) highlights the importance of ethics in qualitative research by emphasising that the welfare and dignity of participants is crucial. Allan (2001:31) provides the essential elements of informed consent:

- The consent should be given by a competent individual, namely he or she must comprehend the information at a cognitive level.
- The participant should have adequate information to make an informed decision and understand the consequences of the decision at an emotional level.
- Consent should be provided voluntarily without coercion or duress.
- The decision maker should be able to communicate the decision to participate.

Before commencing with the interviews, the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the research, verbally and in writing. Informed, written consent was obtained from the parents and written assent from the children. (See Annexure A)**.** Consent to tape record the interviews was

obtained at all times. Consent to have a research assistant present during the interviews was also obtained from all participants.

Invasion of Privacy

Allan (2001:117) defines the right to privacy as "the right of people to keep certain information about themselves absent from the minds of others ... and to prevent others from prying into their affairs". Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:650) defines privacy as "the condition of being private" and private as "confidential or secret". The term invasion is defined by the Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:423) as "an intrusion". Participants have a right to be protected from public speculation and harm. This means that readers of the research should not be able to establish the identities of the participants. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis and the identities of the participants were protected by not disclosing details in the data, namely, addresses, names and so forth. Where the names of individuals were used in transcripts, they were altered to protect the identity of the participant. The researcher ensured that the data was kept in a secure place accessed only by herself. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants. Care was taken to ensure that participants were comfortable with the researcher and her assistant conducting the interview in the privacy of their homes. Where families did not wish to be interviewed in their homes, alternative venues were suggested by the researcher.

Avoidance of Deception

Deception is defined by the Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:202-203) as "a trick" with deception being derived from the word deceive which is defined here as "to mislead by lying". The researcher informed the participants that no deception was to be used in the interview process and that they could ask the researcher questions at any stage of the interview process. The research process was described as voluntary and participants could withdraw at any stage during the interview process.

In keeping with Gestalt professional practice, the researcher also included the principles of the Gestalt code of ethics as provided by the 2002 European Association for Gestalt Professional Practice. The four important criteria are:

- The equality of worth among individuals.
- Respect and uniqueness, worth and dignity of the individual.

- Appreciation of the differences of race, extraction, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity of preference, handicap, age, religion, language, social and economic status and of need for spirituality.

- Recognition of the importance of autonomy and self-regulation of the individual in the context of contractual interpersonal relationships.

The feasibility of the study now follows.

1. 7   FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

When motivating the research or making a case for it, Barbour (2008:45) states that this involves familiarising oneself with the literature first, and identifying the gaps in the knowledge or understanding provided by an existing body of work thereby showing how the intended study can fill this gap. Barbour (2008:197) asserts that certain qualitative schools of thought argue that data needs to be approached *without* the recourse of preconceived theoretical perspectives. It is further stated, that this is not 'simply possible', as the approaches to qualitative research *already include* the cultural assumptions and research questions deeply embedded in the world view of the individual conducting the research (Barbour, 2008:197).   It is also advocated, that because of the influence of the preconceived theoretical frameworks, that the qualitative researcher identifies these theoretical areas, and continuously questions them whilst conducting the research. Cresswell (in Fouché & Delport, 2002:267) supports that a literature review in the early stages of a phenomenological study provides a framework and orientation of what is to be researched, including how the topic will be studied**.**

Fouché and Delport (2005:124) posit that obtaining an overview of the literature before commencing a study, assists in minimising the chances of selecting an irrelevant or outdated topic of research in the area of interest. Furthermore, it assists in establishing that nobody else has done exactly the same study. Cresswell (in Fouché & Delport, 2002:268) explains that the presentation of theory in a qualitative case study design, may also be used as a guide before data collection is accomplished. It is further stated, that there is a great deal of support from supervisors and funding bodies that a research study entails three equal phases, namely, reviewing of the literature, gathering the data and finally analysing the data. Furthermore, the findings of the phenomenological study need to be related to the existing body of theory as part of the literature control, and in phenomenological research, a more *in-depth literature survey* mostly occurs *after* the findings of the research have been analysed or formulated Cresswell (in Fouché & Delport, 2002:268).

The researcher viewed the aforementioned information as pertinent to the feasibility and nature of the intended study, and therefore initially perused the relevant literature in order to ascertain what research had been conducted on expatriate families and expatriate family and child therapy aimed at adjustment problems. An initial overview of the literature also provided the researcher with an indication as to where the intended research could amplify the current knowledge base regarding expatriate family and child therapy using a Gestalt approach. The literature on qualitative research methods was also consulted, to ensure that the intended research approach was appropriate for the study. A more in-depth analysis of the literature was planned to occur after the data analysis had been accomplished, with the aim of comparing the data with the existing theory and similar findings in the literature.

The researcher consulted the South African Consulate General, Ms Agnes Nyamande-Pitso (2008) in Dubai, regarding the feasibility of doing the study in this country. The researcher was informed that there would not be any restrictions with regards to conducting the intended study. The researcher's location in Dubai and the potential contact with the South African community there, was viewed as a favourable environment to conduct interviews and field research for the intended study. From the feasibility assessment, the intended value of the study is identified as follows:

- The study is intended to serve as a guide for Gestalt therapists who wish to assist expatriate families with adjustment difficulties.
- To amplify the current knowledge base regarding expatriate adjustment for all family members, particularly expatriate spouses and children.
- To highlight the flexibility of Gestalt therapeutic techniques, in that they may be introduced in family therapy whereby children can express themselves through play therapy techniques and the whole family can benefit from a systemic perspective especially regarding solutions for expatriate adjustment needs.
- To amplify the current research regarding expatriate adjustment for use in South African psychological literature.

The following section provides the definitions and key concepts to be used in the study.

1.8   DEFINITION OF TERMS AND KEY CONCEPTS

1. Adjustment is defined by the Farlax Medical Online Dictionary (2008:1) as, "based on the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911), adjustment is derived from the Latin meaning *Justus*, right, adapting, settling in". The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:12) defines adjustment as

"The relationship that any organism establishes with respect to its environment. The term usually refers to social or psychological adjustment and when used in this sense it carries clear positive connotations ... the implication is that the individual is involved in a rich ongoing process of developing his or her potential, reacting to and in turn changing the environment in a healthy, effective manner". Black and Gregerson (1991:277) defines adjustment as "the degree of a person's psychological comfort with various aspects of a new setting." For the purpose of this study, the following definition is used:

Adjustment is the harmony between the individual's needs and the requirements of the environment which require the adaptation to new circumstances or conditions; this includes the social adjustment of establishing new relationships pertaining to friendships, work colleagues and other environmental relationships within a different cultural context.

2. Children or child is defined as "a young human being, boy or girl, a childish, immature person" (Collins Paperback Dictionary, 2003:131). For the present study, the following definition is used:

A child or children: boy or girl between the age of five and sixteen years requiring parental consent.

3. Child or (Play) Therapy: for the present study, the term child therapy will include play therapy. Child therapy with play, is defined as, "therapy with children that uses a variety of play and creative art techniques to alleviate chronic, mild and moderate psychological and emotional conditions in children that are causing behavioural problems or are preventing children from reaching their full potential". Axline (1969:9) describes play therapy as "the child's natural medium of self expression. It is an opportunity which is given to the child to 'play out his feelings and problems just as, in certain types of adult therapy, an individual 'talks out' his difficulties". The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:543) defines play therapy as "... treatment in which the play environment provides a forum within which pent-up emotions and feelings can be expressed freely."

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is used:

Child therapy entails the therapist's use of Gestalt play therapy and Gestalt therapy techniques to understand confused feelings, upsetting events and stressful changes experienced by children and adolescents. Whilst younger children may use play to communicate, older children may wish to talk, draw or write their thoughts down. The goal of the therapy is to provide emotional support for the child and/or adult, so that he or she can learn to understand more about his or her emotions, perceptions of the environment and related behaviour.

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4. Expatriate is defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2008:1) as "Latin – *patria* meaning native country. To withdraw from residence in or allegiance to one's native country ... or to leave one's native country to live elsewhere".   Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:275) defines expatriate as "living away from one's native country ... exiled."

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is used:

An expatriate is a person who is living in a foreign country which is not his or her country of origin or birth and where he or she has chosen to relocate to permanently or for an extended   period of time.

5. **Family** is defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2008:1) as "Latin – *familias* and means a basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents and their children".   Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:285) defines a family as "a social group consisting of parents and their offspring ... one's wife or husband and one's children ... a group descended from a common ancestor, or people living in the same household."

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is used:

A family is a social group consisting of parents and their children all living in the same household.

6. Family Therapy is defined as "a branch of psychology that works with families and couples in intimate relationships to nurture change and development. It tends to view change in   terms of the systems of interaction between family members." (Wikipedia Free   Encyclopaedia,   2008:1). The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:268) defines family therapy as, "an umbrella term for a number of therapeutic approaches all of which treat a family as a whole rather than singling out specific individuals for independent treatment ... one can practice family therapy within many different frameworks."

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is used:

Frey (2008:1) defines family therapy as, *"The short-term treatment, usually several months in length, with a focus on resolving specific problems such as eating disorders, difficulties with school, or adjustments to bereavement or geographical relocation. It is not normally used for long-term or intensive restructuring of severely dysfunctional families."*

And by the researcher as: family therapy is defined as the intervention aimed at assisting all family members to communicate and relate to each other, respecting individual perspectives, difficulties and feelings in a bid to create an optimal family relationship and support in the face of

life's constant challenges, particularly factors relating to the adjustment to a new geographical location. Furthermore, the family regarding this form of intervention, is described as a group of individuals consisting of one or more guardians or parents and their dependents or children all residing in the same home or place of residence.

7. Gestalt therapy is defined by The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:300) as "a form of psychotherapy associated with the work of Federick Perls. It is based loosely on the Gestalt concepts of unity and wholeness. Treatment, which is usually conducted in groups focuses on attempts to broaden a person's awareness of self by using past experiences, emotional states, bodily sensations ... in short, everything that could contribute to the person forming a meaningful configuration of awareness is an acceptable part of the therapy process". For the purpose of the present study, a **Gestalt approach** would imply the use of Gestalt therapy theory and techniques in understanding and assisting the client. Gestalt is defined as "originating from the German word for which there is no exact equivalent ... we believe that the Gestalt outlook is the original, undistorted, natural approach to life, that that is to man's thinking and feeling" (Perls, *et al.,* 1951:viii). Another definition of Gestalt is the "German word meaning configuration, pattern or whole" (Hergenhahn, 1997:430).

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is selected:

Healthline (2008:1) defines Gestalt therapy as, "a *humanistic therapy technique that focuses on gaining an awareness of emotions and behaviours in the present rather than in the past ... it is a complex psychological system, that stresses the development of the client's self-awareness and personal responsibility.*"

8. Parents is defined by the Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:592) as, "mother, father or guardian." For the present study, the following definition is used:

Parents are a mother, father or guardian who cares for children that are living in the same household.

9. Technique is defined as, "a method or skill used for a particular task ... proficiency in a practical or mechanical skill" (Collins Paperback Dictionary, 2003:859). Technique is defined as, "a fairly specific, learned procedure or set of procedures for accomplishing a goal" (The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, 2001:735). The Collins Paperback Thesaurus in A–Z Form (1990:625) describes technique as "approach, fashion, manner, means, method ... modus operandi, art, craft, craftsmanship, skill ."

For the present study, the word technique has been adapted according to the approach of Clarkson, (1989:20-26) and Zinker (1977:48) and is as follows:

Techniques describe practical and creative experiments, aimed at assisting clients to have meaningful encounters with others and an optimal relationship with the environment.

The following section outlines the chapters in the study and provides a brief description of their content.

1.9. CHAPTER DELINEATION

Chapter Two provides the theoretical foundation with regards to the therapy theory which underpin the Gestalt approach used in the present study. The chapter also provides a critical evaluation of Gestalt therapy and explains the role of Gestalt theory in the present study.

Chapter Three provides an in-depth discussion regarding the expatriate adjustment theory found in the literature. The chapter addresses the adjustment phases that the expatriate experiences, and explains how culture shock can affect the long term adjustment process. Erikson's developmental stages are provided to show how the age of an individual may influence his or her adjustment process.

Chapter Four provides a historical background to family therapy and reveals how Gestalt family therapy developed. Various therapeutic approaches for family therapy are discussed and evaluated. A discussion on the family life cycle is also presented. The process of Gestalt family therapy is detailed and an overview of Gestalt play or child therapy also is provided. Finally, the current trends in post-modern family therapy is discussed.

Chapter Five provides the research methodology of the study. An in-depth description of the research approach, the research design, procedures, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations and methods of ensuring trustworthiness and data validity are explicated.

Chapter Six provides the data findings of the study and the literature control. The chapter discusses the themes identified from the data. Excerpts from the transcripts are presented and discussed together with the relevant findings in the literature.

Chapter Seven presents the Gestalt techniques to be used in assisting expatriate families with adjustment difficulties. The five techniques were formulated according to the findings of the study, and the literature related to Gestalt therapy theory and expatriate adjustment theory.

Chapter Eight presents the recommendations for future research, the study's strengths and limitations, personal reflections of the researcher, and the value of the study regarding the knowledge base of expatriate adjustment, and Gestalt family and child therapy for expatriate families. The final section describes the conclusions drawn from the results and findings of the study.

1.10   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One aimed to provide the orientation, motivation and objectives regarding the present study. An overview of the research approach and research procedure was presented. The ethical considerations, the feasibility and intended value of the study were discussed. After listing the definitions of the key terms and concepts, a chapter delineation of the whole study was provided. Chapter Two, presenting Gestalt therapy theory, now follows.

CHAPTER TWO

GESTALT THERAPY THEORY

2.   INTRODUCTION

Chapter One discussed the primary objective of this study, namely to investigate the adjustment of South African families living in Dubai and to utilise the findings to formulate Gestalt therapeutic techniques aimed to assist expatriate families with their adjustment process. Gestalt therapy theory provides an important source of reference in the formulation of the proposed techniques, and for this reason, the theoretical principles underpinning this therapeutic approach will be provided in this chapter.

The chapter commences with an introduction of Gestalt psychology theory and an overview of its history. Melnick (2008:2) provides that the three key philosophical premises of the Gestalt approach are dialogue, phenomenology and field theory. However, Haley, Sieber and Maples (2003:181) assert that the *four* important principles of Gestalt therapy theory are field theory, phenomenology, dialogue and existentialism. Flowing from the four principles of Gestalt theory are the constructs, for example, awareness or creative adjustment. The four principles and the related constructs will be examined in this chapter. Finally, an evaluation of Gestalt theory will be given and the meaning of Gestalt theory for the present study will be presented.

2.1   THE ORIGINS OF GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY AND GESTALT THERAPY THEORY

Chapter One provided a definition of 'Gestalt', namely the "German word meaning configuration, pattern or whole" (Hergenhahn, 1997:430). The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:299) defines Gestalt as " the primary focus of the term is that it is used to refer to unified wholes, complete structures, the nature of which is not revealed by simply analysing the several parts that make them up ... the whole is different from the sum of its parts".

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:300) describes Gestalt psychology as "a school of psychology founded in Germany in the 1910's. Arguing originally against the structuralists, the Gestaltists maintained that psychological phenomena could only be understood if they were viewed as organised, structured wholes (or Gestalten)." Gestalt psychology is defined by Hergenhahn (1997:430) as "The type of psychology that studies whole, intact segments of behaviour and cognitive experience." It is in these definitions that some understanding of the essence of 'Gestalt' is provided. However, it is only in being more familiar with the origins of Gestalt theory that these definitions become clearer and reveal how the emphasis of 'patterns'

and 'parts' or *Gestalten,* have assisted in forming many of the Gestalt concepts as we know them today.

The founding of Gestalt psychology commenced in 1910 when Max Wertheimer (1880-1943) had an idea that was to introduce Gestalt psychology (Hergenhahn, 1997:405). Wertheimer's idea was that the individual's perceptions are structured in different ways to sensory stimulation, namely, that our perceptions are different to our sensations. In arriving at this theory, Wertheimer purchased a stroboscope, an instrument that creates the perception of movement in pictures that are actually still. To examine the phenomenon of perceived motion where motion actually does not exist, Wertheimer further experimented with similar instruments that created changes in the perception of light flashes. Arising out of these experiments, Wertheimer formulated his theory of Phi Phenomenon and published this in his 1912 article entitled *Experimental phenomenon,* which subsequently became the formalisation of the first school of Gestalt psychology (Hergenhahn, 1997:405). Pursuing Wertheimer's theoretical approach, were the Gestalt theorists, Kurt Koffka (1886-1941) and Wolfgang Kohler (1887-1967). Both theorists published several articles on perception and Gestalt theory, assisting in Gestalt psychology becoming better known in the United States of America (Hergenhahn, 1997:406-407). From these earlier theorists of Gestalt psychology arose the Gestalt concepts of perception, pattern making, sensation and the 'here and now' (Melnick, 2008:1).

The following section discusses the origins of Gestalt therapy theory, commencing with a brief overview of the original works of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman published in the 1950's and other earlier works that influenced Gestalt therapy practice as it is known today.

2.1.1 Gestalt Therapy Theory

Gestalt therapy is a phenomenological-existential therapy developed by Frederick (Fritz) and his wife, Laura Perls in the 1940s (Yontef & Simkin, 1989:2). Laura Posner Perls, was a psychology student at the time she met with Perls in the 1920's. She obtained her degree from the University of Frankfurt in 1932. She was influenced by existential theologians Paul Tillich and Martin Buber.

Yontef and Simkin (1989:2) state that as a psychoanalyst, Perls was influenced by Wilhelm Reich and Karen Horney. The works of the philosopher Sigmund Friedlander and the works of the earlier South African prime minister, Jan Smuts also left an impression on Perls, specifically Smut's major book on evolution and holism (Yontef & Simkin, 1989:7). Yontef and Simkin (1989:7) reveal that Laura and Fritz Perls lived in a time or *Zeitgeist* when phenomenological-existential

thinking was prevailing and that this significantly influenced the theoretical underpinnings of Gestalt therapy theory. During World War II, Perls and his wife escaped the Jewish persecution taking place in Germany and took refuge in Holland for a short period. Thereafter, Perls and Laura lived in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the couple continued with their work as Gestalt therapists (Mohammed-Patel, 2008:26). After some 12 years in South Africa, Perls relocated to New York. Towards the latter stages of his life, Perls travelled the world and during his travels he visited a Zen monastery in Japan. The exposure to Zen, a branch of Buddhism, influenced Perls into incorporating the Zen concept of 'illumination' or *awareness* into his Gestalt therapy approach (Sinay in Mohammed-Patel, 2008:24). Perls further adopted the idea of 'Yin and Yang' from Taoism, maintaining that every individual coexists with polarities, the concept of which is evident in Gestalt therapy theory today (Sinay in Mohammed-Patel, 2008:24).

In 1947 Fritz Perls published his book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* which provided the principles and themes of the Gestalt therapy approach (Melnick, 2008:1). Another classic work entitled *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, was first published in 1951. According to Yontef and Simkin (1989:1) this early work, has been used as a benchmark by Gestalt therapists over the years and provides an essential source of information for Gestalt therapy theory.

Joyce and Sills (2001:7) describe Gestalt therapy as humanistic and existential, whereby the belief is that individuals are equipped with the resources and skills to enjoy rewarding relationships with others and lead creative, satisfied lives. Clarkson (1989:4) asserts that Gestalt therapy is theoretically an integrative approach to counselling, that is rooted in the existential paradigm, or orientation and includes psychoanalytic knowledge using therapeutic relationship, awareness and experiment. Classified as third force humanistic psychology, it blossomed in the 1950 and 1960s. Perls identified Gestalt as one of the three types of existential therapy, but saw Gestalt as the only psychotherapy based purely on phenomenology – an approach founded on the philosophy that steers away from inherent concepts but moves instead towards pure awareness (Clarkson, 1989:4). This is achieved by the individual discovering the meaning of an event, namely, what phenomenologists call experience which is not subject to interpretation. Judgement is perceived as clouding phenomenological perception and therefore interfering with direct experience (Clarkson, 1989:4).

The Gestalt therapeutic approach, informs clients and therapists about the phenomenological method of awareness in which perceptions and emotions are distinguished from attitudes that pre-exist. Dialogue is used for clients and therapists to communicate their phenomenological

experiences. The objective is that clients become aware of how they behave, how they can change themselves and learn how to fully accept themselves. Gestalt therapy therefore focuses mainly on the process, namely, what is happening, rather than mere content or what is being discussed at the time (Yontef & Simkin, 1989:2).

The literature on Gestalt therapy theory (for example, Melnick, 2008; Yontef & Simkin, 1989) emphasise that the theory has several important underlying assumptions and principles. Arising from the aforementioned four principles are the constructs or 'tools' that assist the Gestalt therapist to understand the client and to facilitate the therapeutic process. From a meta-theory perspective, the four main principles of Gestalt theory are therefore phenomenology, existentialism, dialogue and field theory. Flowing from these four principles are the determined constructs used in Gestalt theory, for example; the 'self', contact boundaries, foreground/background and awareness.
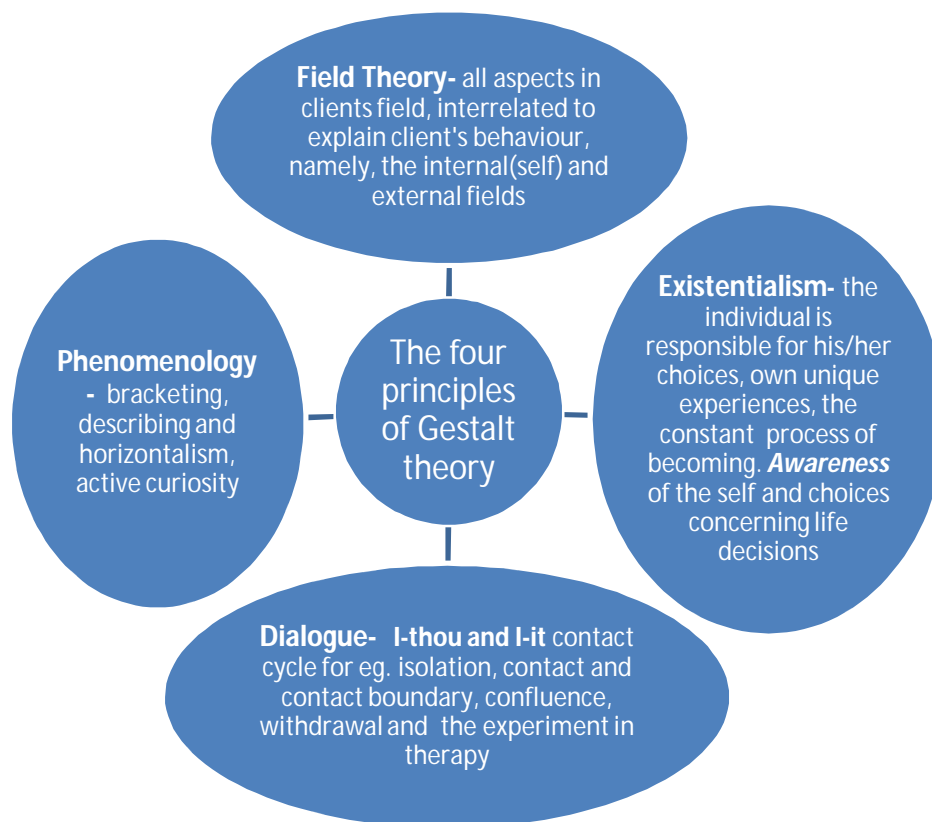
Figure *2.1: The four principles of Gestalt theory and the main constructs related to each of these principles.*

Figure 2.1 (Page 26) displays the four Gestalt principles and provides examples of their related constructs. In the researcher's view, these four principles could also be perceived as useful tools

in understanding the experiences of the expatriate participants interviewed in the current study. For example, *phenomenology* is the system of enquiry employed to study and observe the subjective experiences of the participants. *Existentialism* is concerned with the meaning that the participants assign to their own experiences within the expatriate context. *Field theory* is provided to understand the inner field or 'self' of the expatriate and how he or she relates to the external field, namely the new environment. To obtain the information from the expatriate participant, *dialogue* is used whereby the participant verbalises his or her experiences.

In the following section, each of the four principles and their related constructs will be discussed.

2.2. THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF GESTALT THERAPY THEORY

Hergenhahn, (1997:422-428) reveals how Gestalt therapy draws upon the theories of earlier philosophers and theorists, for example, field theory founded by Kurt Lewin. The phenomenological roots have been taken from Edmund Husserl's theory, and the I-Thou dialogue theory from Martin Buber (Haley, *et al.* 2003:184). The discussion commences with phenomenology.

2.2.1 Phenomenology

The motivation for commencing with a discussion on phenomenology, is that this philosophical paradigm underpins the methodology of the present research, namely the subjective exploration of the experiences of the expatriate participants. Furthermore, phenomenology underpins the *way* Gestalt therapists understand and make sense of their client's inner world by examining the client's subjective experiences in the 'here and now' with the aim of enhancing awareness (Haley, *et al.,* 2003:184; Joyce & Sills, 2001:16). Clarkson (1989:13) states that phenomenology aims to find the truth or the origin of knowledge by focusing on immediate experiences without the use of presuppositions or assumptions. Phenomenology may be described as the study of human experience by focusing on the subjective experiences and observations of individuals (Hazler in Haley *et al.,* 2003:184).

A distinction needs to be made between the original phenomenological philosophical approach first introduced by Husserl in 1931, and the phenomenological existentialist and field theory method adapted in Gestalt therapy theory.

2.2.2 The Origins and Nature of Phenomenology

The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was the original founder of phenomenology. He expressed his philosophy in his most influential book *Being and Time* which

emphasises man's 'being in the world' or '*Dasein*', the German term for 'being here' (Hergenhahn, 1997:252). In formulating his philosophy, Husserl aimed to describe the mental essences by which humans experience other people, themselves and the environment. He believed that phenomenology could be used to create a link between the external world and the subjective inner world of the individual. Derived from this belief, various definitions of phenomenology are provided in the literature, for example, Hergenhahn (1997:540) describes phenomenology as "the introspective study of intact, mental experiences". A more detailed description of phenomenology is given in The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:533) as "a philosophical doctrine that advocates the scientific study of immediate experience be the basis of psychology ... it is the focus on events, occurrences, happenings as one experiences them with a minimum regard for the external, physical reality and for the so-called scientific biases of the natural sciences ... real meaning for a phenomenologist is to be derived by examining an individual's relationship with and reactions to real-world events". Another more detailed description is provided by Seamon (2000:3) which states, "it is the exploration and description of phenomena, where *phenomena* refers to things or *experiences as human beings experience them*. Any object, event, situation or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand or live through is a legitimate topic for phenomenological investigation".

Husserl's view of phenomenology focused on the processes of the mind that were independent of the external or physical world, calling this 'pure phenomenology' with the aim of finding the essence of conscious experience (Hergenhahn, 1997:511). Husserl further believed that the objective of this form of phenomenology was to catalogue all cognitive processes by which the individual interacts with events or experiences obtained from his or her environment. An inventory of these cognitive processes had to precede philosophy, psychology and science because it was fundamental to these cognitive processes upon which all human knowledge is founded (Hergenhahn, 1997:511). From (1994:9) asserts that Gestalt therapy theory draws on classical Gestalt psychology's ideas regarding cognitive processes, thereby revealing Hursserl's influence in the development of the Gestalt concepts used in contemporary Gestalt therapy. To illustrate this, From (1994:9) explains that Gestalt therapy draws on the notion that the information given to us by our environment is organised into 'wholes' of experience named 'Gestalts' which influence the individual's impulses, needs, emotions and so forth.

Seamon (2000:2) states that Husserl interpreted the changing flow of human awareness and experience as 'structures of consciousness' which could be identified by using the phenomenological method of enquiry. This style of phenomenology came to be known as

'transcendental' phenomenology, creating a reaction from other phenomenological theorists and philosophers.   The philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, originally followers of Husserl's philosophy, did not agree with the ideas of transcendental structures of consciousness, arguing that Husserl did not base his theory on actual human experience but on his speculation regarding the individual's cognitive processes. This resulted in Heidegger and his followers becoming known as "existential phenomenologists" (Seamon, 2000:3).   Hergenhahn (1997:512) posits that whereas Husserl was more interested in epistemology and the essence of cognitive phenomena, the existential theorists were more concerned with the nature of human existence asking: what is the nature of human nature? and, what does it mean to be a unique individual?

The philosophical tradition of phenomenology therefore changed since its original formulation by Husserl, with the original founder of Gestalt psychology, Max Wertheimer (1880-1943) incorporating the concepts of existential phenomenology into Gestalt theory (Hergenhahn, 1997:405).   An examination of the 'components', or constructs pertaining to phenomenology in Gestalt therapy theory will now be provided.

2.2.3   The Constructs of Phenomenology in Gestalt Therapy

Melnick (2008:3) supports that phenomenology in Gestalt therapy provides a method to create awareness about how individuals organise meaning in their lives.   It also highlights the uniqueness of all individuals and provides that all experience is legitimate phenomena (Melnick, 2008:3).   For the Gestalt therapist this means staying close to the client's experience, remaining in the here and now moment and approaching the client with open minded and with authentic interest (Joyce & Sills, 2001:16). In doing this, the client obtains more awareness concerning his own process and the life choices he makes.   The phenomenological method of enquiry into the client's subjective meaning and experience of himself and his environment or world is an essential part of Gestalt therapy. To assist with this process, Joyce and Sills (2001:16-22) provide the essential components, namely, bracketing, description, horizontalism and active curiosity. These components may also be viewed as tools or methods involved in the phenomenological enquiry of the client's experiences.

- *Bracketing*

Bracketing concerns the way that the therapist identifies and acknowledges his/her own judgements or preconceptions brought into the therapeutic relationship. Bracketing entails the placing aside of his/her own preconceptions and endeavours to be sensitive and open to the client's unique experiences. Essentially, this means that the therapist needs to prevent stereotyping the client with regards to nationality, race, mental illness and so forth. Bracketing however, does not imply being free of the therapists own preconceptions, but trying to avoid them from blocking the interpretation of the client's own unique experience or world view (Joyce & Sills, 2001:17).

- *Description*

Description implies staying with the perception or awareness of what is obvious on immediate contact with the client and describing this observation. The therapist, in bracketing off his/her own preconceptions or values devotes the attention on describing what he/she notices, sees or senses. This may be provided in the following way of expression by the therapist (Joyce & Sills, 2001:20).

You look anxious...

I'm aware that ...

I notice that your feet are moving rapidly...

The therapist remains close to what is obvious or noticeable from the contact functions and sensory perceptions coming from the client, for example, body posture. The therapist will also become aware of his/her own phenomenology, for example, an emotional response or bodily tension. This becomes the way that the therapist is able to describe the themes or emerging figures of the client. The therapist thereby uses 'tracking' to interpret the phenomenological process over time. The central goal of this is to enable the client to become aware of his or her own experiences by allowing him or her to give these areas of awareness optimal attention. However, some clients may feel exposed and vulnerable when the therapist notices the client's unique inner experiences. It is therefore with sensitivity and caution that the therapist conversationally explores these inner experiences with the client (Joyce & Sills, 2001:20).

- *Horizonalism or Equalisation*

The therapist does not place more importance on one therapy event or aspect of the client. Everything that occurs with regards to the client is viewed as potentially important. The skill of

being able to notice possible connections and/or abnormalities is important. Similarly what is not apparent may also be important, for example, the client who shows very little emotion due to a recent traumatic or sad event in his or her life (Joyce & Sills, 2001:20).

- *Active Curiosity*

Joyce and Sills (2001:21) emphasise that although active curiosity is not a formal component of the phenomenological method, it plays a vital role in the therapist trying to understand the client. This means that there needs to be a strong interest into how the client makes sense of events. Questions may assist in addressing this curiosity but they need to be put in such a manner as to invite an open response from the client and not make him or her feel 'interrogated'. The questions should address the process of the client rather than the content (Joyce & Sills, 2001:20).

In sum, the clinical application of the phenomenological method requires of the therapist the important skill of listening to the client without stereotyping or judgement. The full attention and interest in the client should yield information for the therapist, enabling him to understand his client and bring the client to full awareness of the unique experiences in his or her world. The 'unconditional positive regard' of Carl Roger's theory is echoed here, where the healing of the client lies in the 'empathic acceptance' of the client and his experiences.

The significance of 'existentialism' as part of existential phenomenology in Gestalt therapy theory will now be discussed.

2.3   EXISTENTIALISM AND EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Mackewn (1997:ix) supports that Gestalt places a strong emphasis upon existential phenomenology. Existentialism is defined by the Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:275) as "a philosophical movement stressing personal experience and responsibility of the individual, who is seen as a free agent". The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:255) defines existentialism as "An important 20th Century philosophical movement ... the emphasis is upon personal decisions to be made in a world without reason and without purpose. Existentialism emphasises subjectivity, free will and individuality ... it has also spawned a form of psychotherapy that focuses on free will and the necessity for individual choice, action and judgement". The merging of phenomenological and existential approaches to form existential phenomenology, may be viewed as an endeavour to understand the experiences of human beings and their behaviour (Valle & King in Mohammed-Patel, 2008:81).

Before explaining the relevance of existential phenomenology for Gestalt therapy theory, it is pertinent to understand where the term 'existentialism' originated, including its meaning and significance to psychology. The origins of existentialism may be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who stated "know thyself", but the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was one of the first modern existentialists (Hergenhahn, 1997:195). Deeply religious, Kierkegaard emphasised the freedom of choice that the individual has to choose a fulfilled 'personal' relationship with God. He emphasised freedom of choice and the uniqueness of the individual. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) a German philosopher was also considered one of the first modern existentialists. He rebelled against the Western philosophy of the time because he believed that it emphasised the intellect and minimised human passions, resulting in rationalism (Hergenhahn, 1997:191). Existentialist philosophy arose due to the rebellion against rationalism, empiricism and sensationalism philosophies, emphasising that individuals discover their own *meaning* in life.

The existentialists, like the romanticists, viewed inner experiences and emotions as the most important guide for the individual's behaviour. It is therefore not surprising that over the years, existentialism eventually combined with romanticism, resulting in the third-force movement in psychology, revealed in the theoretical approaches of Maslow and Rogers (Hergenhan, 1997:199). As previously discussed in the origins of Gestalt therapy theory, existentialism is one of the key philosophical premises. Existential concepts have also been integrated into Gestalt therapy theory and the combination of 'existential' and 'phenomenology' implies that there are many realities and many truths (Mackewn, 1997:ix). This means that there are many levels of reality that connect the individual to his bodily experiences and reconnects the individual with the interdependent world. Joyce and Sills (2001:16) assert that Husserl's original phenomenological method of investigating the nature of existence has been adapted for the Gestalt therapeutic context whereby the client's subjective meaning of himself and his 'world' is investigated. This implies that for the Gestalt therapist, existential phenomenology provides a method to focus on the client's existence as *directly experienced*. It also seeks to encourage clients to be authentic and meaningfully responsible for themselves. The existential view also supports that individuals are continuously reviewing and discovering themselves. (Yontef & Simkin, 1989:4).

2.3.1   The Constructs of Existential Phenomenology in Gestalt Therapy

Joyce and Sills (2001:36-37) posit that most individuals choose to avoid the 'awareness' of existential realities such as loneliness, death or responsibility. It is further emphasised that responsibility for these realities are the cornerstone of Gestalt therapy. This would imply that as

the awareness develops in the client, he or she is ultimately responsible for how he or she feels about it and what meaning is assigned to the experience. The experience of an event is therefore 'chosen' by the individual, although it may not be perceived that way by the individual. Cohn (in Joyce & Sills, 2001:36) asserts that according to the existential way of thinking, being completely aware of the reality of existing in the world results in anxiety which existentialists support as 'normal'. The skill of the therapist in facilitating the client's acceptance of the 'harsh realities of life' lies in establishing an optimal level of support for the client *before* doing any awareness work regarding deep existential realities or issues (Joyce & Sills, 2001:36).

Once the therapist has established that the client has sufficient support, and is ready for deeper 'awareness' work, the promotion of awareness, namely the cornerstone of Gestalt practice can begin. Awareness has been selected as a construct of existentialism, because it relates to deeper existential realities and 'being-in-the world' or the existentialist philosopher, Martin Heidegger's concept of *dasein* in the world. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a student of Husserl but unlike Husserl, Heidegger applied phenomenology to study human existence and his works are viewed as the link between existential philosophy and existential psychology (Hergenhahn, 1997:512). Other existential terms introduced by Heidegger are; '*authenticity*', '*guilt and anxiety*' and '*thrownness*' (Hergenhahn, 1997:513).   *Authenticity* is described as the importance of the individual living an authentic life, thereby allowing for personal growth and having the freedom to explore life's possibilities.   *Guilt and anxiety* are described as the feelings the individual experiences when he or she does not exercise personal freedom of choice in life. *Thrownness* is described as the conditions under which individuals exercise their freedom and provides the context for the individual's existence (Hergenhahn, 1997:514). Joyce and Sills (2001:36) assert that individuals often choose to avoid 'awareness' regarding existential givens, for example, loneliness, and create fixed 'Gestalts' as a form of creative adjustment to deal with these existential realities. In the researcher's view, the aforementioned existential concepts could be explored by the Gestalt therapist during the facilitation of awareness in the client.

2.3.1.1 Awareness

Yontef (in Joyce & Sills, 2001:27) describes awareness as a type of experience that brings the person in touch with their own existence, with how he or she does things and that there are alternatives and that the individual actually chooses to be who he or she is. The classic work of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951:viii) describes awareness as "contact by sensing, by excitement and by Gestalt formation". *Contact* concerns the nature of the source of awareness and *sensing* determines the nature of the awareness. *Excitement* relates to the physical

experiences connected to awareness and the emotions arising from it. *Gestalt* formations always function together with awareness. Awareness may also be described as the process of contact and withdrawal from other individuals in the field. Awareness is primarily achieved through dialogue, both being vital tools in Gestalt practice (Yontef in Brownell, 2003:1). In their earlier work, Polster and Polster (1974:207) contend that a common criticism of Gestalt therapy is that the individuals in therapy are *already extremely aware* of what they are doing and that they need to be less aware, in order to live with more spontaneity. However, it is further argued, that before a client can alter his or her behaviour, full awareness is a crucial requirement regarding optimal change. Perls (1973:66) states that awareness allows the therapist and the client to recognise what resources are available to the client in the current moment. This paves the way for immediate action focusing on what the client needs to change and results in self-realisation for the client. There is no cognition of choice without awareness in the therapeutic context (Perls, 1973:66).

Joyce and Sills (2001:27) state that awareness is a non-verbal form of sensing or what is occurring in the here and now. It is further described as a healthy aspect of living, self knowledge, choice and even creativity. How then, can the Gestalt therapist create awareness? Joyce and Sills (2001:28-36) and Perls *et al.* (1951:88) provide the following guidelines:

- The therapist plays an essential role in creating awareness in the client, probing and questioning what the client feels in the 'here and now' and remaining *in* the here and now. This means paying attention to everything that occurs in the session and reflecting where necessary on what the client is experiencing or doing.
- Focussing on areas that are being avoided or minimised in the session and enabling the client to be in touch with areas that are out of awareness. This may be done by asking the client to describe what is happening in his body at the time or where he or she has no 'sense' of feeling or where there is discomfort or pain, muscular tension and other sensations (Perls, *et al.* 1951:88).

To enable this process, Joyce and Sills (2001:30) present the three zones of awareness:

- The Inner Zone

  This zone refers to the internal world of the client and involves the subjective phenomena for example, muscle tension and emotions. The therapist can heighten awareness here by drawing the client's attention to what he or she is feeling or sensing at the time.
- The Middle Zone

This zone consists of our thinking, memories or cognitive process. It assists in how the individual makes sense of external and internal stimuli. The therapist can access this zone by questioning the client or exploring areas that represent 'unfinished business' from the past.

- The Outer Zone

  This is the area of awareness of contact with the external world and includes the individual's speech and behaviour. It entails the use of *contact functions* which are the senses, namely, hearing, speaking, seeing, touching, smelling and movement. The client's awareness of this zone can be achieved by drawing attention to his physical behaviour as a reaction to the outside world.

The original concepts of 'contact' and awareness are described in Perls et al. (1951:116). A way to understand the flow of awareness is to express it in a metaphor, namely a 'cycle of experience' or 'the contact cycle'. (Joyce & Sills, 2001:33). This cycle enables the tracking of awareness stages and how they are finally replaced by the next cycle. An example of a cycle of experience, would be that of a male client who has suffered a traumatic event. He may disconnect from his inner zone of bodily-effective sensation and therefore not have awareness of his feelings of anxiety as a result of the trauma. The client here, needs to *recognise* (become aware of) this underlying event and then take '*action*' to do away with the underlying anxiety that is interrupting his cycle of experience. By doing this, he is able to prepare himself for the next cycle of experience and be placed in the 'fertile void' or equilibrium. The fertile void is understood as a healthy component in the process of change since it reveals that the individual has dealt with unfinished business that interrupted his growth as an individual. This brings the discussion to the concept of *change*, another important component of Gestalt therapy.

2.3.1.2 The paradoxical Theory of Change

Yontef and Simkin (1989:13) support that the Gestalt view of awareness, including the areas of responsibility, choice and owning, result in natural changes in the individual. Therefore, with self-acceptance and the feeling that there is a right to exist 'as is' the individual can grow. Mackewn (1997:62) explains that the Gestalt 'paradoxical theory of change' is based on the premise that individuals facilitate change by becoming more fully themselves, and not endeavouring to be someone they are not. The therapist supports the client's self acceptance and the growth or development of holistic awareness of him or herself.

The paradoxical theory of change entails the client being able to enter as fully as possible into all areas of his/her experience therefore placing it in full awareness (Joyce & Sills, 2001:37). This is achieved by 'organismic self-regulation' whereby the client learns how to live more authentically. The following discussion examines how the individual can achieve change and growth through creative adjustment and organismic self-regulation.

2.3.1.3 Creative Adjustment and Organismic Self-Regulation

In the classical work of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951:406), it is posited that the self's creativity and the organism/environment adjustment is polar, in that one cannot be without the other. The Encyclopaedia of Mental Disorders (2008:1) describes organismic self-regulation as the creative adjustment that the individual or organism makes in relation to the environment. This means that the individual's equilibrium with his or her environment is disrupted by the emergence of a need, interest or sensation which is also related to the figure-ground formation process. Perls *et al.* (1951:147) contend that the *self* is the 'system of creative adjustments'. Brownell (2003:2) describes creative adjustment as the transformation due to contact with a need, unfinished business and or solving difficulties. It is further distinguished from organismic self-regulation which is the process of creative adjustment in which the organism seeks homeostasis, health and deals with stress.

2.3.1.3.1 Organismic Self-Regulation

Mackewn (1997:17) asserts that the process of self-regulation occurs when individuals have emotional or physical needs resulting in a natural urge to regulate themselves to address these needs. The individual organises experiences, interests and energy around satisfying these needs. This is referred to in Gestalt theory as self-regulation (Mackewn, 1997:17). The therapist's role here, would be to facilitate the client in identifying how to address his or her immediate needs. However, there are times when self-regulation is not accomplished by the client using his or her own resources. This is referred to as *impasse* whereby the individual believes external support is not forthcoming and the individual believes he or she cannot support themselves (Yontef & Simkin, 1989:14). It is further stated, that an organismically self-regulating individual takes responsibility for what is done for the self. This reflects the existentialist approach within Gestalt therapy theory which views the individual as having the freedom of choice to change aspects of his or her life.

The manner in which the individual deals with new situations or experiences may be understood by examining how he or she responds to the stimuli from the external environment. The process

or flow of awareness is understood by applying the metaphor referred to as the 'cycle of experience' or the 'contact cycle' depicting the cycle of interdependency of organism and environment (Joyce & Sills, 2001:33). Adapted from the original concepts found in Perls *et.al* (1951:406), Blom (2006:26-27) describes organismic self-regulation or the process of gestalt formation which entails a cycle of stages, and interprets them as follows:

Stage 1: Awareness/Sensation

At this stage, the individual is influenced by an environmental stimulus or experiences, a need referred to as the 'figure'. An example would be that of an individual experiencing fear and anxiety in an unfamiliar, hostile environment. He or she becomes *aware* of the fear and needs to return to a more familiar place that is perceived as safe, thereby alleviating feelings of anxiety or other sensations associated with the fear.

Stage 2: Mobilisation/choice of relevant action

Upon gaining awareness, the individual actively endeavours to satisfy the need, exploring available resources to do so. As described in the example above, the individual experiencing fear now begins to explore the options to escape from the unfamiliar place in a bid to alleviate feelings of anxiety.

Stage 3: Final Contact/Action

This stage occurs in the 'here and now', whereby the individual becomes fully engaged in the activity selected to fulfil the need. As the individual escapes from the unfamiliar place into a perceived place of safety, he or she experiences gestalt completion whereby feelings of fear and anxiety are replaced with feelings of relief.

Stage 4: Post-contact

Upon achieving contact, the individual experiences homeostasis. The previously anxious individual no longer feels afraid after having returned to a safer, more familiar place. Thus the figure or need has now returned to the background and the gestalt is eliminated.

Stage 5: Withdrawal

The individual withdraws into a state of equilibrium or rest when one gestalt has been destroyed or eliminated. The creation of a new gestalt soon occurs, but whilst there is no figure or need, the organism or individual experiences a state of balance. However, the state of balance is short-lived, when a new need begins to develop very soon after one gestalt has been destroyed. When

a new figure or need is experienced, another cycle of organismic self-regulation occurs whereupon the five stage cycle is repeated.

In sum, the client's 'existence or being' is related to the inner world and the external world of the client. Awareness is found in three zones, namely the inner, middle and outer zone. The Gestalt therapist explores where the client is in his or her 'cycle of experience' in this way being able to see where the client is 'stuck' and therefore not reaching the state of equilibrium or 'fertile void', which is required for the next cycle of experience. Change is essential in being open to deal with the next cycle of experience and once again, this is created by awareness in the therapeutic context. Awareness also assists the client in understanding his life choices and the choices he has in 'being' in the world, be it from an internal perspective or within the external world, for example, family, work or environment. These different 'worlds' or fields are integrally a central part of Gestalt practice and are now presented in the following section.

2.4   FIELD THEORY

The Gestalt version of field theory has been derived from Kurt Lewin's (1890-1947) theoretical concept of life space (Hergenhahn, 1997:423). This implies that an individual's life space consists of all the aspects that impact on him or her at a given moment or time. The influencing factors are made up of an awareness of internal events (for example, pain or fatigue) and external events (for example, people on the street, noise) and memories of previous events (Hergenhahn, 1997:423). Parlett (1997:16) contends that Gestalt practitioners do not only work with the individual because human beings live within 'systems', for example families, communities and nationalities. The link between the collective systems is referred to as the *unified field* and is the Gestalt term for the interconnection between the individual and the environment, the self and others and the individual within the communal context (Parlett, 1997:16). All elements within the field, for example, couples, families, racial groups, schools and so forth, all exist within the related spheres of influence (Crocker *et al.*, 2001:116).

The individual's perception of the environment or field is described by the Gestalt figure-ground concept. The *figure-ground* concept is derived from the Gestalt psychology of perception as well as a therapeutic view that is relevant to all functions of the individual, couples, families or larger systems in the community (Melnick, 2008:3). Furthermore, as the individual experiences the external field or environment, a primary 'form/figure' comes to the fore or becomes prominent and is organised against its background, known as the 'ground'. This background includes past experiences, beliefs, constructs, physiology, culture and so forth. Its main purpose is to provide a

'context' (Melnick, 2008:3). Mackewn (1997:16) states that the concept of figure and ground reveals the process by which individuals organise their perceptions to form configurations which they assign meaning to. Furthermore, individuals do not understand the 'whole' of themselves and their environment in one full 'form' or mass, thereby selecting and focusing on specific factors that interest them at the time of need. When this need changes, that item of interest fades into the background and no longer is perceived as an immediate area of interest (Mackewn, 1997:16). As the figure or form emerges from the ground it becomes the focus of attention for a specific period of time, and eventually when it no longer is in the line of focus, it recedes into the background, forming new meaning for the individual. Dysfunction as described by Gestalt theory concerns a blockage in the natural process of figure/ground formation (Melnick, 2008:3). This may entail therapeutic intervention. The following section explores the relevance of field theory for the Gestalt therapist.

2.4.1   The Gestalt Therapist and Field Theory

In the work of Crocker *et al.* (2001:112-145), the field of the individual is referred to as a 'sphere of influence'. From a therapeutic perspective, the 'sphere of influence' relates to the domains or areas that impact on the client. Similarly, the client's family, work or living space constitutes his or her field. Joyce and Sills (2001:24) support that the important areas of Gestalt phenomenological investigation are the external and internal worlds of the client, including the constantly changing relationship between them. It is further provided, that the term field refers to everything, namely all objects, situations and relationships in the human environment. The 'experiential field' consists of what is in the individual's field of awareness. This is the client's reality or phenomenological field that is unique to him or her. The second field focused upon is in context in which the client lives, namely his or her physical environment. This may be called the 'wider' field. The therapist needs to focus on the client's experiential field and wider field, continuously searching or remaining open to the influences between the two types of fields. The client is continuously rearranging the field, due to his or her needs or unfinished business. It is essential that the therapist understands how the client does this, the meaning that is created and what lies within his or her levels of awareness (Joyce & Sills, 2001:24). Parlett (1997:23) states that therapeutic work requires that the therapist examines how the original experiences, namely the older, established components in the client's field impact on current feelings, movements and thoughts. It is further advocated that Gestalt therapists should learn as much as possible about their client's entire field and how current feelings and behaviours are influenced by previous experiences.

Parlett (1997:26) describes a change of country, for example that of a refugee leaving his home country, as a "disruption of magnitude", wherein the habitual configurations of the individual's field have been disrupted and the identification with a familiar and stable system is dislocated. How does a change of environmental field impact on the expatriate who has also left a familiar place or environment? The Gestalt therapist endeavouring to assist such a client, may need to be mindful of how the disruption of the client's original unified field is influenced by the change of environment. For example, where the expatriate has had a strong link or identification with his or her family in the country of origin, and where this family provided the client's greatest support, he or she may now be found in a new field where there are *no familiar* 'systems', cultures, family or community. The original unified field of the home country, is no longer within the expatriate client's immediate access or experience. This would mean that the expatriate has the challenge of forming a 'new unified' field in the foreign country. The new unified field could consist of a new community, a different work place, and a smaller family system or support group.   In the researcher's view, the Gestalt therapist would need to assist the client in befriending the new systems within the foreign environment, thereby enhancing his or her adjustment skills.

To establish how the client 'rearranges' his or her field or what the client's needs are, the therapist needs to be skilled in the art of dialogue. This is an essential principle in Gestalt theory and will be presented in the next section.

2.5   DIALOGUE IN GESTALT THERAPY

Gestalt theory supports a specific form of therapeutic relationship called the 'dialogic relationship' based on the ideas of the philosopher, Martin Buber (Joyce & Sills, 2001:42).   The intention behind this form of dialogue lies in genuinely 'hearing' (or 'I-Thou' relationship) the other individual without any judgement. Another description of Gestalt dialogue is that it demands the willingness of two or more individuals to be sincere and open in a true manner, and therefore in open engagement of two phenomenologies (Melnick, 2008:3). Philippson (2002:73) argues that an important approach in Gestalt dialogue, is that it considers the non-verbal aspects in the communication process. For example, the therapist can indicate his or her interest in what the client is conveying, by expressing this in the eyes or body posture.   The Gestalt therapist needs to be fully present, sincere in the relationship with the client. This is essential as part of the Gestalt therapeutic relationship which is composed of the four elements, namely; presence, confirmation, inclusion and willingness for open communication (Brownell, 2003:1; Joyce & Sills, 2001:45). The four elements are now described.

- **Presence** – this implies that the therapist is fully present for the client during the therapy session. There is an emphasis on being in the '*here and now'* which means in the current moment or what is occurring in the immediate context of the session. As discussed in the previous section regarding the beginnings of Gestalt therapy theory, Perls was influenced by the Eastern spiritual discipline of Zen, which advocates living in the present moment, or here and now. For Perls (1973:63) Gestalt therapy therefore means giving the client the opportunity and resources to solve difficulties in the present or here and now. Furthermore, the 'neurotic' client cannot fully function in the present due to unfinished business from the past. The Gestalt therapist encourages the client to become aware of his or her breathing, gestures, emotions, thoughts and physical changes thus forcing the client to remain in the here and now and to face difficulties from the past (Perls, 1973:65). Being present-centred does not exclude the past or future but implies that those aspects of time exist in the current moment as regret, nostalgia and so forth.

- **Confirmation –** The experience of being truly listened to and understood may be a healing one for many clients. The Gestalt therapist thus attempts to contain what is figural for the client and also what is out of awareness.

- **Inclusion** – this entails the attempt of the therapist to really understand the client or to 'be in the client's shoes'. Using empathy, the therapist endeavours to experience the subjective world of the client without stereotyping or judgement. Inclusion entails attending to the physical, emotional and cognitive processes of the client.

- **Willingness for open communication** – open communication is an important 'tenet' in the dialogic relationship. This means that the client should feel free to communicate openly and feel 'safe' to do this in the presence of the therapist (Joyce & Sills, 2001:49-50).

The literature (for example, Joyce & Sills, 2001:98 and Phillippson, 1996:72) emphasises the importance of experimenting in the dialogue process. Phillippson (1996:72) asserts that Gestalt dialogue includes the Gestalt concept of 'experiment' whereby the client is provided with the opportunity to interact or approach the therapist in a different way. The early work of Polster and Polster (1974:234) states that the experiment is about bringing the client's 'action system' into the therapy room. The therapy context is a safe place whereby different aspects of the client's perspectives can be explored. Joyce and Sills (2001:98) posits that *experiments* are used to:

- Heighten awareness
- Explore new ways of being or behaving
- Bring about self-support

- To create an awareness of what is not in the foreground
- To complete *unfinished business* which refers to situations that occurred in the client's past. Unfinished business means that the client has not achieved a resolution or closure related to the situation of the past (Joyce & Sills, 2001).
- To experiment with new ways of behaviour

Philippson (2002:77) explains that the experiment in Gestalt therapy could also be seen as an intervention which impacts on the relationship with the client. Furthermore, with each intervention there is a configuration of the individual's field and a motivation for the client to change his or her behaviour. Joyce and Sills (2001:100) further suggest how experiments could be used by the therapist. Applied in dialogue, the therapist 'hears' and perceives a theme or figure emerging from the clients conversation. Applying all techniques of 'attending' the therapist observes the physical posture, voice and behaviour of the client.   When the moment is appropriate, the therapist suggests an experiment to create a shift in the client, moving him or her out of an old way of thinking or behaving. The client can however refuse to participate in the experiment. Too much risk in the experiment may result in the client being traumatised. For this reason, the therapist needs to monitor and adjust the process if necessary.

Feldhaus (2001:151) supports that the 'empty chair' method is a well known Gestalt technique in experimenting, and is a sound method of exploring introjections, projections, awareness or polarities. Furthermore, this Gestalt technique is directly aimed at assisting the individuals to re-own projections.   The method involves placing an empty chair in the room and inviting the client to imagine that an individual is sitting in the empty chair. The client is then encouraged to converse with the 'imaginary' person. This method is also a traditional method of exploring the impasse in a *'top-dog'* and *'under-dog'* conflict in the client.   This implies an internal struggle between an introjection and the resistance towards it. The top dog is viewed as the idealist and perfectionist in all individuals, whereas the underdog is the indecisive, weak aspect within the individual (Mohamed-Patel, 2008:65).   Stephenson (in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:65) asserts that the top dog and the underdog are continuously engaging in an internal dialogue whereby the underdog may win by introducing broken promises or sabotage.   The therapist could ask the client to verbalise his or her internal dialogue within the therapy session, thereby enabling the client to achieve awareness regarding the disowned parts of the 'self'.

Dialogue within the therapy session is therefore the 'tool' in bringing about awareness in the client (Joyce & Sills, 2001:100-109). To ensure successful dialogue, Gestalt therapists understand the role of 'contact' that occurs in interactions.

Contact and Contact Boundary

The classical work of Perls *et al.* (1951:227) states that "experience occurs at the boundary between the organism and its environment ... experience is the function of this boundary and psychologically what is real are the whole configurations of this functioning ... we use the word contact or in touch with objects as underlying both sensory awareness and motor behaviour". The early work of Polster and Polster (1974:99-101) states that *contact* can only occur between separate beings always maintaining independence but risking 'capture' in the union or interaction. It is further emphasised that contact is the core of growth, the very method of changing the individual's *self* and the experience he or she has of the world. This means that the boundary between the self and the world or field must be flexible to allow adjustments and equally allow for autonomy. Where the boundary between the self and the outside world becomes blurred and the distinction between the self and the other is lost, there is a disturbance of contact (Brownell, 2003:2). It is further given that Gestalt therapists have traditionally held that the 'self' forms at the boundary and is a consistently reforming or changing sense of one's experience. Thus the 'self' is believed to be the figure/background process in contact situations (Brownell, 2003:1).

The aspect that distinguishes contact from togetherness is that contact occurs at a 'contact boundary' where a sense of separateness is established to prevent overwhelming the parties in the union (Polster & Polster, 1974:103). Contact relates to where the 'I' and the 'You' occur at the contact boundary thus forming the 'we' (Mohamed-Patel, 2008:29). The boundary is also experienced both as isolating and as contact, thus the contact boundary is the site at which the individual experiences the 'me' in relation to that which is not 'me'. Furthermore, only through contact with an 'other' can the awareness of separate identifies be developed. At the contact boundary all psychological happenings occur, for example, thoughts, emotions and behaviours are expressions of boundary experiences (Perls in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:29).

The individual may establish means to avoid or modify contact, which are known as 'interruptions' or modifications of contact (Joyce & Sills, 2001:113). For each of the modifications there are an opposite or 'polar' opposite. The following Table 2.2 (Page 44) taken from Joyce and Sills (2001:113) displays the polarities that occur regarding modifications of contact.

Table 2.1: Modifications to Contact (Joyce & Sills, 2001:113).

Retroflection	impulsiveness
Deflection	reception
Desensitisation	sensitivity
Confluence	withdrawal
Egotism	spontaneity
Projection	ownership
Introjections	rejection

Joyce and Sills (2001:116-127) provide clarification of the seven modifications of contact as presented in Table 2.1 (Page 44):

- *Retroflection* concerns the restraining of an action or impulse by the individual which may result in the energy being turned inwards. A retroflection may be held in the body and manifest as somatic illness, depression or physical tension.

- *Deflection* is the turning away from a stimulus, either external or internal, in order to block or avoid awareness. Deflection in a therapeutic session may be expressed by the client not attending to the subject that is being focussed on. The client may turn the focus onto something completely different to avoid the topic that makes him or her uncomfortable.

- *Desensitization* is similar to deflection, in that it forms another method of avoiding contact with a stimulus. It concerns the blocking of the inner zone of awareness. The therapist may become aware of this due to his or her feelings of tiredness or sleepiness in the presence of the client who is using deflection.

- *Confluence* is expressed in a polarity, namely in either distance or closeness. It is expressed by the individual who remains 'fixed' regarding either attachment or separateness from others. In contrast, the healthy individual can be close or attached to others, but withdraw from this closeness only to return to it at a later stage without feelings of discomfort. Perls (1974:38) states that confluence occurs when the individual feels no boundary between him or herself and the world or the environment. Furthermore, when there is no distinction between the self and the other, the individual has lost all sense of him or herself.

- *Egotism* is expressed by the excessive preoccupation with one's own behaviour, feelings and thoughts. The feelings may be positive or critical, but serves to block relational contact with others. The therapist could encourage the individual to focus more on the other individual with whom the contact is made thus diverting the attention outward.

- *Projection* occurs when the individual disowns parts of him or herself pertaining to personality factors that are incompatible with his or her self-concept and project these factors onto others.

- *Introjection* is the process whereby the individual unquestioningly accepts an attitude or opinion from the environmental field, without contemplating whether the introjected material is in fact beneficial, factual or applicable. (Joyce & Sills 2001:116-127).

In one of his final works, Perls (1973:25-43) describes the modifications of contact or boundary disturbances as 'neurotic disturbances' which result from the individual's lack of ability to maintain a healthy balance between him or herself and the environmental field. Boundary disturbances are likened here with 'neuroses' and are referred to as neurotic mechanisms. Traumatic neuroses are further described as defences that assist in protecting the individual from the intrusion of the environment. Perls (1973:40) provides a succinct summary of the following modifications of contact:

"*The introjector does as others would like him to do, the projector does unto others what he accuses them of doing to him, the man in pathological confluence does not know who is doing what to whom, and the retroflector does to himself what he would like to do to others*".

The question therefore arises, how does the therapist raise the client's awareness and comprehension as to how they experience contact? The therapist can offer a hypothesis for the client to think about, for example state, "I am aware that you fold your arms every time we talk about your sister". The client may then conceptualise the modification as a way to avoid uncomfortable emotions (Joyce & Sills, 2001:114). This is also the time to assist the client in finding a new more creative way to deal with a painful or difficult situation.

From the aforementioned discussion, it is evident that one of the important tenets of Gestalt therapy theory, is that optimal functioning of the individual entails good contact with the self and others. The therapist can assist the client in achieving this by applying the Gestalt techniques of listening and attending to the client with empathy and without prejudice. The experiment is another technique to create awareness in the client and provide an opportunity to tackle any modification of contact boundary that the client may have.

In sum, the four major principles of Gestalt therapy theory and their related constructs have been presented. Integrated into the discussion, were the different ways that the Gestalt therapist could make use of the constructs and principles to facilitate change and growth in the client. In discussing the various principles and their constructs, the influence of different philosophical approaches were recognised, for example, the influence of Kurt Lewin's Field Theory. There are also elements of Freud's psychoanalytic theory to be found in Gestalt therapy theory, for example, the concepts of projection and transference in the therapeutic relationship (Perls in Mohammed-Patel, 2008:20). The philosophical concepts of Husserl, Buber and Heidegger, all contribute to make Gestalt therapy theory an eclectic assortment of principles and related constructs. The following section evaluates Gestalt therapy theory as it exists today, presenting it as a precursor to substantiate its meaningfulness for the present study, which follows in the last section.

2.6   AN EVALUATION OF GESTALT THERAPY THEORY

The literature (for example, Burley, 2001: 1-2 and Hergenhahn, 1997:426;) provides the positive and negative aspects present in Gestalt therapy theory. One of the main criticisms found, is that the important terms are vague and difficult to assess experimentally. It is argued, that the term "Gestalt" is equally vague and has never been precisely described or defined (Hergenhahn, 1997:426). In conducting a literature review of Gestalt therapy theory, the researcher found that certain descriptions of Gestalt theory emphasise only specific areas or constructs. From (1994:4) argues that since Gestalt therapy was introduced more than forty years ago, it is not that well known in contemporary psychology and that not many individuals are familiar with the theoretical concepts of Gestalt therapy. From (1994:4) further posits that the 1950's official debut work of Gestalt therapy, entitled *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in Human Personality* by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, was a "strange concoction, consisting of two dissimilar volumes bound together". The second volume was written in particularly complex and difficult prose containing jargon that was obscure and not easily understood (From, 1994:4). In the researcher's view, this may be the reason why the quest to find a 'common' description of Gestalt therapy was not an easy task, in that writers of Gestalt therapy may have presented different views or interpretations regarding the original concepts presented in the debut volumes of the 1950's. Mackewn (1997:13) supports that in the past there have been difficulties in exercising Gestalt therapy as it was originally intended by the founders of Gestalt in the 1940's and 1950's. However, Mackewn (1997:13) further emphasises that Gestalt theory has evolved

over the last fifteen years, meeting many of the complex needs of contemporary counselling and psychotherapy.

Gestalt therapy's strength lies in the concept of acceptance regarding human growth and potential, including the therapeutic value in Gestalt therapy of attending to the present moment during the therapy session (From, 1994:2-10). Furthermore, Gestalt therapy is applied phenomenology. These concepts may resonate with psychotherapists who prefer to use a phenomenological and existentialist approach with their clients, therefore making Gestalt therapy a useful method with which to assist their clients. Similarly, the researcher found the phenomenological and existential principles of Gestalt therapy compelling and to be highly appropriate for the present study, especially the concepts of 'field theory' and 'creative adjustment'. These two concepts present an informative tool in understanding the expatriate's adjustment process from a phenomenological perspective. Another positive aspect about Gestalt psychology is that it motivated psychologists towards the holistic areas of human behaviour, while its premises have been assimilated into modern psychology (Hergenhahn, 1997:428).

Burley (2001:1-2) states that Gestalt therapy theory is a process theory, namely a theory about how the individual and the ecosystem function as one resulting in "many Gestalt therapists not being able to articulate the theory effectively". This may imply that certain Gestalt concepts are difficult to fully apply in the therapeutic context. However, evident in the literature (for example, Blom, 2006; Oaklander, 1992,2007; Polster & Polster, 1974; Zinker, 1978) is the varied use of Gestalt therapy techniques and methods. Polster and Polster (1974:306), support that the same Gestalt principles used when working with individuals, may be applied when working with couples and families. This suggests that the Gestalt approach is flexible enough to accommodate individuals and groups, each having their own unique needs and difficulties. In the researcher's view, the eclectic nature of Gestalt therapy theory allows for its flexibility and use in many contexts. Yontef and Simkin (1989:6) compare Gestalt therapy to other theoretical approaches. It is stated that the psychoanalysts only apply interpretation, the Rogerian therapists are passive and can only reflect and clarify. Gestalt therapists on the other hand, use methods to increase awareness and view clients as being responsible for their own existence. Yontef and Simkin (1989:7) posit that another difference from other therapies is that Gestalt has a genuine regard for holism and considers the bio-psychosocial field as important. Gestalt theory is thus applied phenomenology, its underpinning philosophy of phenomenology, being an alternative method to the dominating scientific methods of the twentieth century (From, 1994:1-2). According to the

researcher, this makes the theory useful in understanding phenomenological data in qualitative research, specifically for the present study. This brings the discussion to the following section.

2.7   THE MEANING OF GESTALT THEORY FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

The Gestalt approach has been selected for the present study in that its phenomenological principles are compatible with the nature of this study. As mentioned in Chapter One, the objective of the present study is to explore the 'phenomenological field' of South African expatriates living in Dubai. The expatriate subjects' experiences are to be understood and interpreted through the lens of Gestalt theory and empirical phenomenology research methods, so that Gestalt techniques may be formulated to address the adjustment needs of expatriates. A more in-depth discussion of how the Gestalt therapeutic approach may be used effectively with families and children will be presented in Chapter Four. Figure 2.2 (Page 48) illustrates the Gestalt theoretical areas of compatibility with the current study.
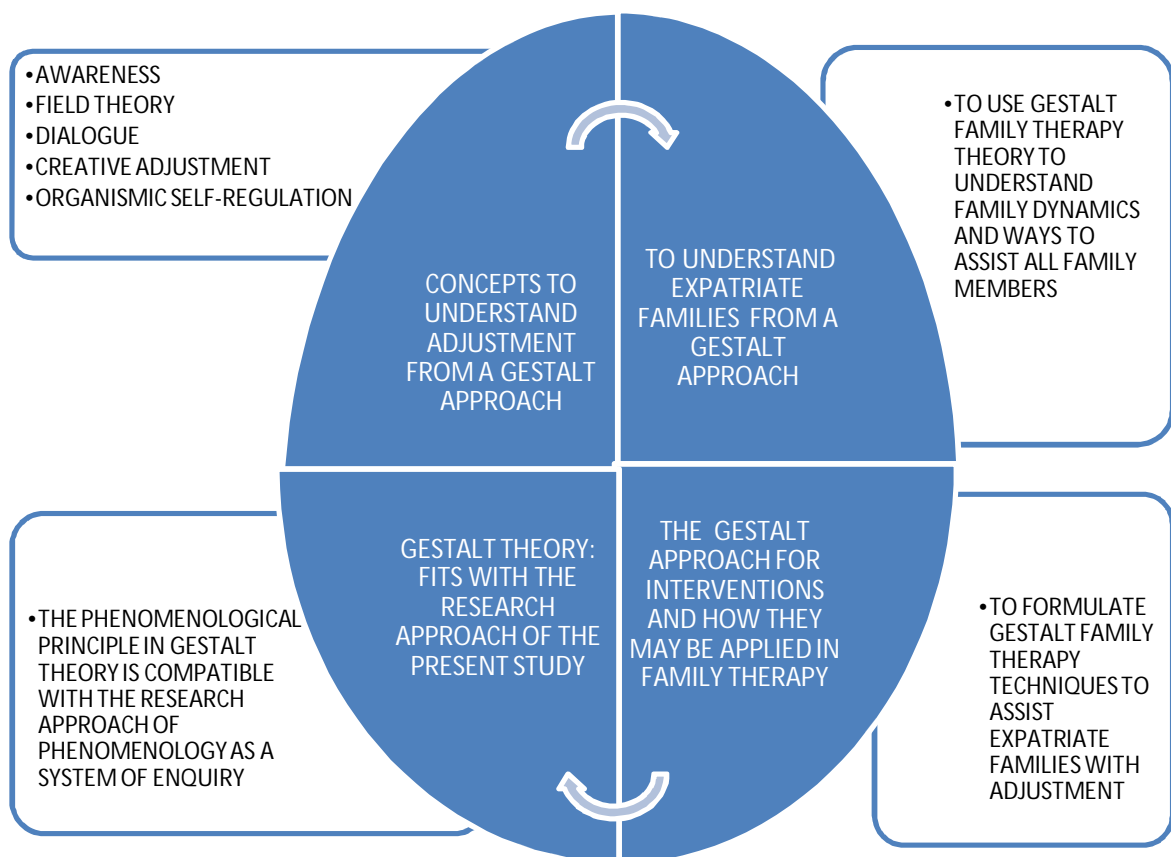
Figure 2.2: Diagram Reflecting the Compatibility of the Gestalt Approach for the Present Study.

In sum, the Gestalt approach has been selected for its suitability in understanding the experiences of expatriate families, and allows for the creative formulation of techniques to assist expatriate families with their adjustment difficulties. The phenomenological and existential principles

underpinning Gestalt therapy theory are compatible with the research approach selected for the present study.

This brings the discussion to the end of this chapter. A summation of this chapter follows.

2.8.   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The main objective of this chapter was to present the important theoretical principles and constructs relating to the Gestalt approach to therapy, and the role that this theoretical approach provides to the present study.

The history of Gestalt psychology was followed by a discussion on the origins of Gestalt therapy theory, which is a phenomenological-existential therapy introduced by Frederick (Fritz) and Laura Perls in the 1940s. In 1947, Fritz Perls published his book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* which provided the principles and themes of the Gestalt therapy approach (Melnick, 2008:1). The classic work regarding Gestalt therapy was published by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman in 1951. Entitled *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality,* the book has been used as a benchmark by Gestalt therapists over the years and provides an essential source of information for Gestalt therapy theory. The Gestalt therapeutic approach founded by Fritz and Laura Perls instructs therapists about the phenomenological method of awareness in which perceptions and emotions are distinguished from attitudes that pre-exist.

The four main principles or 'pillars' of Gestalt therapy theory were discussed. These principles entailed, phenomenology, existential phenomenology, field theory and dialogue. With Gestalt therapy theory's strong phenomenological roots, it was pertinent to commence with a detailed discussion regarding Edmund Husserl's influence and the principle views of phenomenology. This was followed by an examination of existential phenomenology, field theory and the role of dialogue in Gestalt therapy. An in-depth discussion of the constructs related to the four principles was also presented.   Finally, an evaluation of Gestalt therapy theory was provided and the relevance of the Gestalt theoretical approach for the current study was presented in diagram form.

As discussed in Chapter One, *adjustment* is an essential area of analysis in the present study. The following chapter examines the literature regarding adjustment theory and relates the adjustment process to the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

"We don't leave our weaknesses behind when we fly to foreign shores. They are securely packed in the luggage of our psyche. We simply begin a new journey."   *(Caitcheon , 2003:7).*

3.   INTRODUCTION

Expatriate adjustment was introduced in Chapter One as an important factor contributing to the success of any expatriate venture.   This chapter provides the theoretical perspectives concerning expatriate adjustment, and also includes a section regarding the researcher's interpretation of expatriate adjustment by examining it through the lens of Gestalt theory.

The following sections will reveal that not all expatriates experience the adjustment process in the same manner. Some individuals may experience more anxiety and distress, whilst others may perceive their new lifestyle as a positive and uplifting experience. This also applies to the unique ways in which family members may differ in their perceptions of their new environment. This chapter commences with the most recognised concepts found in the literature regarding adjustment theory.   Definitions of cross-cultural adjustment, culture and acculturation will be provided. An exploration of the adjustment process according to four theoretical perspectives is then provided and the four critical stages of expatriate adjustment are explored. Thereafter, the relevance of human developmental stages and expatriate adjustment are examined. Integrating the theoretical concepts described in Chapter Two, a discussion of how expatriates adjust to their new environment from a Gestalt perspective will be presented. This is followed by a section on the determinants of adjustment regarding families, spouses and children. The final section examines grief and the adjustment process of expatriates.

3.1   Cross -Cultural Adjustment and Acculturation

The literature on expatriate adjustment reveals that the impact of cultural differences plays an important role in the expatriate's adjustment process. For this reason, it is necessary in the first instance, to examine and define the meaning of cross-cultural adjustment.

Kumar, Raduan Che and Subramaniam (2008:322) describe cross-cultural adjustment as the degree of psychological comfort that an individual experiences with the different aspects of the host culture.   Kumar *et al.* (2008:322) state that three areas of cross-cultural adjustment have been established in the literature, namely: i) the adjustment to the general environment, dealing

with aspects like climate, health facilities and food; ii) the interaction with the nationals of the host culture; iii) work related demands and standards.

In the context of expatriate adjustment the term 'culture' needs to be clarified. Kim (in Halsberger & Brewster, 2005:2) describes culture as the perception patterns, behaviours and attitudes acceptable in a given society.   Culture is further described, as part of the semi-conscious norms and values expressed in observable mannerisms, for example, art or technology Schein (in Halsberger & Brewster, 2005:2). Hofstede (2003:4-5) describes culture as patterns of thinking that have been acquired during childhood, a form of 'programming' of the mind that begins within the family home, schools and community. Cultures differ in how they value symbols, heroes, rituals and traditions (Hofstede, 2003:7).   In many Western languages, culture is also denoted as 'civilisation', or the fruits of education in art and literature. It is also a collective phenomenon since it is usually shared with individuals living within the same social context where it is learned (Hofstede, 2003:5).

Examples of cultural differences experienced when coming into contact with foreign cultures are different traffic laws, dress codes, neighbourhood rules, attitude towards time, personal body space, gender roles, the laws of the country, religious customs and superstitions.   The expatriate therefore needs to adapt or 'fit in' with the new environment and how he or she copes with this challenge may be described as cross-cultural adjustment.   Rieger and Wong-Rieger (in Ali, 2003:29) describe the process whereby expatriates adapt to different cultures, as acculturation.

In assessing the aforementioned descriptions of cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation, there is an omission with regards to the perceptions and feelings that the expatriate may experience when confronted by another culture.   The expatriate's challenge of adapting to new cultures requires self-awareness and an acceptance or recognition that many things may be different to those of his or her own culture. Cross-cultural adjustment may entail a willingness to be curious rather than detached, respectful rather than prejudiced, and adventurous rather than inhibited or afraid. These concepts and the aforementioned theories are further explored in the following section whereby the adjustment process is more closely examined.

3.2   The Adjustment Process

As provided in Chapter One, the term 'adjustment' is defined by the Farlax Medical Online Dictionary (2008:1) as "the art or process of modification of physical parts ... and the relative degree of harmony between the individual's needs and the requirements of the environment". Takeurchi, Lepak, Marinova and Yun (2007:929) posit that general adjustment refers to how the

individual experiences familiarity, psychological comfort and the environmental features, for example, climate, food, weather, housing and living conditions. Searle and Ward (in Selmer, 2008:3) assert that a distinction needs to be made between psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment. Socio-cultural adjustment is described here, as the ability to blend in with the host culture and is based on cultural learning theory. Psychological adjustment is described as the person's subjective well being and level of acceptance regarding the new environment. Ward and Kennedy (in Selmer, 2008:4) indicate that psychological adjustment has been associated with the individual's cognitive perceptions, personal traits and emotional state. Upon reviewing the literature, the following main theoretical approaches were identified with the objective of understanding expatriate adjustment: 1) Social cognitive theory; 2) Coping theory, incorporating various concepts specifically related to expatriate coping and/or adjustment; 3) Developmental theory and 4) Gestalt concepts on creative adjustment.

Commencing with Social Cognitive theory, Black and Mendenhall (in Caliguiri, 2000:63) suggest that this theory based on the concepts of Bandura, may be important in explaining cross-cultural adjustment, since the role of learning new skills is deemed to be effective in coaching expatriates. After conducting a meta-analysis of expatriate adjustment research, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk (2004) further support that the concepts of social-cognitive theory, for example, self-efficacy and learning socialisation skills are important in the expatriate adjustment process. In keeping with these findings, the following section on the adjustment process will commence with a discussion on how the social-cognitive theory of Albert Bandura may provide an explanation of the cross-cultural expatriate adjustment process. Thereafter, the theories on coping behaviour, developmental theory and the adjustment process according to Gestalt theory will be provided.

3.2.1 Social -Cognitive Theory and Adjustment

In one of the earlier works on adjustment, Whitman (1980:138) asserts that learning is the essence of adjustment and that man adapts to his environment by changing his behaviour. It is further stated, that the classical learning models assist in understanding and describing human behaviour. Social-cognitive learning theory originates from the first theoretical concepts pertaining to learning, named classical conditioning introduced by Ivan Pavlov (Whitman, 1980:127). For this reason, a brief background of Pavlov's theory will be provided.

Pavlov formulated his theory by observing the reactions of dogs when presenting the sound of a bell and providing meat for the dogs at the same time. This process was repeated over a period of

time. It was subsequently noticed, that when the bell was presented, the dogs associated the sound with food and then began salivating, expecting the food to be provided. Continued simultaneous presentations of the *unconditioned stimulus* (example, the food) and *conditioned stimulus,* (example, the bell) results in a *conditioned response* (example, salivation) whenever the conditioned stimulus is experienced by the subject. A reinforcement or punishment given after a response can encourage or discourage the desired behaviour. Classical conditioning theory has been used to explain and understand the human learning process and the capacity to adjust to new situations (Whitman, 1980:127-138).

 A major criticism of classical conditioning theory is that the concepts were largely based on the outcomes of animal related research. Although useful as a learning model concerning the prediction of behaviour, this approach neglects the other aspects of human behaviour connected to adjustment and learning. These aspects include the thoughts, feelings and process of the mind not observable to others (Whitman, 1980:126). This is also supported by Möller (1995:119) where it is asserted that the work of Bandura was important, in that it focused attention on the cognitive process of the individual in learning new things, not just the physiological response or behaviour. Learning is therefore a combination of creating new nerve connections, motivation, thought, insight and formulating meaning during the input phase of the learning process (Möller, 1995:119). Learning can therefore be viewed as a component of adaptation or adjustment regarding a changing or new environment.

Bandura rejected the idea that the environment is responsible for all behaviour and that humans do not only respond to rewards and punishments provided by the environment (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:142). It is further argued, that human beings do more than just respond to the stimuli around them, they create new 'environments' due to their ability to imagine outcomes, future possibilities, modify behaviours and the skill to plan strategies. Bandura introduced the idea of *reciprocal determinism* asserting that the sources of behavioural patterns come from within the individual as well as from the environment, and therefore are parts of a system of mutual influences (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:143). Figure 3.1 (page 54) depicts an interpretation of this idea when applied to the expatriate's experiences in the new environment. Bandura believed that expectations can create behaviours, therefore, the expatriate who 'expects' to be unhappy in a different country may experience his or her new environment in a negative manner, so creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:143).

Central to Bandura's theory is the concept of *self-efficacy*, namely the belief in the individual's ability to perform appropriate behaviours (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:144). The expatriate's belief

that he or she will be able to interact and behave acceptably in a new social environment or culture may provide the confidence to adapt or fit in. *Observational learning* is also an important concept in Bandura's theory. This is described as the acquiring of a new behaviour by watching and observing the behaviour of other individuals, thereby learning behaviours that have the desired outcomes (Mayer & Sutton,1996:145). It is further stated, that cognitive and emotional functioning can be learned by observation, a form of conditioned *emotional* response. Mayer and Sutton (1996:145) emphasise that observational learning experiences enhance the social repertoire required to participate in a culture. The expatriate who applies observational learning or *modelling* in a new social or cultural context, may become optimally acquainted with the customs, language and behavioural patterns of the culture, facilitating his or her adjustment process and strengthening feelings of self-efficacy.
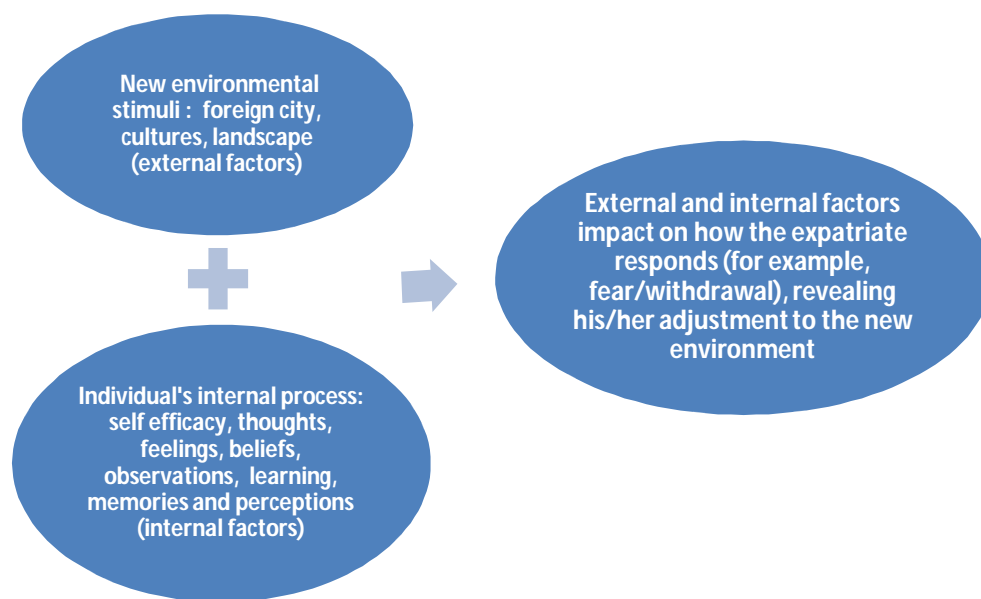
Figure. 3.1: An interpretation of Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism applied to expatriate adjustment.

In sum, Bandura's theory provides an important explanation as to how expatriates may adapt to a new culture, specifically using observational learning and other cognitive skills. It is the researcher's view that Bandura's conceptual formulations of the individual's inner processes and his ideas of human behaviour provide useful tools for the therapist coaching expatriates, in that they form a solid foundation in understanding the role of learning in the adjustment process.

The following section explores the role of coping skills and the adjustment process. A background on coping theory will first be provided, followed by an explanation as to what "coping" phases pertain specifically to the expatriate adjustment process.

3.2.2   Coping and Adjustment

In his classical work on adjustment theory, Whitman (1980:152) posits that *how* individuals cope with new stressful situations provide evidence as to whether the coping style or 'skill' is successful or not. Stahl and Caliguiri (2005:603) lament that few empirical studies have examined *coping processes* explaining why certain expatriates adjust better than others.   The classical work on stress theory by Lazarus and Folkman (in Stahl & Caliguiri, 2005:604) describes coping as a way to master or tolerate, reduce and manage environmental demands and conflicts. Coping in the case of expatriates, includes ways to manage or overcome environmental differences (for example, cultural differences) and internal demands experienced (Stahl & Caliguiri , 2005:604).

The classical theorists on stress and coping, Lazarus and Folkman (in Frydenberg, 1999:12) focused on how the individual continuously interacts with the environment. It is further stated, that stress resulting from exposure to the environment is as a result of the *type of* relationship that the individual has with the environment.   This is significant regarding the expatriate adjustment process, in that the individual has to formulate new coping resources and ways to deal with environmental stressors that may be different and unfamiliar to him or her.   When the individual is confronted with a stressor, *primary appraisal* occurs which defines the individual's perception of whether the situation is one of threat or challenge. This is followed by a *secondary appraisal* whereby the individual assesses whether there are sufficient inner and external resources to cope (Frydenberg, 1999:12). It is further explained, that where individuals perceive a stressor as non-threatening, they have already decided that they possess sufficient resources to cope.

Frydenberg (1999:23) contends that when learning to cope, it is the context and the culture within which the situation occurs, that is significant and each individual brings unique biological dispositions, personal history, inner and external resources. Coping is also connected strongly to learning, with coping skills programmes giving credence to this view in that they assist individuals to learn new ways to deal with stressors (Frydenberg, 1999:24). This view may be linked to Bandura's theory of social-cognitive learning, discussed in the previous section, whereby individuals may learn to acquire greater self-esteem or improved ways of functioning by observing how others deal with similar situations.

From the aforementioned discussion, it would seem that the type of relationship that the expatriate has with his or her new environment, and the perception of the resources available, ultimately determines how the expatriate copes or adjusts. The following section details the stages of adjustment and indicates how the expatriate's perceptions influence coping behaviour.

3.2.2.1 The Four Phases of Expatriate Adjustment

Underpinning the theoretical perspective that describes the adjustment process of expatriates are the four phases provided by Punnet (in Ali, 2003:32), Hofstede (2003:209) and Winkleman (2002:2-3). These phases are as follows:

Phase 1 – The expatriate experiences a form of euphoria or excitement related to the novelty of seeing new places. This is also referred to as the 'honeymoon phase' and the expatriate family experiences the new culture almost as a new tourist might do.

Phase 2 - During this 'crisis phase', the reality of change and the challenge of fitting into the new environment occurs. The difference of the climate in the new country, transport difficulties and minor irritations begin to escalate. The expatriate may experience frustrations, disappointment, impatience and tension. Life does not make sense and feelings of helplessness, isolation, hostility and anger arise as a sense of lack of control increases. Depression and psychosomatic illness is not uncommon at this stage. The new culture is viewed with suspicion and dislike and there may be increased attempts to insulate one's self from the foreign culture. Culture shock may be experienced at this phase.

Phase 3 - It is during this period, that acculturation sets in, whereby the individual is more familiar with the local conditions and values and he may become more self-confident in becoming involved with the new social network. Acculturation occurs when the individual has *chosen* to make an acceptable adaptation to the new cultural environment. Many adjustments need to be made, with some individuals opting to return home during the crisis phase or choosing to only socialise with fellow countrymen. Successful acculturation entails developing problem solving skills and a mind-shift in attitude towards the new lifestyle.

Phase 4 – The individual may accept the new environment or continue struggling to adapt. Feelings of alienation may occur or over-familiarisation may result, whereby the individual becomes immersed in the new customs and traditions. Substantial personal change may occur through cultural adaptation and the formation of a 'bicultural identity' whereby new cultural aspects are integrated into one's previous self-concept. Figure 3.2 (on page 57) depicts the four phases of adjustment and coping incorporating the abovementioned concepts of Lazarus and

Folkman (in Frydenberg, 1999:12), Hofstede (2003: 209), Punnet (in Ali, 2003:32), and Winkleman (2002: 2-3). The funnel represents the filtering of information from the environment and how the parts or phases merge to result in a final outcome, namely adjustment or culture shock which will be discussed in the following section. Phase 1 and phase 2 may overlap, in that the primary appraisal stage may be influenced by novelty and lack of a sense of reality. The true perception of the stressors may only become apparent in phase 2.
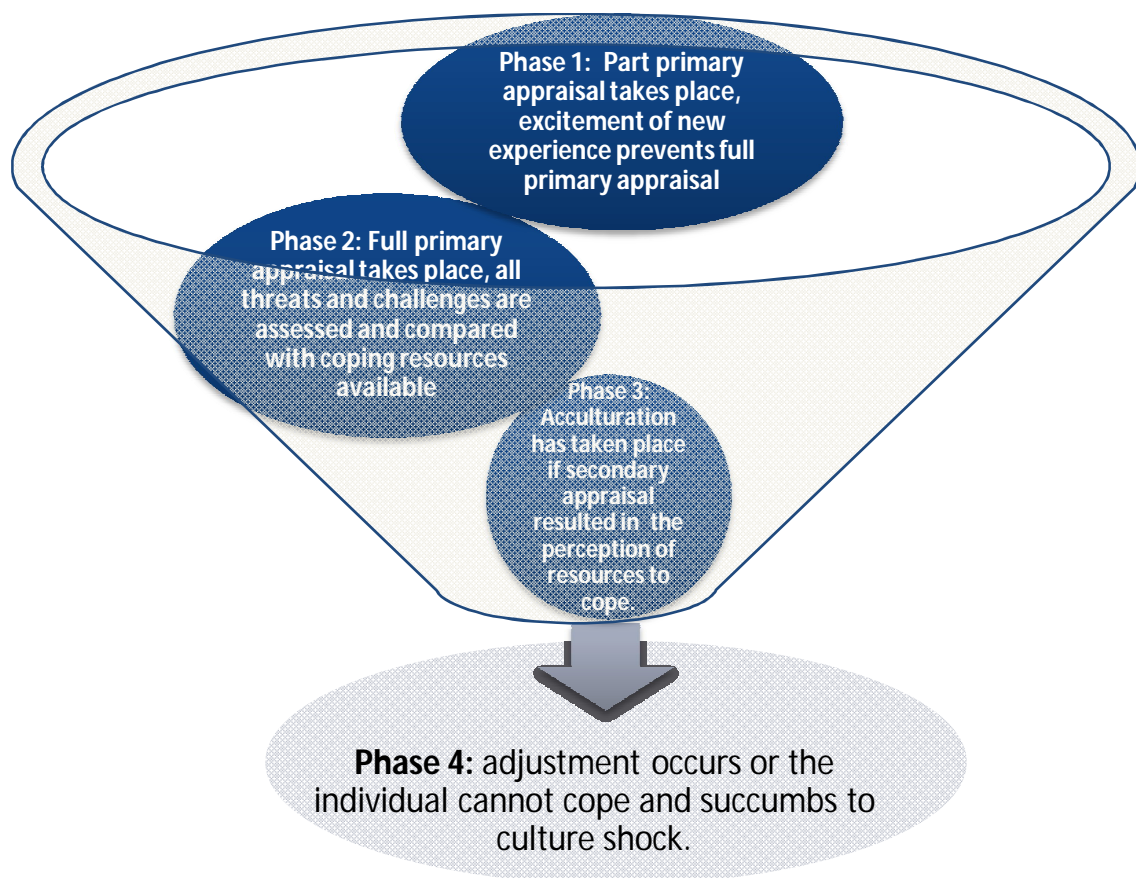
Figure 3.2: The four phases of expatriate adjustment and coping

Hofstede (2003: 210) argues that there cannot be a specific time period for these phases to take place, stating that some individuals have reported culture shock for a year or more before acculturation occurred.   It is further stated that many expatriate assignments have to be terminated prematurely due to this factor and in certain cases suicides of expatriates have been reported. When expatriates perceive the new environment as too threatening and they feel that coping resources are insufficient, the outcome could be culture shock. This is examined in detail in the following section. The discussion also includes the physical and psychological ramifications of environmental stress and incorporates the concepts of adjustment and coping introduced

previously. Previous research conducted on culture shock and adjustment has been integrated in the discussion to exemplify how the theoretical concepts of coping and adjustment may be applied.

3.2.2.2 Coping and Culture Shock

What occurs when the expatriate cannot successfully overcome the challenge of new environmental demands? Figure 3.2 (page 57) revealed that individuals who move through the third phase of adjustment and cannot cope with the adaptation to the new culture and environment, fail to adjust. This is supported by Oberg (in Halsberger & Brewster, 2005:3) where it is stated that when individuals fail to cope or adjust to environmental change, their heightened feelings of anxiety and stress are referred to as *culture shock*.

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:170) defines culture shock as "The emotional disruption often experienced by persons when they pay an extended visit to or live for some time in a society that is different from their own. The typical manifestations are a sense of bewilderment and a feeling of strangeness which may last for a considerable length of time depending on the individual". Winkelman (2002:2) describes culture shock as the contact with a new culture resulting in feelings of anxiety, confusion, loss and impotence due to the absence of familiar social rules and cues. Culture shock responses may cause physiological and psychological reactions whereby the psychological reactions consist of heightened emotions, fatigue, identity loss and role stress (Winkelman, 2002:2). The causes of culture shock are largely induced by the stress experienced due to the new, unfamiliar environment and information overload resulting in cognitive fatigue (Winkelman, 2002:4). Several studies (for example, Halsberger & Brewster, 2005; McGinley, 2008) on expatriate adjustment, assert that when an expatriate cannot fully meet with the demands of the new environment, stress and negative emotions are often the result. McGinley (2008:3) states that failed adaptation is the result of unsuccessful attempts to change the frame of reference and behaviour in the face of new cultural demands. This introduces the importance of coping styles, resources, or ways in which the individual is able to manage the stressful new demands made on him or her.

Culture shock requires adjustments based on awareness of cultural shock and its symptoms, skills for managing crises, acceptance of individual change and adjustment of behaviour related to cultural shock adaptation and resolution (Winkelman, 2002:5). Stahl and Caliguiri (2005:604) posit that scholars in the fields of organisational socialisation have identified various strategies that individuals use related to work transitions that include expatriate cross-cultural adjustment.

Stahl and Caliguiri, 2005:605) reveal that problem focused strategies, for example asking for help and becoming socially integrated were positively related to expatriate effectiveness. It was concluded that expatriates can be active in addressing their own adjustment process and this may be strengthened by the assistance they receive from their employers.

An example of a study whereby employees attempted to boost their resources in order to cope, was that of Berger, Fukunishi, Wogan and Kuboki (1999:66) who examined whether alexithymic characteristics thought to be related to poor coping with stress would be associated with life in a new culture. Alexithymia is a disorder related to a disruption in cognitive and thinking processes. The alexithymic characteristics that include difficulty in describing emotions and externally orientated thinking were examined. The subjects consisted of 56 outpatient expatriates living in Tokyo, Japan. The results revealed that alexithymic characteristics are strongly related to poor coping with stress or negative reactions to stress. Although these subjects were struggling to adjust, *they were seeking assistance* and support as outpatients.

In evaluating this study, the subjects were presented as 'struggling to adjust', yet it could be argued that by seeking medical assistance and by participating in the study, they were involved in a pro-active 'strategy' to address and understand their dissatisfaction of how they were coping with life in a new culture. This is supported in Stahl and Caliguiri (2005:605), whereby strategies that are problem focused, like asking for help, result in expatriate effectiveness and coping. In applying this to Bandura's social cognitive theory, it may be viewed as a process of observational learning or modelling thereby strengthening feelings of self-efficacy and ultimately coping styles. The question arises whether taking action to increase self-efficacy and coping resources could successfully prevent culture shock. Selmer (in Stahl & Caliguiri, 2005:605) report the findings of a study conducted on the coping strategies of western managers working in China. It was found that expatriates engaging in problem-focused coping strategies, for example, patience and tolerance, were better adjusted, whereas emotion focused strategies were related to lower cross-cultural adjustment. It would therefore appear that a cognitive-learning approach to address coping difficulties could result in a more optimal adjustment process.

In sum, this section examined the theories pertaining to social cognitive learning and coping. The effects of positive coping and adjustment were explored and the four phases of adjustment were presented. Culture shock was discussed to reveal the ramifications for expatriates who are unable to adjust to their new environment. As a method of integrating the section on coping and adjustment, specific expatriate studies were examined and evaluated. Some studies revealed that individuals who are pro-active in their attempts to adjust, fare better than those individuals

who do not seek help or seek solutions for their adjustment problems.   In the researcher's view, it could be argued that individuals with an internal locus of control, namely the sense that they are 'masters of their fate' may adjust more successfully than those individuals that do not actively seek different solutions for their adjustment difficulties.   The question arises, does age and the phase of development in the individual's life, affect the way that he or she adjusts to new situations?   Section 3.2 emphasised the impact of developmental stages on how individuals adjust. The following section discusses this aspect as part of the adjustment process.

3.2.3   Developmental Theory and Adjustment

In his earlier work on adjustment, Whitman (1980:9) states that development in an ongoing process reflecting the adjustment of the individual in a constantly changing environment. It is further stated, that the adjusting individual may be understood specifically when viewed developmentally. It is therefore pertinent to examine how the developmental stages of the individual may impact on expatriate adjustment.   The present study focuses on *all family members,* and for this reason it is necessary to consider the developmental stages of children and adults. The discussion commences with the focus on development and children, thereafter two pertinent stages of adult development will be provided.

3.2.3.1 Adjustment of Expatriate Children

Children also have concerns regarding new schooling, identity, new friendships and independence in their new environment (Beaverstock, 2001:4). Moving to a new country may be a frightening and unsettling experience for children. It entails leaving behind familiar places, pets, friends and family members. The new environment means adapting to new schools, different teachers and cultures, new systems and establishing new friendships. Clearly, it is an uncertain period in their lives and the changes may impact on their schooling and development. The following section examines the most pertinent factors that impact on the child's adjustment in a new environment. The literature consulted for this section, supports that the age and developmental stage of the child is significant, attachment theory, learning and school environment, parental support and family cohesion all play a role in the child's adjustment process.

The personality and developmental stages of the children will vary. Marion (2003:1) asserts that children may experience anxiety, sadness and anger due to a relocation. It is further added, that depending on the developmental stage and personality of the child, he or she may hesitate to discuss his or her difficulties with parents or teachers. For this reason, the following section examines the impact of relocation on child development.

Gaylord (in Ali, 2003:41) found that children aged 3-5 years and 14-16 years experience relocation to be most stressful. It is further stated, that the 3-5 year olds often experience emotional difficulties and the 14-16 year olds suffer from socialisation difficulties. These difficulties will be further examined in Erikson's developmental stages provided below.   Chambers (1999:131) emphasises that children's coping and adjustment, like adult's coping, includes the perception of an event as negative or positive, generating a reaction to deal with the event. Furthermore, the types of events perceived as stressful should change with age including the choice of coping strategies available and the person's emotional self-regulation process.

It is important therefore, to assess how the developmental stages of children affect their adjustment in a new environment. Erikson's Developmental theory has been integrated here to understand the impact of age and adjustment on children.   The reason why Erikson's Developmental theory has been used here, it that it includes the core idea of "disequilibrium" which relates well to the concept of disequilibrium in Gestalt theory as provided in the classical work of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951). In other words, at every stage of development, the individual faces a new 'need', 'Gestalt' or task and when this has been achieved, equilibrium is obtained. The concept of disequilibrium may be described as 'tension' or 'conflict' and describes the destabilisation experienced as individuals move from one level of interpretation of their world to a more complex level of understanding and a new stage of development (Mortola, 2001:45-56).

Erikson's Developmental Theory taken from Erikson and Erikson (1998:54-82) has eight developmental or 'crises' phases. Each of the eight stages requires the individual to accomplish a task before moving on to the next stage. The stages one to five are pertinent to relocation and the impact on child development. The stages six to eight relate to adult development and will follow after this section.

Stage One: (Age 0-1) Age of Trust Versus Mistrust

This stage entails the first year of life, whereby the child must acquire a feeling of basic trust and the child's relationship with the mother is of prime importance in the development of trust.

Erikson and Erikson (1998:40) discusses the newborn's need to see the responsive face of the mother and therefore requires the familiar sound of the mother's voice, face, eyes and touch. Erikson and Erikson(1998:40) argues that the consistent contact with the familiar mother or caregiver at this stage of life has a lifelong impact on the individual. A disruption of this process,

namely the change of routine with the mother or caregiver may have an adverse impact on the child, especially with regards to relationship formation and attachment.

In reviewing this stage of development, it is essential that the child develops a feeling of trust and a sense of certainty which are obtained by the familiarity of the environment and the attentive presence of the mother. Hook (2002:270) emphasises that this first stage of life is vital in that the child should enjoy a caring maternal relationship in order to create a sense of trust and hope, the essential ingredient for his or her future ego strength. Circumstances due to a relocation or change of home environment may alter the interaction patterns that the mother has with the infant. This may occur when the mother has to leave the infant with another caregiver or may be preoccupied with relocation demands and cannot provide the same amount of time to the infant that was previously possible.

Stage Two : (Age 1-2) Age of Shame Versus Doubt

Mortola (2001:9) as well as Erikson and Erikson (1998:54-82) assert that this stage covers roughly the second year of life and the child's task is to overcome feelings of doubt and shame. It is the stage when the child learns to enjoy greater muscular dexterity, like learning to walk which affords the child greater autonomy. Control over excretory functions is also important in this stage. It is an essential stage of mastering movement, reaching, walking and exploring the immediate environment (Hook, 2002:271).

The toddler's world is his home, and it is the primary focus of his life, with certain people, routines and objects. Finding objects in the same place, familiar routines and a sense of order helps the toddler to achieve a sense of mastery and confidence in the environment (Hess & Linderman (2007:118). When the sense of orderliness is absent, the toddler may feel frightened and insecure and be anxious to re-establish the 'loss' of familiar and comforting objects. The impact of a move could now be experienced as a loss of the familiar and may result in anxiety in the child (Hess & Linderman, 2007:118).

In reviewing this stage of development, the infant's feelings about his or her ability to be autonomous may be influenced by the time that the caregiver has to attend to his or her daily activities, for example, dressing, eating and movement. Hook (2002:271) asserts that movement and muscular maturity is essential at this stage, with the parent's role being one of encouragement and support. Where the caregiver/s neglect or punish the child and label him or her 'messy', 'sloppy' or 'bad', a sense of shame and self-doubt is experienced by the child (Hook,

2002:271). The expatriate parent would need to ensure that a change of environment does not negatively impact on the child's freedom of mobility and developing sense of autonomy.

Stage Three: (Age 3-6) Age of Initiative Versus Guilt

This age is characterised by learning tasks, showing initiative whilst overcoming feelings of guilt. A greater contact with people is prevalent. The child now learns to assume greater responsibility for his or her own physical care. Having now mastered the skills of walking and climbing, the child begins to explore his or her environment with great energy and curiosity (Hook, 2002:273). It is further asserted that at this stage, children have improved language skills and this facilitates asking questions to address an increasing curiosity. Imaginative abilities are developed and a strong interest for experience and exploration occurs. If parental support for these areas of growth is experienced as punitive by the child, feelings of guilt and anxiety occur (Hook, 2002:273). It is also an important stage for moral development in children and over-controlling parents may instil problems that manifest later in adulthood, for example; inhibitions or denial (Hook, 2002:273).

In reviewing this stage of development, McLeod (2006:21) contends that there is insufficient research to verify that younger children do not adjust as quickly as older children or adolescents. Marion (2003:1) states that relocating is more stressful for very young children, because the loss of friendships, teachers and relatives result in a loss of the child's wider support network. It is especially stressful for children in early childhood because they are still learning to separate from their own parents, whilst adapting to nursery school or preschool classes. Hess and Linderman (2007:118) contend that the main impact on the child of this age, is the loss of routine and that the provision of familiar objects, people and so forth may help to ease the child into a happier adjustment process.

According to Bowlby (1977:201-210), internalised early childhood experiences create a prototype for later relationships outside the family circle. In his works on attachment theory, Bowlby (1977, 1982) posited that there are three attachment styles of a baby, namely secure, avoidant and ambivalent. The first two styles, namely 'secure and avoidant' allow for the child to develop care and trust for others. The ambivalent attachment style is a combination of secure and avoidant attachment styles. From this theoretical perspective, it would be reasonable to believe that the child with a secure attachment style with his or her mother, may adjust more positively to forming new 'attachments' or relationships with others not only as a young child, but also throughout his or her lifetime. Ali (2003:133) states that expatriate children who have a

dismissive–avoidant attachment style would be less inclined to adapt to the host country, whilst children with a secure attachment style are more likely to experience successful adjustment.

Stage Four: (Age 6-12) Age of Industry Versus Inferiority

This age is characterised by the task of mastering specific skills, especially scholastic skills needed for adult life. Successful achievement of this task is essential thus preventing feelings of inferiority. This is a stage whereby the child enhances his psychosocial skills and social roles. Furthermore, the peer group becomes an added source of identification, influencing the personality formation and development of the child (Hook, 2002:277). In relocating to a foreign environment, the child would have to identify with a new peer group that may be comprised of many different cultural backgrounds. In the researcher's opinion, this may create difficulties for the child who has not yet adapted and mastered the skills to fit into his original scholastic and social environment.

In reviewing this stage of development, there is support in the literature regarding the impact that relocation may have on a child of this age group. Studies on relocation have found that children who move home before the third grade had a greater chance of encountering academic difficulties by the sixth grade (Mcleod, 2006:21). The implication here, is that relocating during these formative years may result in a loss of important learning skills. Erikson and Erikson (1998:75) emphasises that at this age, the child needs to feel competent and this may result in excessive competition or regression. The expatriate child struggling to adapt to the new school for example, may not feel competent or confident in the struggle to understand and fit in with the new environment. Without the parental or support system to rectify this situation, the child may not achieve the task completion required for this stage of development, namely to acquire the 'competence' or growth level needed to move to the next stage of development.

Hess and Linderman (2007:121) contend that the loss of friends and the change of school may create emotional as well as academic difficulties, however choosing the right school, introducing new activities and friends may aid adjustment. Similarly, communication is essential with the child during this phase, since it may address adjustment difficulties before they start impacting on the child's well-being. McCaig (1994:3) provides that the strength of a family bond is successful when communication is good but devastating if it is not, and the expatriate child is reliant on the family for affirmation, behaviour modelling, and a place of safety and support. It is further stated that unresolved family tension is extremely debilitating and parental abuse, alcohol abuse or depression may be unnoticed by outsiders.

Stage Five: (Age 12-19) Identity Versus Role Confusion

The adolescent at this stage has the task of acquiring a feeling of identity regarding his abilities, values and ideals. The main areas of crisis in this stage, are the psychic and physical changes that play a role in intensifying the drives, for example, the sexual drive and search for identity. The core issue of this stage of development, is combining the many different 'identities' required for the adolescent's journey into adulthood. This means that he or she needs to learn a number of roles, namely, student, friend, boy or girlfriend, sibling and occupational identity (Hook, 2002:280).

Brown and Orthner (in McLeod, 2006:21) posit that adolescence and gender made a difference to adjustment, with 12-14 year old girls presenting a significantly lower score on the life satisfaction variables, namely self-esteem, alienation, life satisfaction and depression. The boys of the same age group did not display any negative associations on the same measures. Studies support that older expatriate adolescents, particularly girls, had fewer friends and tended to be more isolated (McLeod, 2006:22). Middleton *et al.* (in McLeod, 2006:19) found that due to relocation, the social fragmentation was most strongly associated with suicide risk in ages as young as 15. Brown and Orthner (in McLeod, 2006:21) found that gender made a difference to adjustment after a move, with girls showing an increased depression with a past experience of relocation experiences.

In reviewing this stage of development, the teenager or adolescent may experience a relocation to another country as a painful and disruptive time, whereby the loss of friendships, perceived future career options and the loss of romantic attachments are perceived as punitive and unfair (Hess & Linderman, 2007:122). It is further posited, that parents may allow their older teen to choose whether he or she would prefer to remain with family members in the home country for the duration of their schooling years. Hess and Linderman (2007:124) contend that allowing the adolescent to make choices regarding the relocation process, fosters self-esteem and autonomy whereby the teen has more control over his or her adjustment process.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001:155) assert that teenagers of expatriate families may struggle with their identity formation in the new culture causing them to 'act out' or rebel in their search for independence or autonomy. It is further stated, that rebellion may be a cry for help and that these teens may be feeling lonely, or are in need of more open communication with their parents. Unresolved grief at the loss of a previous lifestyle may manifest into anger directed at

the parents or other forms of authority, even if the child has opted to remain in the home country to complete his or her schooling (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001:157).

Since this stage of development pertains strongly to a sense of identity, expatriate children that may have been living in a foreign country for a few years begin to question "who am I?". Pollock and Van Reken (2001:146) indicate that these adolescents may struggle to identify with the new culture and may not feel that strongly connected to their home culture. Furthermore, interacting with many cultures encourages children into thinking about their *own* cultural identity. The loss of previous social networks, also forces these children to develop a sense of self.

The present study includes the parents of the children experiencing the various developmental stages mentioned. For this reason, the stages of development ranging from early to middle adulthood will now be discussed in the following section.

3.2.3.2 Adjustment of Expatriate Adults

The average age of expatriates is between 25 and 45 years of age and a large percentage of these expatriates bring their children with them (Van Swol-Ulbrich, 2004:1). The developmental stage of these expatriate adults may influence how they cope with their new environment including the impact their adjustment process may have on their children and respective spouses. The family therapist therefore needs to understand how the developmental stages of the parents and the children can impact on their functioning and adjustment.

The previous section on the adjustment and development of children and adolescents ended with Erikson's developmental stage five, namely, Identity versus Role Confusion which placed the individual at the age of nineteen. The following section commences with stage six, namely the Intimacy versus Isolation stage of Erikson's developmental theory. Stages 6 and 7 have been selected for the discussion in that they address the area of focus in the present study, specifically with regards to the age of the parents in the expatriate families concerned, namely 25 -50 years of age.

Stage Six: (Age 19-25) Intimacy Versus Isolation

According to Bee (1996:56) this is the stage whereby the young adult has the task of creating one or more intimate relationships or experience feelings of isolation. The young adult has to develop his or her specific goals and values, being a shift from the here and now orientation of the childhood years to a more future oriented focus (Bee, 1996:57). It is further stated that the young adult needs to develop other sound identities, namely, an occupational identity, a gender

role identity and religious and political identities. Not resolving these identities may result in a sense of confusion. Hook (2002:285) posits that this is the one stage that is most crucial, since it relies heavily on the fulfilment of previous stages and resolution of previous crises. The question arises, how does the young expatriate, who has not developed a strong self-identity experience a foreign environment that supports strong religious and political values? The researcher supports that family therapy and positive affirmations from family members may assist in strengthening the individual's sense of identity here. This assumption is based on the idea that acceptance by family and friends may serve to build a greater sense of 'belonging' and confidence in the individual, thereby preventing feelings of isolation or rejection that may occur at this stage of development.

Erikson (in Hook, 2002:286) reveals that at this stage, prejudices learned earlier may be consolidated, with the danger of the individual making strong and cruel distinctions between the foreign and the familiar, often against the very group of individuals with whom intimacy is being focused upon or sought after. The implications for the young expatriate adult would be that if he or she has not as yet formed a sound sense of identity and is placed in a foreign environment, he or she may struggle to form close relationships and feel isolated. This may well impact on the adjustment process. However, one could argue that the young married expatriate couple in their early twenties who have 'bonded' and have children could have found the intimacy necessary for this crucial stage of development. This brings the discussion to the following stage of development.

Stage 7: (Age25- 65) Generativity Versus Self-absorption and Stagnation

During this stage, adults should have largely resolved their earlier life stage conflicts and are able to focus on assisting others, specifically their own children (Hook, 2002:287). 'Generativity' refers to the task of guiding the next generation and relates to the values of creativity and productivity (Hook, 2002:287). Furthermore, the failure to provide such guidance and thus self-enrichment, may lead to stagnation and self-impoverishment (Erikson in Hook, 2001:287). The question arises, what factors could cause the adult or parent expatriate to struggle with adjustment. From the previous stages, the unfulfilled stage of Intimacy Vs Isolation could lead to difficulties for the individual to identify with and form relationships in the new environment. Bee (1996:58) explains that stage 7 of development is important in expressing care for others in society, with the opposite being 'rejectivity'. Erikson (in Bee, 1996:58) posits that rejectivity is the unwillingness to include certain groups in one's generative concern. The rejectivity includes an 'us and them' outlook, designating certain groups as outside the range of caring (Bee, 1996:58). The

implications that this has on the adult expatriate, would be that the individual would find it difficult to accept the other culture as 'worthy' of caring for or to be included in his or her community. This could result in a sense of isolation and lack of cross-cultural adaptation.

An important task at this stage of the expatriate parent's development is to care for and guide his or her children through the adjustment process. The parent who has not yet resolved previous developmental issues, may struggle to provide enough guidance and understanding for the children who require a great deal of support throughout the relocation and adjustment process.

In sum, the aforementioned sections have shown that the unsuccessful fulfilment of a stage of development may impact on the adjustment of all members in the family. In the researcher's view, the family therapist needs to be cognisant of how each of the parents are coping with their stage of development, not only the children. A spouse that faces mid-life concerns and is living in a foreign country, may feel isolated and lonely, without the resources to cope. As a parent, this individual may also struggle to provide his or her family members with the necessary support to cope with the demands of expatriate living. It is therefore important that the family be viewed as a system whereby all members impact on each others' adjustment process and development.

In assisting the expatriate family, it may assist the Gestalt therapist to understand the expatriate's adjustment process from a Gestalt theoretical perspective. The following section examines the expatriate's experiences through the lens of Gestalt theory.

3.2.4   Gestalt Theory and Adjustment

Chapter Two described the main Gestalt principles and their related concepts. The five stages regarding organismic self-regulation or the process of gestalt formation was described. Integrating these concepts, an interpretation of how the expatriate adjusts to his or her environment from a Gestalt theoretical perspective, is now presented.

The Expatriate and Adjustment

The manner in which the expatriate deals with new situations or experiences, may be understood by examining how he or she responds to the external stimuli from the foreign environment. Adapting the five stages of organismic regulation from Blom (2006:26-27), the researcher provides an interpretation of how the expatriate's process of adjustment may be understood from a Gestalt theoretical perspective.

- Stage 1 – Awareness

The expatriate experiences the new environment referred to as the 'figure'. There may be a heightened awareness of new colours, smells, landscape, climate, different cultures, buildings and vegetation. These environmental features form part of the expatriate's external field. Joyce and Sills (2001:27) posit that awareness is the non-verbal form of sensing what is occurring in the 'here and now', and includes self-knowledge, creativity and choice. The process in the following stages, may be exemplified by the expatriate who experiences the new environment with feelings of curiosity and excitement, or the expatriate who experiences the same environment with anxiety and fear. Awareness entails self-knowledge regarding feelings, and actively choosing ways in which to manage them. Furthermore, awareness of these feelings may create the choice to explore or to retreat from the new stimuli in the environment.

- Stage 2 – Mobilisation/choice of relevant action

Once the expatriate has gained awareness of how the external field is impacting on him or her, choosing ways to deal with the feelings or responses become important. Where the environment is perceived in a positive way, the expatriate may explore the surroundings and find ways to address his or her curiosity, which may be viewed as the 'choice of action'. The expatriate who experiences the new environment as hostile or overwhelming, may retreat from the external environment, avoiding contact with the aspects that create feelings of discomfort. Thereby, the expatriate endeavours to 'escape' from the unfamiliar, to alleviate feelings of anxiety. Withdrawal would therefore also be the 'choice of action'.

- Stage 3 – Final Contact/Action

At this stage, the expatriate either accepts the new environment, thereby experiencing gestalt completion, or remains at Stage 2, the 'crisis stage', described in Section 3.2.2.1. If this occurs, a choice of action has not been accomplished. Where the expatriate perceives the environment from a positive perspective, and has feelings of curiosity, these may be replaced with feelings of satisfaction. The feelings of satisfaction may be achieved by the 'curious' expatriate actively seeking out new information from the environment. This expatriate takes responsibility for his or her needs, and actively pursues ways in which to address them. From a Gestalt theoretical perspective, an organismically self-regulating individual takes responsibility for what is done for the self. This reflects the existentialist approach within Gestalt therapy theory, which views the individual as having the freedom of choice to change aspects of his or her life.

The expatriate who experiences the foreign environment as frightening, may choose to replace these feelings with more positive perceptions of the environment, and thereby experience feelings of relief. However, where these negative perceptions are not replaced with new or positive ones, the expatriate may remain 'stuck' and cannot achieve gestalt completion. This is referred to as *impasse,* whereby the individual believes external support is not forthcoming, and also cannot find or identify the internal resources needed to achieve self-support (Yontef &Simkin, 1989:14). This may indicate adjustment difficulties for the expatriate, who struggles to access the necessary coping resources in order to adapt to the challenges of the new environment.

- Stage 4 – Post contact

  Where the perceived needs of the expatriate are met and upon achieving contact, the expatriate experiences homeostasis, whereby the figure or need returns to the 'background' and the gestalt is eliminated. The expatriate has now accessed the resources required to address his or her perceived needs in order to adapt to the environment. The expatriate who has not experienced this process, still needs to find the internal and/or external resources to achieve homeostasis and thereby adjust to the new environment.

- Stage 5 – Withdrawal

  The expatriate withdraws into a state of equilibrium or rest, and a new gestalt is soon created. The expatriate who has not achieved equilibrium continues with his or her adjustment difficulties, remaining in the i*mpasse* mode.

Figure 3.3 (page 71) depicts the main environmental features that impact on the expatriate's existence upon arrival in a foreign country. At the core of the diagram, is the individual's awareness and his or her responses that reflect the manner in which he/she adjusts to the various environmental elements of the external field. The external field may consist of the geographical, occupational, social and community components in the foreign country.

In sum, the section on the adjustment process closely examined the most pertinent theories regarding expatriate adjustment. The social-cognitive learning theory of Bandura, coping theory, developmental theory and the process of expatriate adjustment from a Gestalt perspective were presented. In discussing the theoretical perspectives, the role of each theoretical approach was measured against the expatriate adjustment process, and was found to be an essential way in understanding how individuals adjust to their environments. In the researcher's view, each of the four theoretical approaches on adjustment, provides a sound background for the family therapist

seeking to assist families with adjustment difficulties. It is therefore essential that *all family members* be understood and validated to ensure that the family system receives optimal support throughout the therapy process. The family system will be further explored in the following chapter. Apart from the theoretical approaches mentioned in this section, the literature identifies *other* determinants that pertain to expatriate adjustment. In the light of the present study, these factors deserve to be discussed.
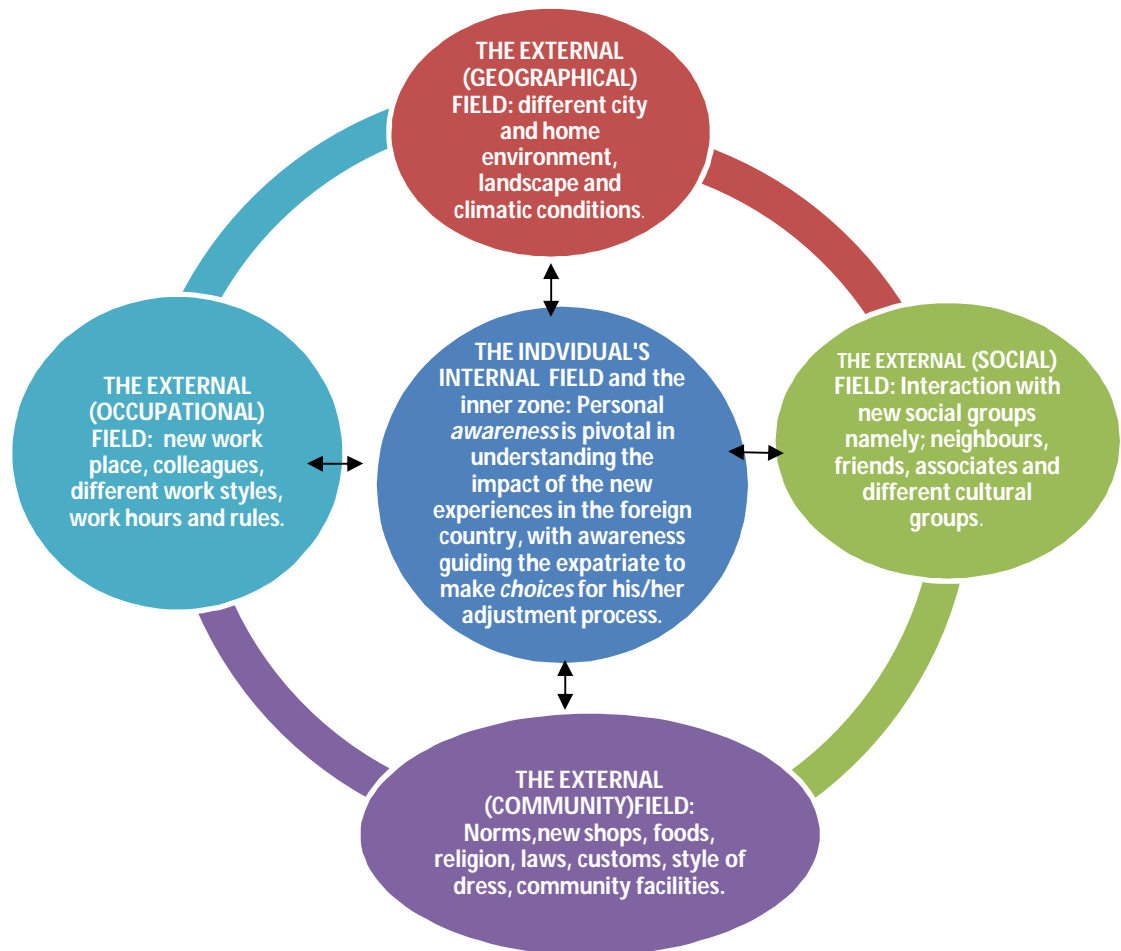
Figure 3.3: Aspects from the expatriate's internal and external field

The following section closely examines the studies conducted on expatriate families and spouses and ultimately assists in providing what determinants are important in the adjustment of expatriate families.

3.3   Determinants for Adjustment in Expatriate Families

In focusing on the adjustment of expatriate families, the question arises, as to the many factors that determine optimal coping or lack of coping. This motivated the researcher to examine the

literature for data pertaining to studies conducted on expatriate families and spouses. The following section examines the available literature to ascertain the determinants for adjustment in expatriate families.

3.3.1   Adjustment of Expatriate Families

According to Ali (2003:1) there is a dearth of research on cross-cultural adjustment of children and spouses, with this subject only recently introduced into global expatriate research. Caliguiri, Hyland, Bross and Joshi (1998:599) posit that very little research exists on the role of the family as a predictor of the outcome of expatriate assignments. It is further stated, that more research is required to understand how and when a family impacts on the expatriate manager's ability to complete his projects successfully in the host country.   Bester (2007:1) lamented the paucity of research and the lack of knowledge scholars have of the adjustment of the spouses of expatriate managers.   As evidenced, many previous studies of expatriate adjustment did not involve the spouses and children, however a few studies (example, Ali, 2003; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001) did include spousal satisfaction in their studies. Regarding international assignments, several authors cite the inability of the family and spouse to adjust as a significant cause for repatriation or assignment failure (Black, & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998:95).

 A more recent study completed by Ali (2003), examined the determinants of adjustment in spouses and children of expatriate families. The main determinants used in the study were; family, personality, the breadwinner expatriate's work habits, work-home interference, home-work interference and attachment styles. The subjects in the study consisted of 248 expatriate spouses and 104 children.   Regarding the spouses' adjustment, the main variables included personality aspects, family characteristics, the expatriate's work habits, psychological well-being, intercultural interaction with locals and socio-cultural adjustment. The study revealed that the personal characteristics of open-mindedness and emotional stability were strongly related with expatriate spouses' adjustment. Family adaptability and family cohesion were found to impact on adjustment.   Support from the expatriates' work environment and expatriate work satisfaction also related significantly to spousal cross-cultural adjustment. Regarding the adjustment of the children, family adaptation, communication in the family and family cohesion appeared to be the main predictors of expatriate children's successful adjustment. The attachment styles of the children were the strongest predictor of children's cross-cultural adaptation or adjustment.

Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) studied the impact of family influences on expatriates' psychological withdrawal from international assignments and concluded that although job satisfaction was a significant predictor of adjustment, spousal adjustment and satisfaction and living conditions significantly affected the decision to continue with the assignment.

In analysing the overall adjustment of the family, Caliguiri *et al.* (1998:601) identified three essential factors regarding the family adjustment process, namely; family adaptability, family communication and family perceptions of the stressors. Family communication included the ability of the family to exchange opinions, respect different ideas, decision making rules and conflict resolution. Perceptions of the stressor included the perception of the relocation process and whether or not there was a willingness to relocate.

With the mention of psychological factors as variables in the studies discussed above, the question arises as to what specific personality traits or characteristics enable some family members to adjust better than others? The literature on expatriate adjustment suggests that personality may play a significant role in how expatriate family members adjust. Kumar, Raduan Che and Subramaniam (2008:320) studied the effects of personality and cultural intelligence relating to expatriate adjustment. For this study, the literature was surveyed and analysed to ascertain whether there was a relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment. The results revealed that personality has a significant impact on expatriate cross-cultural adjustment. It was established that the five significant personality traits needed for cross-cultural adjustment included extraversion, agreeableness (willingness to co-operate), conscientiousness, the ability to handle stress and emotional stability.

According to evolutionary personality psychology, personality traits are adaptive resources, that have evolved in humans as ways to survive and the five characteristics mentioned above reflect this (Kumar *et al.*, 2008:322). Caliguiri (2000:61) contends that the personality characteristics for example, extraversion and emotional stability result in the willingness to continue with the expatriate experience and thus adjust more successfully. Hess and Linderman (2007:6-7) assert that for the ability to tolerate frustration, failure and ambiguity, curiosity, a strong sense of self and a sense of humour are essential personality characteristics of cross-cultural adjustment. Evident in the aforementioned studies on personality and expatriate adjustment, is the importance for expatriates to have the ability and desire to communicate and to socialise with people. It follows, that the extraverted individual would be more inclined to seek help from others, obtain social support and be willing to integrate into the new culture. This is supported in Caliguiri (2000:68), whereby the variable of s*ociability* or ability to communicate and make friends

by expatriates was found to be positively related to integration with the host culture, access to support networks and the reduction of stress. These factors were also found to be closely related to successful cross-cultural adjustment.

In a study conducted by Ali (2003:163), it was shown that emotional stability is the most important characteristic for adjustment in expatriate spouses and in children, since this personality trait is linked to the ability to confront cultural differences in a foreign country. In the same study, open-mindedness was also found to be an essential determinant for expatriate adjustment in spouses. Ali (2003:164) further reveals, that the personality factor of 'social initiative' was a significant determinant for adjustment in children, since their social lives and school interactions depended on this task despite cultural differences.

McLeod (2006:38) studied resilience in relocating children and argues that resilience as a personality factor has been omitted from most studies regarding relocation. McLeod (2006:38) contends that by studying resilience and the process of adjustment, the potential for interventions may be developed, thereby allowing for the strengthening of the 'coping assets' in the individual's life. In McLeod (2006:41) resilience is described as promoting a stage of development, which would not have been attained without the challenging life event. The challenging or adverse life event fosters resilience or strengthening factors. Resilient families have several characteristics in common and parents that build protective family factors aid children in developing competencies that enable them to address life challenges (McLeod, 2003:45).

In sum, attributes contributing towards the resilient expatriate family include affection, sound communication, acceptance and support. However, to provide the support for the children in the family, both spouses need to feel emotionally and psychologically empowered enough to do so. As discussed previously, each individual copes differently with expatriate challenges and it is therefore necessary to examine *how* different family members adjust. The following section examines what factors impact on the parents or spouses and children's adjustment process.

3.3.2   Adjustment of Expatriate Spouses and Children

Although the research has focused largely on male expatriate workers and their spouses, it is not unheard of to have the roles reversed, whereby the wife is offered a work project overseas. Beaverstock (2001:5) contends that empirical research shows that women working expatriates make up less than fifteen percent of all known expatriation. However, it is argued that women expatriate managers are confronted with significant barriers of entry into worldwide expatriate

assignments and for this reason, the expatriate assignment job market tends to be dominated by men. It is therefore necessary to make a differentiation between the working spouse, in most cases the husband and the non-working spouse, the wife. Regardless of who works in the family, spousal support is vital for the adjustment and satisfaction of the expatriate family, it provides valuable affirmation and comfort during the stressful periods of adjustment (Edstrom & Jervfors, 2007:14). It is further stated, that job satisfaction for the working spouse is also important for overall adjustment and satisfaction for the family.

For both spouses expatriate training or coaching interventions are linked to effective adjustment, including organisational support (Beaverstock, 2001:4). Tung (in Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2001:3) assert that spouses have a more difficult experience than their working partners, since they are not considered during the selection phase and do not obtain counselling for career interruptions. Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr and Christiansen (2001:3) studied the importance of job, family and environmental factors in expatriate adjustment and found that spousal adjustment with work related factors like role conflict were strongly correlated with expatriate work adjustment.

Ali (2003:24-25) reports that several studies indicate that spousal adjustment difficulties are viewed as the main cause for the failure of expatriate assignments. Reasons for the spousal and family dissatisfaction included marital difficulties, the children's education, the spouse's social contacts, spouse's attitude and the job satisfaction of the working spouse. A meta-analysis of studies on expatriate adjustment by Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk (2004) yielded the conclusion that spouse-family adjustment, rational skills and role clarity are vitally important for the retaining of expatriate assignees. Mohr and Klein (2003:5) refer to role clarity as role adjustment of the expatriate spouse and highlight this as a relevant determinant for positive adjustment. Upon moving to a new country, the non-working spouse would thus have to redefine her or his new 'role' especially if he or she previously enjoyed an active working life. From the researcher's experience, in the United Arab Emirates, for example, the wife of an expatriate employee requires his permission to work. Added to this, there may not be suitable employment opportunities available for the spouse. The 'new role' of housewife and 'stay at home mother' may require a role adjustment as referred to in Mohr and Klein (2003:5).

In a study by Black and Stephens (1989:1), it was indicated that the adjustment of the spouse is positively related to the expatriate employee's intention to continue with the overseas assignment. Takeuchi *et al.* (2007:929) support that family-related issues are on major source of stress for expatriates and their spouses. Caliguiri *et al.* (in Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007:929) reveal that a

child's maladjustment to a new school, living conditions that are not satisfactory, the unavailability of favourite or necessary foods, may affect the whole family, thereby increasing the stress levels of all family members. It is further stated that where a child or children experience adjustment difficulties the added stress placed on the expatriate and his spouse limit the amount of cognitive and emotional resources required to sustain the whole family through the adjustment process. Ali (2003:39) found that with respect to environmental factors, a certainty of the assignment duration and living conditions, were important determinants for spousal adjustment. It was also found that family relationships and support were significant in influencing the adjustment of the spouse. Ali (2003:41) also found that the spouses valued organisational support for the whole family, like cross-cultural training, interest in family welfare and pre-departure guidance as a favourable contribution to adjustment. An important factor in the adjustment of the spouse and therefore a positive support base for the family, is the attitude and willingness of the spouse to accompany her partner on the expatriate assignment (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998: 94). Black and Gregersen (in Selmer, 2008:10) found that the standard of living in the new environment impacted strongly on the general adjustment of the spouse.

The Prudential Relocation International Services (2008) provides advice to corporate clients regarding global relocation. The organisation supported a research project that explored the experiences of women who had accompanied their husbands overseas. Named the "Many Women Many Voices Survey", it obtained the responses of 194 expatriate spouses from different countries. Surveys were collected from the period 1995-2001. The objective was to understand the factors that influence spouses' experiences as expatriate wives. Interestingly, the women in the sample group who felt that they were not "able to be who they wanted to be" were associated with poor adjustment. It was found that most closely related to adjustment were the women's sense of identity, bicultural connection, employment potential and the ability of doing daily tasks. The difficulties of intercultural living and aspects closely related to adjustment were; following the new customs, ability to make friends, clothes shopping, doing errands, general living conditions, schooling for the children and recreation (Prudential Relocation International Services Survey, 2008:3-10).

Hess and Linderman (2007:223) emphasise the importance of social networks for expatriate spouses, since the spouses may feel very isolated during the day when the husband and children are at school. The expatriate spouse could examine her own identity challenges and redefine her role in the new environment creating an opportunity for growth and learning whereby different work opportunities could serve to aid the adjustment process (Hess & Linderman, 2007:222).

Beaverstock (2001:4) supports that for the non-working spouse the general living conditions and parental tasks are major stressors. Other stressors here include making new friends and ensuring that the children are placed in a satisfactory school.

In sum, where the parents are dissatisfied with the new environment, particularly the non-working spouse, in most cases the mother, the children may not receive the emotional support that they require to adjust optimally. It follows, that the parent struggling to find the emotional and psychological resources to adapt to the new lifestyle, may struggle to provide emotional support to the children who are also grappling with adjustment challenges. The self-identity of the non-working spouse appears to play a significant role in the satisfaction and adjustment, specifically where there are few or no opportunities for this spouse to fulfil his/her need to be employed outside the home.

Table 3.1: Summary of Determinants for Adjustment in Expatriate Families

Determinants for the working spouse	*Determinants for the non-working spouse*	*Determinants for the expatriate children*
Personal traits: Personality and coping with problem solving resources, communication skills, tolerance for ambiguity and resilience.	**Personal traits:** Personality and coping with problem solving resources, communication and social skills, adaptability, self identity, resilience.	**Personal Traits:** Personality and attachment behaviour, resilience and temperament, developmental stages.
Social support: spouse, family, colleagues, conflict resolution skills.	**Social support**: spouse, family and access to new friendship network.	**Social support**: Parental support, teachers and friends.
Family Factors: stable marriage, spousal adjustment, family communication and cohesion.	**Family Factors**: stable marriage, emotional stability, open-mindedness, role clarity.	**Family Factors**: Family cohesion and communication.
Work factors: job satisfaction, organisational support, defined roles, training.	**Work factors**: role identity and role adjustment, employment potential and opportunities, spousal support.	**Work/school**: type of education and school, identity, independence.
Environmental factors: work conditions, work hours, home environment and family satisfaction.	**Environmental factors**: living conditions including climate, home, shopping, food, transport.	**Environmental factors**: home with familiar objects, school, sport and play environments.

The non-working spouse may also feel alone with regards to caring for the children, whilst the working spouse is largely occupied with his or her new, 'exciting' working environment. Parental unhappiness would therefore not bode well for the expatriate child who has also lost his or her familiar life structure and routine. From the aforementioned studies conducted on family and child expatriate adjustment, the characteristics or determinants which have been identified as the most relevant for the adjustment of the whole family, and are presented in Table 3.1. (Page 77).

As evident, there are many factors that impact on the adjustment process of all family members, however, there is another factor that is not always mentioned in the literature on expatriate adjustment. It is the grief and sense of loss, that expatriates often feel when leaving their home country, family and friends behind. For this reason the following section on grief is provided.

3.4   Grief and Expatriate Family Members

Pascoe (2008:1) posits that apart from the many new challenges expatriate children face at school and home, the grief faced by separation from family, friends and pets is not acknowledged enough. McLeod (2006:30) provides that the cumulative result of multiple losses and changes include friends and family, community groups, teachers, clubs, churches and pets. It is further emphasised that for children already struggling academically, relocating may tend to aggravate the problem.

Pollock and van Reken (2001:167) state that there are many hidden losses of relocation, saying that for the expatriate especially the child, the loss of the 'world they knew' is gone and there is no funeral to mourn this loss. The following poem written by an expatriate child may be considered a poignant insight to the role of grief in the expatriate's journey to foreign shores.

"There was no funeral.

No flowers,

No ceremony

No one had died.

No weeping or wailing.

Just in my heart.

I can't...

But I did anyway,

And nobody knew I couldn't.

I don't want to ...

But nobody else said they didn't.

So I put down my panic

And picked up my luggage

And got on the plane.

There was no funeral." ("Mock Funeral" - by Alex James in Pollock & Van Reken, 2001:165).

In reading the poem, it is highlighted that expatriate grief is seldom fully acknowledged by expatriates themselves, and that leaving one's home country can result in a deep unresolved sense of loss and emotional pain. There may be the misperception by family and friends that the person leaving is jubilant and excited about the new journey and does not experience intense feelings of separation and loss. It is after all, a life change generally regarded as positive and adventurous, rather than tragic. There may even be the perception that any departure 'sadness' is temporary and that the expatriate will soon replace his or her 'losses' with new and different friends, colleagues and so forth. However, this may not always be the case as Pollock and Van Reken (2001:168-170) emphasise in the following:

Loss of Lifestyle

This includes the freedom of obtaining favourite foods, enjoying a climate that allows for sporting activities and nature walks or having dependable resources like transport. The new location may be a city where these lifestyle habits cannot be enjoyed, thus creating a change in the pattern of living. For expatriate spouses this could mean the loss of a familiar place to dine or to meet friends.

Loss of possessions

For children, favourite toys may need to be left behind, tree houses may remain abandoned in gardens and familiar playground terrain is missed. With international moves, the shipping of an entire household is often impossible and familiar furniture, cars and so forth may be left behind with feelings of ambivalence.

Loss of relationships

Saying farewell to family members like grandparents or siblings left behind may be very painful for all family members. This includes the loss of beloved pets.

Loss of System Identity

Separated from friends and family in the home country, some expatriates may feel 'disowned' by these social systems. Birthday celebrations happen without them, older family members may die or become ill and there may be a feeling of alienation from the extended family at home. Upon visiting the family members and friends the expatriate may find that they have changed or that they no longer share the same interests or values.

Loss of the past that was

Some expatriates may grieve for experiences that they missed at home, (for example a grandparent's 80th birthday) whilst others may grieve for a past that is no longer available to them. In other words, the experiences they would have enjoyed in the home country are absent with no memories to share with extended family members. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:172) argue that there is no rite of passage for this kind of grief and no recognised way of mourning these losses. It is further stated that unresolved grief is an obstacle to healthy adjustment and the grief experienced in relocating especially to foreign shores, is not perceived socially as a valid reason for the overt expression of pain and sadness. This could result in feelings of shame and denial of grief. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:172) cite an example, whereby a spouse and her child are chastised for feeling sad at moving to a foreign relocation, being told "but you should not be so sad, you can make new friends, it will pass". This advice it is argued, is not comforting and the feelings of grief may become submerged or denied.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001:176) provide the stages of grief that the expatriate child or adult experiences, showing that they are not that dissimilar to the stages of 'acceptance' provided by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the dying patient. The responses given are denial, anger, depression, withdrawal and rebellion. There is also the danger of delayed grief, whereby the expatriate may not be conscious of any particular feelings of sadness but may be surprised at a seemingly unrelated 'trigger' that elicits intense feelings of pain and anguish.

To conclude, unresolved grief in expatriates needs to be included as part of the adjustment process, in that it often is perceived as a less important factor. The ultimate goal of the expatriate is to be able to commence a happier 'new life' in a different environment. Some sadness and loss of the previous life is inevitable, however, a deeper prolonged sense of grief may prevent optimal adjustment and happiness for the expatriate adult and child.

3.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The expatriate family has many challenges to face in a foreign country; adapting to a new culture, new languages, new roles, different friends, the loss of familiar people and places and the grief

that accompanies these changes and losses. Four theoretical approaches were identified as pertinent to expatriate adjustment. These approaches included the Gestalt concept of creative adjustment, social cognitive theory, coping theory and developmental theory. The studies pertaining to the determinants of expatriate adjustment were evaluated and a summary of the most important determinants for all family members was presented. Finally, a section on expatriate grief was provided.

As a parent, the individual may struggle to provide his or her family members with the necessary support to cope with the demands of expatriate living. It is therefore important that the family be viewed as a system, whereby all members impact on each others' adjustment process and development. For the Gestalt family therapist this is an essential consideration as the *whole family* is addressed in therapy. This aspect is more closely examined in the following chapter, which presents family therapy from several theoretical approaches including the Gestalt and systemic perspective.

CHAPTER 4

FAMILY AND CHILD THERAPY

4.   INTRODUCTION

As described in Chapter One, the second objective of the present study is to find suitable Gestalt therapy techniques to assist the families who experience adjustment difficulties.   Chapter Two provided a discussion on Gestalt therapy theory, which served as a background of the history and the essential concepts underpinning Gestalt therapy theory.   In this chapter, these Gestalt concepts will be revisited in the context of family therapy, wherein play therapy is viewed as a supportive therapeutic approach during the family therapy session.

It may be argued, why include the whole family in therapy when only one or two family members are struggling to adjust to a new environment? Satir (1978:x) in her classical work regarding conjoint family therapy   asserts that any person's behaviour is a response to the rules and dynamics flowing from the family as a *whole* and all family members should be viewed as a means of growth for the individual and his family. This is especially pertinent if one of the children in the family is struggling to adjust but the other members are adapting well. A child may not be able to articulate his or her difficulties verbally, however, a therapist may reveal these difficulties by administering play therapy techniques within the family therapy session.   There may also be a need to provide a separate therapy session for a child with emotional difficulties, so enabling the child to 'voice' or express his or her difficulties in the form of play therapy outside the family therapy context.   In this instance, the child may feel less inhibited or anxious when other family members are not part of the same therapeutic process.

 As indicated in Chapter One, the literature (for example, Black & Stephens, 1989:529-544; Chew, 2004:2; Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2001:1) emphasises that the premature return of expatriates to their home countries is frequently due to the lack of adjustment of the spouse, namely the wife. It may happen that either the husband or the wife is experiencing adjustment difficulties and are unable to obtain the necessary support or comfort from each other.   The accustomed support systems, for example, friends and family may also be unavailable.   Telephonic and electronic communication with loved ones may not be sufficient in cases where the individual requires personal contact to solve emotional difficulties. For this reason, family therapy is further indicated with the aim of assisting *all family members* to cope more optimally and learn how to support each other during the difficult periods.

The literature (for example, Carlson, Sperry & Lewis, 1997; Cook, 2007; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996; Jones, 1993) reveals that there are many types of theories and related interventions that describe specific ways of administering and understanding family therapy. The therapeutic approaches found within these different theories, follow specific paradigms or philosophies that define how a phenomena or problem is perceived. To understand where the Gestalt approach to family and child therapy is contextualised in the theory of family therapy, an examination of the main schools of thought is presented in this chapter. The first section describes and defines the concept of family therapy. This is followed by a discussion on the origins and history of family therapy and a section pertaining to the characteristics and life cycle of the family. A discussion on the functioning of families is then provided. The next section discusses and evaluates the various theoretical approaches underpinning family therapy interventions. Emerging from this section, is a detailed description and exploration of Gestalt Family therapy. Thereafter, Gestalt child therapy and play therapy techniques are discussed. Finally, an exploration of the current trends in postmodern and Gestalt family therapy is provided.

4.1   FAMILY THERAPY

Cook (2007:2) describes family therapy as the intervention that "alters restrictive, self-defeating and recurring patterns, aiming at enriching family relationships". The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:268) defines family therapy as "an umbrella term for a number of therapeutic approaches all of which treat a family as a whole rather than singling out specific individuals for independent treatment. The term is neutral theoretically, and can practice family therapy within many different frameworks". This definition is very applicable to the present study, in that the term 'can practice family therapy within many frameworks' relates to the inclusion of Gestalt play therapy within the administering of family therapy.

Frey (2008:1) defines family therapy as "the short-term treatment, usually several months in length, with a focus on resolving specific problems such as eating disorders, difficulties with school, or *adjustments to bereavement or geographical relocation*. It is not normally used for long-term or intensive restructuring of severely dysfunctional families". This definition is regarded by the researcher as most suitable, since it relates to the objectives of the present study.

For the purpose of the present study and as provided in Chapter One, family therapy is thus defined as; *the intervention aimed at assisting all family members to communicate and relate to*

each other, respecting individual perspectives, difficulties and feelings in a bid to create an optimal family relationship and support in the face of life's constant challenges, particularly factors relating to the adjustment to a new geographical location. Furthermore, the family regarding this form of intervention, is described as a group of individuals consisting of one or more guardians or parents, and their dependents or children all residing in the same home or place of residence.

Clarification of the word 'therapy' is also pertinent here, since it provides a greater understanding of the role of the therapist and the nature of the service that the therapist intends to provide in family therapy. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001:747) defines therapy as "an inclusive label for all manner and forms of treatment of disease or disorder ... a general term for any therapeutic approach in which the therapist takes an active, directing role". For the present study, the concept of 'therapist' is described as a psychologist, social worker or counsellor trained in the dynamics of family therapy and Gestalt theory, taking an active role in devising a suitable treatment plan, techniques or intervention for the expatriate family presenting adjustment difficulties.

It is the purpose of this section to provide a clear explanation of family therapy and how it pertains to this research. Examining the historical development of family therapy adds a more in depth understanding of the nature and dynamics of this type of therapeutic intervention.

4.1.2 The Historical Development of Family Therapy

The literature (for example, Jones, 1993:xvii-xx) indicates that family therapy practice evolved as a result of a historical process that emerged from the fields of social work, psychology, psychiatry and pastoral counselling more than fifty five years ago. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1996:8) the introduction of family therapy arose in the 1950's, representing a different approach to understanding human behaviour. This was a shift from the original therapeutic emphasis on the individual and psychotherapy as was previously promoted by the classical psychotherapist, Sigmund Freud. The paradigm shift also resulted from the perspective that the behaviour of the individual can only be fully understood by including the context in which the behaviour takes place, for example in the family home (Cook, 2007:2).

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1996:8) posit that the move towards family therapy resulted after World War II whereby family reunifications often created social problems. Furthermore, the loss of loved ones frequently created a change of family structure and role demands. Mental health professionals were now confronted with increasing numbers of family related difficulties. Frey

(2008:1) states that shortly after World War II, the doctors treating schizophrenic patients observed that the patients' families related to each other in disturbed or dysfunctional ways. This observation further served to promote a greater interest in family therapy as an intervention for clinically related psychological disorders.

The 1950's and 1960's revealed changes in many social contexts, for example increased marital conflict, divorce and sexual liberation that inevitably impacted on the traditional family status and structure. Not surprisingly, practitioners from several different disciplines were approached to assist in family related problems and an increase in the recognition for family therapy interventions ensued (Gladding in Cook, 2007:4). Due to the increase in the need for family therapy, new techniques and methods were developed to address these demands and after the 1980's a shift towards postmodern ideas, integration and eclecticism occurred (Cook, 2007:19).

In the researcher's view, it could be argued that for specific interventions a more eclectic approach may be more effective, in that each client family has unique needs and ways to overcome difficulties. This may require using techniques or positive aspects from two different theoretical approaches. Therapy or an intervention pertaining to the adjustment of expatriate family members in a new environment, would not specifically aim to treat clinical symptoms, but rather to address problems of a more practical nature, for example communication difficulties, self-awareness and coping skills. For this reason, the consultation of other family therapy techniques may serve as a framework wherein the Gestalt approach may be applied and enhanced. Another reason for discussing the ensuing family therapy approaches or types of therapy, is that with each approach, a greater understanding is provided of family dynamics, structures, patterns of behaviour and types of communication patterns. Similarities with Gestalt Family Therapy concepts may also be found in several of the other approaches, and serve to deepen the understanding of the origins of certain Gestalt concepts and the development of Gestalt as we know it today. However, before describing the main family therapy approaches, an understanding of how families are viewed by family therapists is pertinent.

4.1.3   Understanding Families

Understanding how individuals behave within the family context begins with the insight as to how the family members are coping with the stages *within* the family life cycle. Although these family life cycle stages may bear a resemblance to Erikson's developmental stages described in the previous chapter, they are unique to the formation of the family and what the individual experiences to achieve a new family system outside his family of origin.

4.1.3.1 The Family Life Cycle

The literature (for example, Hoshino, 2008:36; Poore, 2007:1-6; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991:16) provide descriptions of the family life cycle.   The intellectual and emotional stages experienced from childhood to retirement as a member of a family is referred to as the family life cycle. Each stage is faced with the gaining of new skills. However, not all individuals experience these stages in the same way. Crises, for example the death of loved ones, severe illness or financial hardship inevitably have an impact on how the individual experiences these stages. Recognising if family members have difficulty in moving to the next stage due to stressful events provides the therapist with important information to formulate the appropriate intervention. The literature does not always agree with the description and number of stages in the family life cycle. For example, Berg-Cross (1988:7-9) provides six stages in the family life cycle, recognising that a family with adolescent children is a separate stage in itself. It is further emphasised that this may arise at a time when the parents are facing midlife or career crises. For the present study, the following five stages provided by Barnhill and Longo (in Barker, 1992:27) and in Poore, (2007:1-6) have been selected and will be discussed in more detail.

1. Independence
2. Coupling or marriage
3. Parenting : babies to adolescents
4. Launching adult children
5. Retirement or 'senior years'

1. The Independence Stage

During this stage, the individual enters young adulthood and starts to separate emotionally from the family.   The task is to become independent socially, financially, emotionally and physically. Intimacy with others is a necessary skill providing for the ability to form and maintain close relationships.   The intimate relationships teach the individual aspects about commitment, commonality, compatibility, attachment, depending on non-family members and shared emotions in the relationship. This stage also requires that the individual takes responsibility for nutritional, physical and medical needs.   Career development is essential to gain a sense of financial and social independence.   During the independence stage, the individual strives to form an identity namely the sense of 'who he or she is in the world' (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

2. The Coupling Stage

Once independence is achieved, the individual explores the ability to commit to a new way of life or a new family. The joining of families through marriage is the formation of a new family system and the individual's unique expectations and values shaped by his family of origin are combined with that of the new spouse. This may result in the reshaping of previous ideas and values aiming to become compatible with the new spouse. Adjustments may include sharing finances, different lifestyle, hobbies, relationships with in-laws, friendships and thinking of the spouses needs before one's own. This stage aims to achieve interdependence, whereby the individual is fully able to enter into a long term relationship with another. Skills learnt at this stage include problem-solving skills, improved communication, the formation of boundaries in relationship and emotional developmental goals (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

3.   Parenting: Babies through Adolescents

The decision to have children impacts on individual development, the identity of the family and the marital relationship. The parenting role entails increased responsibilities and new stressors that may be successfully dealt with if the marital relationship is strong. The pressures of parenting young children may impact on how the husband and wife relate to each other, and it is not uncommon for couples to experience a strained marital relationship during this stage. Successfully including extended family members to assist with parenting is another task at this stage (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

Parenting teenagers may at times, be challenging and test family relationship skills. Families that cope best during these years communicate openly with each other, show mutual caring, trust and support. This stage is a time, when one or more family members may experience depression or stress-related disorders. Nurturing the marriage, while not excluding individual needs and personal growth factors remains a challenge during this stage. Specific goals during the parenting stage include the emphasis on parent-child relationships to empower the child to eventually move out of the family system. Remaining cognisant of the midlife marital and career needs of *both* husband and wife, is a further task to successfully transcend this stage (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

4.   Empty Nest: Launching Adult Children

The departure of older children from the home may have positive or negative consequences for the family unit. However, if the family has managed to develop the necessary life skills throughout the family life cycle, the children may be more equipped to meet the challenges of independence. Developing adult relationships with the children also remains a task of this stage.

Should the spouses not have maintained a strong relationship during the previous stages and have not transitioned together, they may no longer feel compatible and may decide to separate. Missed skills, furthering education and dreams of pursuing certain missed ambitions may now become important for one or both spouses. However, this is a stage where health problems may arise and midlife health issues may include weight gain, menopause, osteoporosis, heart disease and stress-related illnesses. Coupled with this challenge, there may be the need to care for aging parents and maintaining healthy relationships with the adult children (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

5. Retirement Stage of Life

This stage includes many changes for example, the acceptance of new family members when children marry and the new role of becoming a grandparent. Although this stage may be an enjoyable period of decreased responsibilities and freedom, it may also be a time of physical or mental decline. There may be the death of other family members or the death of the spouse. The quality of the individual's life at this stage is dependent on how the previous stages were accomplished, including the effort regarding self care and the maintenance of relationships. The goals left at the final stage of the family life cycle include maintaining interests and health, investigating new social and family roles, providing emotional support for adult children, dealing with the possible loss of the spouse, siblings and peers, preparing for your own death and reflecting on the life experience gained during the life cycle (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27; Poore, 2007:1-6).

In evaluating the life stages of the family, it would seem that each stage has its positive and negative aspects, however the important task of each stage is to prepare for the next one. It would appear to the researcher, that it is questionable whether any individual does *not* experience some problems during one of the family life stages, even when the previous stage was successfully accomplished. This theoretical approach of the family life cycle needs to be viewed as a general 'outline' of what many individuals experience, but does it represent most global population groups? Are single or divorced parents laying the foundations of struggle for their children's future? Cheevers, (2007:8) asserts that most single-parent families are presently ruled by women, with one-third of all children in developed countries growing up in single parent families. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2004:39-40) reflects on the changes that have occurred with regard to family developmental stages since the 1940's, stating that divorce is a familiar and common fact of American life today. This in turn, has resulted in single parent families and 'remarried' families entailing stepfamily integration, which frequently leads to complications and

conflict within these families. In the researcher's view, information concerning the history or 'unique lifecycle' of contemporary client families, is instrumental in providing the therapist with an understanding as to what the families' therapeutic needs are.

Not only has the impact of industrial growth and global trends influenced family life cycles, but poverty and disease has also contributed to the disintegration of traditional family structures. An example, is the devastating impact that the disease, HIV/Aids has caused in many African communities. With the number of adult deaths due to HIV/Aids, there are increasing numbers of child-headed households in Sub-Saharan Africa (Richter, Makiwane & Amoateng, 2003:56-58). The impact of HIV/Aids has therefore affected the traditional family structure in these instances. In further evaluating the family life cycle theory, there is no explanation of how couples without children fare at the latter stages of the family life cycle.

As evidenced in the aforementioned discussion, a family therapist may be confronted by different 'types' of families. Each family arrives with a number of problems that may manifest in stress that the family members cannot cope with. A single-parent family for example, may experience different life stressors when compared to a traditional family. To devise the appropriate intervention plan to assist the family, the therapist therefore, needs to discern what behaviours in the family are considered problematic or healthy. Depending on what stage of the family life cycle the family is in, the family may not be coping with what could be viewed as temporary life stressors. Not only does the family therapist have to identify at what stage the family is within the family life cycle, but identifying positive and negative coping resources assist in formulating an effective intervention plan. This leads the discussion to the following section.

4.1.3.2   Norms for Family Functioning

Barker (1992:28) contends that it is not possible to define a normal family, however, it is useful to have an idea of what optimal family functioning is and the family therapist therefore requires certain norms for family functioning. It is further emphasised that it also provides a *standard against* which to consider families searching for assistance. However, the factors that a family therapist may consider relevant in assessing the 'normality' of families depend largely on the orientation of the therapist (Barker, 1992:18). The question arises, what problems or stressors in the family provide the therapist with important information that could assist in devising an intervention strategy to help that specific family? Excessive stress due to internal family problems can result in conflict and misunderstandings within the family system (Pierce, 2009:1-2).

Figure 4.1 (Page 90)   interprets the stressors identified by Pierce (2009: 1-2) and the impact this may have on family behaviour.
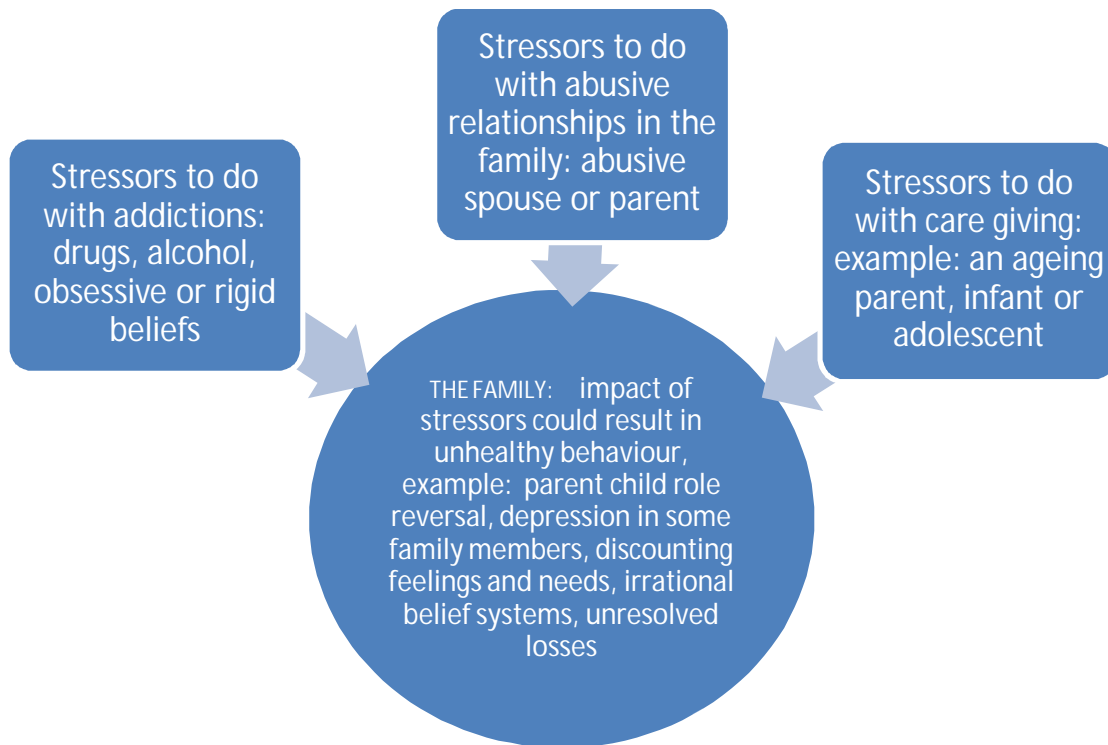
Figure 4.1: Unhealthy Behaviours in Families due to Stressors within the Family Circle (Adapted from Pierce, 2009:1-2).

Pierce (2009:2) contends that although some of the aforementioned problems may be temporary, they can place severe strain on the main caregiver and the family. It is further stated, that families present symptoms of excessive stress by showing signs of tension exhibited in conflict and misunderstanding, a sense of urgency, a desperate bid to escape from the family context, a desire to have a simpler lifestyle and having insufficient time alone. It is argued that healthy families deal with the stressors differently to dysfunctional families. From the abovementioned descriptions of family behaviour, the therapist is provided with 'clues' regarding what areas to focus on in the therapeutic process. Similarly, the therapist needs to recognise the 'assets' or positive behaviour in families as resources in the therapy process.   Fleck (in Barker, 1992:19) and Pierce (2009:1-3) provide the parameters of optimal family functioning. Table 4.1 (page 91) summarises these important parameters.

Table 4.1: The Healthy Parameters of Family Functioning

Healthy Functioning in Families (Pierce, 2009:2-3)	Healthy Functioning in Families Fleck (in Barker, 1992:19).
The family acknowledges that stressful situations are part of life and need not be permanent	Leadership of the parents and the characteristics of the marriage, style of parental roles and parental use of power
Parents set clear boundaries and assume the role of main caregivers	Family boundaries: for example, ego boundaries, generational and family-community boundaries
Support from outside the family is accepted	Interpersonal intimacy, family members' tolerance of each others' emotions
The family works together to reduce the stress and strengths are emphasised	Communication between family members and the extent of non-verbal and verbal communications being consistent
Family members work together to find solutions for difficulties, with the focus being on 'solution change', not blame. The family members realise that decisions and routines may need to be changed and that rigid expectations are not accepted. Members address the source of the stress.	Goal/task performance: the manner in which the children cope with separation from the family, behavioural guidance, leisure activities, how crises in the family are dealt with and adjustment of family members after leaving the family of origin.

Pierce (2009:1) emphasises that certain life stressors are prevalent for all kinds of families, but it is *how* these stressors are dealt with and the source of these stressors that determine how healthful the family functioning is. Examples of general stressors are finances, insufficient couple time, communication with children, a lack of family play time, an over-active family calendar and lack of shared responsibility for household chores.

Krysan, Moore and Zill (1990) studied the factors that were considered important for strong, healthy and successful families. The constructs examined in the study included communication, commitment to family, religious orientation, social connectedness, ability to adapt, clear roles and time spent together. One of the objectives of the study was to establish whether these constructs could be taught to families in need of therapeutic intervention. It was suggested that teaching 'strengths' to families by using strategic programs could improve childrearing and family interaction. The findings of this research are encouraging for therapists devising specifically tailored interventions for families who struggle to overcome general life related difficulties, for example, adjusting to a new environment upon relocation.

In conclusion, the family has been described according to a cycle of family life stages and further understood by the stage of its life cycle, as well as the nature of the problems that the family encounters. The family therapist needs to be cognisant of these factors when devising an

intervention plan, and decides at the outset or start of the therapy process whether he or she can work with the family. For example, the therapist not trained in clinical or pathological disorders would be ethically obliged to refer a client family with severe problems to the relevant professional. For this reason, a prudent therapist has a consultation first with the family to determine the nature of their problems before continuing with the intended therapy (Allan, 2001:39). This requires an understanding of the therapist's own limitations and strengths, personal prejudices and ability to build a rapport with the family members.

 The type of therapeutic approach is also important when working with specific families. Where the 'healthier' family presents difficulty in adjusting to life transitions, practical or solution focused therapies may be appropriate. The type of therapy practiced by the therapist also needs to be suitable regarding his or her temperament, life values and training. Cook (2007:199) supports that the 'self' of the therapist is a significant force in the therapeutic context, and the choice of theoretical approach in family therapy is linked to the character and values of the therapist. For this reason, a therapist who favours a psychodynamic approach may feel more comfortable with the role of 'expert', keeping a strong professional distance between him/herself and the clients. A Gestalt therapist may prefer the closer interaction and collaboration with the client.

The following theories underpinning family therapy were specifically selected because they serve as a pertinent background and introduction for family therapy techniques, broadening the understanding of family therapy theory as a whole. The literature reveals that most family therapy approaches, including the Gestalt approach of family therapy, are derived from systems family theory, which is discussed at the start of the section.   A further objective of providing an overview of the types of theoretical approaches, is also to illustrate *where* Gestalt family therapy theory may be contextualised amongst the diverse schools of thought.

4.2   THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Systems theory originated from the ideas of the mathematician Norbert Wiener (1948) who introduced the term *cybernetics*, representing the process of feedback and control in the communication process in human 'systems' (for example families) as well as machines (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004:14). Family therapy theory originates from the concept of cybernetic epistemology taken from mechanical systems theory which entails the monitoring of feedback mechanisms prevalent in complex and simple systems known as first order cybernetics (Cook, 2007:40). Barker (1992:33) contends that in the early stages of family therapy

development, the ideas of cybernetics were adopted by therapists endeavouring to understand the processes occurring in families with problems. It is further stated that in following the cybernetics approach, the intervention is governed by the feedback provided by family members, namely if the feedback is positive it is referred to as 'deviation amplifying' and when negative it is 'deviation minimising' (Barker, 1992:34).

Within this approach, individual behaviour is understood by including the context in which the behaviour is presented, namely the family context.   However, theorists following a postmodern perspective, promote a second-order cybernetic approach that implies that the individual in the family also has a separate and 'unique' perspective or reality (Cook, 2007:40).   Brown and Christensen (1999:227) support that the role of the family therapist is viewed as collegial rather than directorial. The therapeutic relationship is further described as an open-ended partnership that may or may not induce change in the client family. From this approach, emerges the belief that all family members influence each other and the family as a smaller 'system' forms part of a larger social system, with these systems all impacting on each other (Carr in Cook, 2007:45).

Systems family theory plays an important role in the growth and development of family therapy theory and the move away from the focus on the mind and the individual to the study of observable patterns of behaviour in family relationships (Carlson, Sperry & Lewis, 1997:41). It is with the systems theory paradigm in mind, that the following family therapy approaches are presented. Adapted from the work of Carr (2000), the various schools of family therapy may be classified according to the focus on *behaviour patterns*, *belief systems* and *context*. The three theories representing each of the therapeutic approaches, have been selected for discussion in that they reveal the diversity regarding family therapy approaches and techniques. Furthermore, these three schools of family therapy assist in contextualising Gestalt family therapy, reflecting its similarities and differences from the other approaches and *where it may be found in the theory and history of family therapy*.

Each of the therapeutic approaches will now be discussed and evaluated.

4.2.1   Theories Focusing on Behaviour Patterns

These theories target the behaviour styles in families and give meaning as to how the family members behave.   The aim is to change behaviour, thereby changing negative interaction patterns. Strategic Family Therapy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy were selected for this section. Barker (1992:59) states that the behavioural family therapist studies the cognitive processes and behaviours that control the family's problem behaviours. Essential goals occupy a

central place in behaviour therapy, namely to create new conditions for learning to ameliorate behaviours (Corey, 1996:287).

Strategic Family Therapy

Strategic family therapy according to the aforementioned classification, relates to concerns in the *behaviour patterns* of the family. Carlson, Sperry and Lewis (1997:62) assert that the strategic family therapy model is based on the idea that families are rule-governed systems and should be understood in this manner. The goal of the treatment in this approach is to solve the presenting problem of the family which is defined as a succession of behaviours among the family members in a given social situation (Carlson *et al.,* 1997:62).

Founded by Jay Haley and Cloe Madanes of the Washington Family Therapy Institute, the central theme of this type of therapy is that the family shows signs of reluctance to change due to the main problem being a 'crutch' for the family to behave in the manner that they have become accustomed to (Brown & Christensen, 1999:81). The therapist designs specific interventions to tackle this reluctance or ambivalence to change. The style or manner in which the family communicate is also emphasised. This is revealed i**n** one of the original works of Haley (1963:8), where it is emphasised that when individuals or family members communicate, the underlying message in the communication process reveals the nature of the relationship. An example would be that of a father saying to his son "it is late, time for bed". In this instruction, the underlying message is, "I am in control and order you to go to bed" clearly defining the hierarchy in the relationship. With strategic family therapy, there is the assumption that a healthy family is able to adapt to family life cycle stages, that love is the main family value, having clear intergenerational boundaries and has skills in problem solving. The problematic family is characterised as having unclear boundary structures, 'pathological triangles', poor marital relationships, lack of problem solving skills, aggression, abuse, depression and other disorders (Carr, 2000:87-88).

Brown and Christensen (1999:82) posit that strategic family therapists are mainly concerned with four important areas, namely; *symptoms, metaphors, hierarchy and power. Symptoms* include the way that the family relates to each other. The *metaphor* is viewed as the label for the symptom that the family members display. The *hierarchy* in the family indicates the distribution of power within the family system. The *power* aspect exposes the type of power struggle present in the family. It follows, that should any of these problem areas exist in a family, it may become 'stuck' or difficult for the members to communicate optimally with one another.

The treatment in this form of therapy includes an assessment interview and the clarification of why the family is 'stuck'. A therapist's role here is to understand each family member's perspective regarding the problem presented in the session. This is achieved by firstly examining how the family previously tried to resolve the problem, thereafter the therapist provides his or her interpretation or understanding as to how the problem has been managed so far. A therapeutic team may be used, whereby the family problems are reframed and presented back to the family, thereby providing directives as how to change negative behaviour. The family members then explore their opinions concerning the problem, whilst the therapist formulates ideas on how to assist the family to set goals regarding the improvement of their relationship. The therapist's role in this approach is active and directive (Cook, 2007:26).

In evaluating this form family therapy, it would seem to the researcher, that one of the major criticisms is the role of the therapist, in that it appears to be rather authoritarian and directive. For this reason, it is questionable as to how long the family would adhere to the new 'goals' or rules of interacting since they may have outwardly accepted the therapist's guidance without formulating and 'owning' their *own way* of addressing the problem. There seems to be less autonomy for the client family in solving their problems. However, this type of intervention may work with a family that genuinely integrates the goals and directives of the therapist, with all members equally wanting to change previous behaviours. In sum, it may also be valuable for a family that has tried other therapy methods and simply cannot formulate solutions for their problems without an external directive.

<u>Behavioural Family Therapy</u>

Behavioural family therapy is largely derived from the certain existing theories, an example being, Bandura's social learning theory, whereby change in families is conceptualised with regard to operant conditioning, respondent conditioning and cognitive change (Barker, 1992:57).

The therapist intervenes in the problematic patterns of behaviour by 'teaching' the client family to engage in healthier behaviour and change negative ways of thinking. Previous negative patterns of behaviour and ways of interacting are replaced with more positive behaviours. This is achieved by the therapist 'modelling' examples of healthier ways to communicate or behave whilst with the family in therapy. Gladding (in Cook, 2007:31) asserts that the maladaptive behaviour is focused upon, rather than the underlying reasons for the behaviour.

Brown and Christensen (1999:155-160) as well as Cook (2007:32) provide a description of how this therapeutic approach is conducted. The method of cognitive restructuring is used and aimed

to challenge perceptions and thoughts based on faulty cognitions. The restructuring is primarily used to change negative cognitions or patterns of thinking. With children, the techniques may include reward systems to perpetuate positive behaviour. With adults or adolescents 'contingency contracts' are often used whereby there is an agreement about the consequences of certain actions or behaviours. Positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement techniques are used to develop new behaviour patterns. Clients may also be involved in role plays whereby they are encouraged to display healthier responses to each other. Gladding (in Cook, 2007:32) posits that cognitive behavioural family therapy may not be as systemic as other approaches, in that the learning is targeted more on individual behaviour and this could prevent the whole family from benefitting optimally from the change.

In evaluating this type of family therapy, the researcher is of the opinion, that there appears to be a lack of emphasis on the feelings, insights or views of the family members. There is a preference for activity and application of 'rules'. Cook (2007:33) posits that the rigidity of this approach may result in the loss of the therapist's rapport with the family and thereby affect the outcome. The underlying causes of the problems are not explored enough, if at all, and the therapist is the 'expert' in the process. This, like strategic family therapy does not allow for the clients to explore their pain, anger or other emotions. Conditioning and coaching may create change in the short term regarding behaviour, but it allows for the *cause* of the problems to remain unchallenged. The question arises, without the deep seated problems being addressed, how long can the family sustain the newly acquired mode of behaviour? This now brings the discussion to theories that focus on belief systems.

4.2.2 Theories that Focus on Belief Systems

The two examples selected for this approach are solution-focused therapy and narrative therapy. Theories following this approach, perceive the belief systems in the family as impacting on the manner in which the family members interact with one another. Many perspectives are explored and solutions are viewed as a product of collaboration between the client family and the therapist. Language is also essential in these theories, as words create meaning and can be reframed to embrace new ways of interacting in the family (Goldenberg & Goldenberg in Cook, 2007:41).

Solution-Focused Therapy

Carlson *et al.* (1997:59) emphasise that the philosophy behind the solution focused model is based on the idea that change is inevitable and constant. The goals of this form of therapy are

that in a relatively brief period, the family members' behaviour is changed and a solution to the presenting problem is provided (Carlson *et al.*, 1997:59).

Brown and Christensen (1999:228-229) provide the following description of this therapeutic approach. Solution focused therapy emphasises the strengths or resources of the client group and is mindful of cultural differences without imposing judgement. The interventions are perceived as a collaborative effort. Originally developed by de Shazer and Berg in the 1970's and 1980's, this school of therapy is focused on change rather than the history or causes of family issues or difficulties. The therapy is directed by the clients' goals and although led by the therapist, the dialogue is steered by solutions. Therapeutic conversation with the family is viewed to be instrumental to finding solutions. The focus is on successful factors in the family and how they compare to the problematic areas. Previously attempted methods at finding solutions for problems in the family are examined in order to establish why they were not successful. Furthermore, this approach recognises the role of a trained outsider in assisting the family to identify its resources and identify what is working in the family (Brown & Christensen, 1999:229).

Assessment in this form of therapy, entails enquiries about the problem and includes where the therapist fits with regard to the solution finding process. A distinction is drawn between clients who are sent to therapy at another person's request (visitors); clients that acknowledge the problem but do not wish to participate (complainants) and clients that want to change are called 'customers'. In sum, this therapy style is viewed as an optimistic approach towards problem solving. It is respectful towards the client's own unique ways in which to resolve problems and has uncomplicated techniques to assist in helping the family.

In evaluating this approach, the researcher believes that it may be valuable in finding practical solutions for family difficulties that are not of a complex nature. Furthermore, it bodes well for families that have resistant family members attending the therapy sessions, in that there is a non-judgemental approach to promote cooperation and a respect for those clients who are not yet ready to change. Cook (2007:49) endorses that solution-focused therapy is useful when working with a large range of culturally diverse clients. The researcher is of the opinion that although this form of therapy brings about small changes, it is doubtful whether it will bring about long-term changes in every family, since it does not fully address the causes of the problems.

Narrative Family Therapy

Carlson *et al. (*1997:57) and Lowe (2007:17) support that the originators of narrative family therapy are David Epston and Michael White having been influenced by philosophy, anthropology

and psychology. It is further provided that narrative therapy consists of the client's story metaphor to understand the meanings he or she constructs about his or her experience in the world. Hare-Mustin (1994:20) describes this approach as discourse theory, a postmodern view of knowledge that perceives universalising themes and narratives as constricting. Dominant discourses are attained through the socio-economic context, language and social interactions. The story in narrative therapy is the main principle for understanding the individual from a narrative point of view.

Narrative therapy is a non-blaming, respectful method with the view that the clients are the experts in their lives. The focus is on the problem development whereby the individual is not viewed as the problem but that the actual 'problem' remains separate (externalising) and needs to be dealt with in this manner (Morgan 2000:2). Client families are helped to examine and formulate different versions or interpretation of their 'story' and challenge the dominant features that create difficulties in their lives (Brown & Christensen, 1999:233; Carlson *et al.*, 1997:57).

The authors Carlson *et al.* (1997:58) including Brown and Christensen (1999:232-233) provide the following description of narrative therapy. A central aim of this approach is to assist the family to 're-author' their lives, and to define themselves in a non-pathological manner. The therapist is in a collaborative and consulting position during the therapy and externalisation is used for the client family to separate themselves from the problem, whereby failure or blame is omitted. Solutions are arrived at by formulating or 'authoring' their stories differently, thereby providing alternative ways to consider the problem. The process is creative and the therapist conveys a 'curious' questioning stance for the client who remains the expert in the process of change. However, the therapist does require the knowledge and expertise to maintain a good rapport with the family so that they remain comfortable to reveal their story. Other therapists such as a 'reflecting team' may be used to assist in changing the narrative of the family. Reflecting teams are therapists that observe the session with the permission of the client family and provide interpretations of the session and its narrative at the end of each session so that the client family may hear the story from different perspectives. Self narratives are also used in the form of letters or declarations. Sharing the narratives with the family is aimed at motivating the members to behave in new ways consistent with their new 'stories' thereby creating new realities. According to the original work of Michael White, narrative therapy encourages the client to create a distance between him or herself and the 'problem story' using language to externalise the problem and thus creating change (Brown & Christensen, 1999:233).

It would appear to the researcher that Narrative therapy reflects a respectful and non-judgmental way of role modelling to the family in how to interact with each other in a non-blaming manner. Furthermore, it may be a creative and useful way to work with families that do not have deep seated problems (or pathological problems needing clinical assistance) but need to communicate and understand each other in more optimal ways. A criticism of this approach lies in the method; the family needs to be comfortable with the mode of expression.   It is reasonable to expect families to arrive at the therapy session feeling angry and emotional at times. The question arises, that where family members arrive in an aroused state of emotion, are angry with each other and may not wish to communicate, it is doubtful whether the sessions will be continuously 'blameless' and respectful. A skilled therapist is needed here, to maintain a calm, 'healing' atmosphere throughout the story telling process.

 The following section includes the theoretical perspectives of Freud, Klein and Perls.

4.2.3   Theories that Focus on Context

These theories focus on the contextual, historical and constitutional factors in family dynamics. The two approaches to be discussed are psychoanalytic family therapy and experiential family therapy.

<u>Psychoanalytic family therapy</u>

This therapeutic approach was selected due to its similarity with some of the concepts presented in Gestalt therapy theory. Barker (1992:54) asserts that the main objective of psychodynamic family therapists is to assist members to gain insight into themselves and the way they respond to each other.   Originating with the classical psychoanalytical views of Freud, this approach recognises the family as a system and includes the unique experiences of the individual in the family context and is described below by (Cook, 2007:70).

One of the concepts integrated into this approach is that of object-relations derived from the theories of classical theorists, Klein and Winnicott (Carr, 2000:163). Object relations theory is derived from these early theorists regarding mother and child relations and how this relationship would affect adult functioning.   Internalised objects are mental concepts of individuals formulated by earlier experiences and needs. Early life experiences in this regard remain in the subconscious and influence the individual throughout his life. An infant uses the 'splitting' mechanism to perceive the mother, namely as two different individuals with one being the' good object' satisfying needs and the other being the 'bad object' that provides frustrating and anxious feelings.

In family theory, the partners use projective identification to project on each other the parts of themselves that they cannot actually accept within themselves. This creates a manipulation to behave according to the projection. The problems in the marriage are therefore perceived to originate from each partner's projections. This may lead to disappointment and a relationship of conflict, whereby one partner's projections allows him or her to perceive the self as the 'good object' and the other partner as the 'bad object'. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (in Cook, 2007:71) states that the child or children's behaviour is a way to deflect attention from the parental conflict. Carr (2000:164) indicates that unconscious intra-psychic difficulties impact on the parental relationship, and is transferred to the children, who transfer these problems into their own marriages upon reaching adulthood.

David and Jill Scharff's approach using object relations theory, focuses on the family as a system of relationships that determines the way that the family relate to each other and the family is seen as a cybernetic system with problems arising from family system disturbances (Goldenberg & Goldenberg in Cook, 2007:72). It is further asserted that unlike other family approaches, this theory supports that change in the individual can introduce change in the family.

The therapist's role is to afford insight and use 'interpretation' to do this. The therapist is like an observer and is not 'part' of the family system. As part of the assessment process, the family's shared object relations are explored, stages of psychosexual development and defence mechanisms are examined. The goal is heightened insight and self-awareness in managing developmental problems.

In evaluating this theoretical approach, the researcher's main criticism, is that there is no time-frame as to how long the therapy will be. The therapy process could be time consuming and expensive for clients. Gladding (2002:124) observes that psychodynamic approaches also require clients with above average intelligence, insight related skills and have sound financial means to pay for prolonged therapy.

Experiential Family Therapy

Barker (1992:61) reveals that Carl Whitaker and Walter Kempler are recognised as the best known practitioners in this type of therapy. Nichols and Schwartz (2008:211) contend that experiential family therapy borrowed techniques such as role-playing from Gestalt therapy. Carlson *et al.* (1997:52) emphasise that experiential family therapy concerns the expressing of emotions in the here and now, acknowledging the struggle that exists between the sense of belonging and autonomy within the family system. In his original work, Kempler (1974:19) states

that the goal of Gestalt and experiential family therapy is to assist the family in returning to its main function as the primary resource for the needs of all family members.

Brown and Christensen (1999:137) posit that the experiential approach to family therapy developed from existential-humanistic psychotherapy and similar to the structural and strategic approaches its emphasis lies in the present rather than the past. It is further asserted that the systems orientation in this form of therapy was derived from the Gestalt therapy theory of Fritz Perls, rather than that of Bertalanffy and that experiential family therapy was largely pioneered by Carl Whitaker and Virginia Satir. Experiential family therapy emphasises the role of experiential obstacles to individual growth that results in individuals maintaining problem-related behaviour styles or patterns.

Cook (2007:76) states that experiential family therapy also includes concepts from personal growth approaches. This approach has a humanistic orientation, with a focus on self-actualisation. Problems in family interactions are defined by rigid rules and roles that result in family members distorting their experiences, or authenticity so that they are accepted by the family members. This further results in incongruity due to the internalised injunctions coming from the family of origin and is then manifested in troublesome marital and family interactions. Denial of certain feelings, for example anger, may result in the projection of this emotion onto one family member, often a child who bears a label of 'the bad one' in the family, thus becoming the family scapegoat (Carr, 2000: 171).

Brown and Christensen (1999:138) assert that central to experiential family therapy are the concepts of individuality, freedom of choice and personal growth. Change is obtained through experience, insight and reflection, especially the exploration into the cause or origin of problems. Interventions are formulated according to the unique needs of the family with the aim of creating a genuine or 'congruent' relationship with clients that allows for the expression of feelings and openness. The growth aimed at in this type of therapy includes self-esteem, self-awareness, self-actualisation and self-responsibility. A further objective is to attain a congruent, responsible individual whereby the suppressed or ignored parts of the self are eventually integrated into the self (Carr, 2000:171-172).

The therapy process requires a good rapport with the client family enhancing openness and awareness of feelings. This is achieved by the therapist striving to be sincere or 'authentic' with the clients. The concepts of congruence, warmth, non-judgement and unconditional positive regard are the conditions for facilitating the therapy process. The therapist is therefore viewed

as a facilitator, guiding the family to find their strengths and more optimal ways of communicating with each other. One of the first pioneers of experiential family therapy or 'conjoint family therapy,' was Virginia Satir. Throughout her earlier work, Satir (1978) strongly supports the essential concepts of this form of therapy, highlighting the involvement of the therapist as facilitator or collaborator in bringing about changes related to self-esteem, communication and congruence.

In evaluating this form of therapy, the researcher is of the opinion, that the therapist needs to be 'comfortable' with this approach and to have the personality characteristics required to be sensitive, warm and non-judgemental in the therapeutic context. This is supported in Cook (2007:198), whereby the role of the self as therapist is emphasised when selecting a particular therapeutic approach to follow. Cook (2007:198) posits that the 'self' of the therapist is a therapeutic resource and the therapist's own self-awareness and realisation of strengths and limitations is critical in providing optimal therapy for others. This is particularly pertinent in the existential and Gestalt family therapy approach and brings the discussion to the link between the Gestalt approach and existential family therapy.

The Existential Family Therapy Approach and Gestalt Family Therapy

As indicated, existential family therapy theory is rather eclectic and includes Gestalt concepts regarding family therapy. Although there is an abundance of literature on Gestalt therapy and theory, there seems to be less literature that only specifies *Gestalt family therapy*. The search for Gestalt family therapy consistently led the researcher towards the work of Walter Kempler who wrote the book '*Principles of Gestalt Family Therapy*' in 1974. This classical work is frequently mentioned with regard to Gestalt family therapy. Rudolph Bauer is also featured in the earlier literature, with many of his publications dating back to the 1970s. From the literature, it would seem that Gestalt theory is a collection or integration of different psychological approaches including psychodynamic theory of Sigmund Freud. Bauer (1979:41) supports that Gestalt psychotherapy is a synthesis of different psychological traditions, with Fritz Perls being influenced by Reich, Freud, Ferenczi and Horney. Both Kemplar (1974:13) and Bauer (1979:41) emphasise that Perls was greatly influenced by existential thinking. From this understanding of existentialism, the themes that emerge in the Gestalt approach are the importance of the here and now, the importance of learning, knowing and doing, experiencing to gain insight and the importance of the relationship with the therapist (Bauer, 1979:41).

Incorporating his existentialist approach, Perls would create experiments for his patients to understand or 'experience' what they were trying to communicate in the therapy session, thereby de-intellectualising and experiencing the conflicts directly (Bauer, 1979:41). In writing about the principles of Gestalt family therapy, Kemplar (1974:14) states that for himself, as a family therapist, there is no distinction between Gestalt, Gestalt-experiential and Experiential therapy. From these perspectives, there are strong indications that Gestalt family therapy has derived its existential concepts from Perls and the experiential concepts from the works of the Gestalt family therapist, Walter Kemplar. The various therapeutic approaches in working with families are summarised in Table 4.2 (page 103) and emphasise where the Gestalt approach is placed according to the various schools of thought.

Table 4.2: Summary of Therapeutic Approaches in Working with Families

Theoretical Approach Underpinning the Method of Therapy	Method of Family Therapy	Key Concepts
Theories on Behaviour Patterns Focus: behaviour styles of families	• Strategic Family Therapy • Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	• Behaviour change • Cognitions and classical conditioning
Theories on Belief Systems Focus: belief systems and embracing social constructivism, modernism and postmodernism	• Solution-Focused Therapy • Narrative Family Therapy	• Problem focused • Short- term therapy • Dialogue • Story and language
Theories that Focus on Context Focus: contextual, historical and constitutional factors in family dynamics.	• Psychoanalytic Family Therapy • Experiential Family Therapy – including **Gestalt Family Therapy**	• Object relations • Interpretation, analyse • **Insight** • **Self-awareness** • **Experiments** • **Techniques**

In sum, several approaches to family therapy were examined and evaluated. What was evident at the end of this exploration, were the similarities between the different styles, particularly the postmodern paradigms that describe the client as the 'expert' in his or her life, with the therapist being in a consulting and collaborating role. As previously mentioned, Gestalt theory follows a postmodern experiential approach and recognises the therapist largely as a 'respectful facilitator' within the therapeutic context. The following section provides a more detailed discussion pertaining to Gestalt family therapy, being an important part of the present study.

4.3   GESTALT FAMILY THERAPY

Before providing a description of Gestalt family therapy, it is necessary to explore the origins of how it came to be included in Gestalt therapy. Lynch and Lynch (2005:202) posit that Gestalt therapists have had difficulty in integrating systemic family therapy with Gestalt family therapy. The reason for this is that systems family therapists focus on the intervention being on the 'family' as a group, whilst classical Gestalt theory focuses on the individual. However, both approaches converge at the same point regarding the understanding that 'psychotherapeutic phenomenology' is operating within the system or family's experiences (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:202). It is further, stated that the Gestalt family therapist integrates the systemic principles of therapy with Gestalt methods to assist the family. Bevcar and Bevcar (2003:171) assert that the classical Gestalt family therapist, Walther Kempler, strongly supports the inclusion of systemic principles in Gestalt therapy practice. Kempler's influence on Gestalt family therapy was introduced in the previous section. It is pertinent to mention Virginia Satir, who was one of the earliest family therapists to combine systemic and experiential family therapy (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:204). Furthermore, Satir's combination of the two approaches, provides an example as to how an eclectic therapeutic approach may be applied successfully. Systemic theory has been integrated into Gestalt family therapy theory, also resulting in a combination of different theoretical approaches. A discussion on the main concepts of systemic theory, is therefore relevant before describing the process of Gestalt family therapy.

4.3.1.   Systemic Theory and Gestalt Family Therapy

As mentioned in Section 4.2, Family systems theory was founded by Norbert Weiner as a basis regarding the understanding of family structures, processes and organisation. This view advocates that each member of the system plays a role in the process of change in the family, therefore, all members need to change for the whole system to benefit (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991:207).

Parlett (1997:16) asserts that Gestalt practitioners do not generally work with the individual only, since people exist within "systems of relationships". Furthermore, individuals and collective systems need to be viewed together as a 'unified field' which is the term provided in Gestalt theory for the system or web of interconnection between the person and everything in the environment (Parlett, 1997:16). This perspective highlights the similarity between the field theory concepts in Gestalt with those of systemic theory. Parlett (1997:17-18) emphasises that

the impact of Lewin's field theory on Gestalt thinking has been underestimated, positing that field theory is one of the main concepts in Gestalt theory.

Lynch and Lynch (2005:202-203) provide the following background premises to systemic theory and the link to Gestalt family therapy. The family is perceived as part of a larger system, for example, the ethnic and religious group it belongs to or the community belonging to the family. The unit of the family system comprises two main subsystems. These consist of the adult or parental system with the other subsystem being the child system. These two systems are considered the primary systems, however one parent and a child may become a subsystem if both are engaged in pursuing a similar interest for a period of time. An example would be the common pursuit of a sports or arts interest. The subsystems are managed by regulatory processes creating boundaries that determine what family member participates how, when and where. The systems that function well have clear boundaries and rules that provide for growth of the members of the family or system (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:203). To fully understand the concept of the functioning of the family or system, Lynch and Lynch (2005:214) provide the following important principles of the family 'system':

- A system comprises an interactional group made up of people who share the same history, intimacy, anxiety, differentiation and needs that are transferred inter-generationally.
- Members of the system may attempt to deal with problems in old or previous ways.
- The main system has various subsystems that may be comprised of commonality, gender and shared interests.
- The primary subsystems are the couple in the system, namely the parental system and the sibling system.
- Subsystems are regulated by boundaries and rules – often tacitly implied.
- There is a natural hierarchy in the family or system.
- The marital subsystem functions to provide emotional nurturing and support, providing limits, respect and love.
- The sibling subsystem has the function of learning to relate to peers and how to negotiate with adults in authority.

Each client family brings its own unique difficulties and world view to the therapy room. However, the literature reveals that there are certain common difficulties shared by many families. These difficulties or stressors were mentioned earlier in this chapter. As emphasised, it is *how* these family members deal with the stressors that determines whether or not they require therapeutic

assistance. Lynch and Lynch (2005:205) state that when families present themselves for therapy, they are stuck in their endeavours to resolve their problems and are in 'fixed *gestalten'*. A family member is therefore often referred to as the 'identified patient' or symptom of the system's problems and the 'symptom' is the motive or catalyst for seeking therapy.

In his earlier work, Campbell (1980:78) states that families may use projection or deflection to alienate some of their parts from the 'whole' thereby causing blocks to contact. This process is named the 'family scapegoat' whereby one member is identified as the 'sick one' and the member that acts as a catalyst for therapy. This 'sick' member is 'disowned' or the projected part of the family. The task of the therapist is to encourage dialogue between the disowned part and the whole system in order to re-establish contact (Campbell, 1980:78). This fostering of dialogue is further described as the facilitation of the I-Thou relationship. Corey (1996:236) emphasises that the Gestalt therapist allows the client to be 'who they are', thereby assisting in the openness and readiness to address problem areas. To heal the internal split or alienation caused by the scapegoat process, each family member needs to come to terms with the alienated parts within him or herself, before genuine dialogue can take place with the 'sick part out there', namely the family scapegoat (Campbell, 1980:78).

As previously mentioned, the way that the family therapist conducts the therapy process, may not only be influenced by his or her training or theoretical approach, but by the type of rapport with the client family that the therapist manages to establish at the outset of the therapy. The researcher is also of the opinion that the unique personality and world view of the therapist determines the manner and flow in which the therapeutic process ensues. This would imply that not all therapy sessions occur according to the descriptions provided in theoretical texts. However, the literature on Gestalt family therapy provides guidelines as to how the family therapy process should ideally take place. Evidenced in the classical work of Kempler (1974), Lynch and Lynch (2005:205-206) and Zinker (1998: 207) is the strong influence of systemic family therapy *within* the Gestalt family therapy approach.   The process of family therapy incorporating Gestalt and Systemic principles is provided in the following section.

4.3.1.2 The Process of Gestalt Family Therapy

Kempler (1974:19) posits that the goal of Gestalt Family Therapy is to restore the family to its functional state in this way attending to the personal needs of all the members in the family. In one of his later works, Kempler (1981:7) posits that in family therapy, it should be possible to change disturbed behaviour by encouraging family members to gain different perspectives of

awareness. Evidenced in the literature on Gestalt family therapy, is a systemic approach that includes procedures found in many other family therapy approaches. This section examines the process or 'flow' of how the family therapy sessions should ideally progress.

Before commencing with family therapy, the therapist has a first consultation in order to determine whether family therapy is indicated or whether to include the children in the process. Should family therapy be indicated, Zinker (1998:208) advises the following:

- The work space or therapy room should be spacious enough to accommodate a family and seating should be arranged in such a manner that it can be changed for future sessions.
- The time of the session should be scheduled to ensure that all family members can attend regularly, although the occasional absence of one member is inevitable.
- The duration of a session could range between one to three hours depending on the ages of the children and the size of the family.

Allan (2001:31-50) advocates that the therapist should obtain written and informed consent when providing therapy for both adults and children. It is further stated that the prudent therapist, no matter what theoretical approach is adhered to, should contract in writing with the clients before commencing with therapy. The contract should include limitations in the therapy, for example the exclusion of confidentiality should the therapist be aware of child abuse or the risk that one or more members are a danger to themselves or the public. This is provided for in South African statutory provisions, namely the *Mental Health Act 18 of 1973* and the *Child Care Act 74 of 1983 (Section 42)* where it is *s*tated, that any practitioner working with adults or children who are exposed to physical or psychological danger need to inform them that their plight has to be reported to the relevant authorities for further investigation (Allan, 2001:149-150). This means, that the therapist needs to inform his client family at the outset that should there be any abusive behaviour in the family that violates the sexual, mental or physical integrity of one of the minor children, he or she needs to break the confidentiality agreement and obtain help from the right authorities.

Lynch and Lynch (2005:205) assert that the family therapy which follows an orderly progression assists in keeping the therapist and the therapy on track. The following stages are provided:

1.   *Joining and Assessment Stage*

At this early stage, the therapist endeavours to join or engage with all the members of the system. Respect and rapport are encouraged allowing for the therapist to be included in the system for the duration of the therapy process. The therapist is the bearer of inspiration and uses genuine interest in the family to cement the joining process. The therapist explores the reasons for coming to therapy using observations of the phenomenological experiences that occur in the session and endeavours to understand how the 'symptom' is maintaining the system. During this stage there is no judgement or criticism, while the therapist stays with the system's process. This stage includes the assessment of the system and prepares for the therapeutic contact in the next stage. The system's boundaries are also more relaxed to allow for the entry of the therapist who obtains experiential data to understand the process of the family. There is also a search for strengths or assets in the family with which to work with. The therapist also becomes familiar with the family's contact style including how boundaries are dealt with. In the assessment phase, the therapist endeavours to enlarge the focus on the presenting problem, ensuring that all members' reactions and behaviours are included in how the problem is being dealt with. The goal of the therapy should also be clarified and understood. These actions now pave the way for the intervention stage (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:206).

2. The Intervention Stage

Lynch and Lynch (2005:206) emphasise that the hallmark of systemic therapy are the interventions and these interventions should assist the family in finding a new less painful way to be together. The 'experiment' at this stage, is the core of the intervention facilitating change and contact disturbances. The goal is to foster interaction between the system members, whilst the therapist uses nonverbal cues to signal support, ultimately grooming the members to interact more positively without the help of the therapist. The aim is to encourage and sustain interaction between family members thus increasing the chance for resolution. In Gestalt terms, the therapist allowing the members to sustain interactions despite the likelihood that they be interrupted is referred to as 'mini-experiments'. These are viewed as open and creative processes. An example would be the encouragement of two family members interacting alone whilst other members do not participate but observe. Despite the difficulty that these two members may have, the therapist continues to encourage the interaction. Lynch and Lynch (2005:209) assert that the experiments are the mainstay of Gestalt family therapists but do have to adhere to systemic principles like the healthy restructuring of boundaries for more optimal functioning within the system. This includes a strong awareness of the therapists self and the client family.

There may be the chance that the therapist projects his or her own family experiences into the treatment process. Zinker (1998:215) argues that the Gestalt therapist should always be aware of his or her own reactions to a family, and states that the therapist should avoid reacting too quickly, argue with family members, tolerate excessively abusive behaviour and prevent strong feelings of like or dislike for members. When there are reports of changes outside the therapy room, the therapist is assured that *change* has occurred. The next stage is to support the change.

3.   Supporting the Change in the Family

Supporting the change is vital in both systemic and Gestalt therapy. Balance also needs to be maintained with regards to the fear of change and the positive feelings that accompany it. The 'symptom' has now been removed and may cause feelings of loss, having been the crutch in the family process for an extended period of time. The therapist has to support the change and the fear of the change. This becomes a test regarding the skill of the therapist, whereby the manner in which the changes are contained preventing a relapse is challenged. Once the changes have been instated and the likelihood of relapse is excluded, the termination process can occur (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:210).

4.   The Termination

Lynch and Lynch (2005:210) state that Gestalt therapy has personal growth as a main goal and that systemic therapy is successful when change in the system has occurred. Since Gestalt family therapy incorporates systemic and Gestalt principles, the therapist seeks areas of growth and change in the client family and explores whether termination or individual therapy for a member is indicated. However, there is an incubation phase after the family has terminated, to allow for the integration of systemic changes to set in. Families may return for more sessions should they feel the need to explore other growth or problematic areas.

Figure 4.2 (Page 110) depicts the flow of the therapeutic process as provided by Lynch and Lynch (2005:210). The diagram indicates a slight overlap between the stages, in that the family may not fully move out of one stage completely before transcending to the next stage.
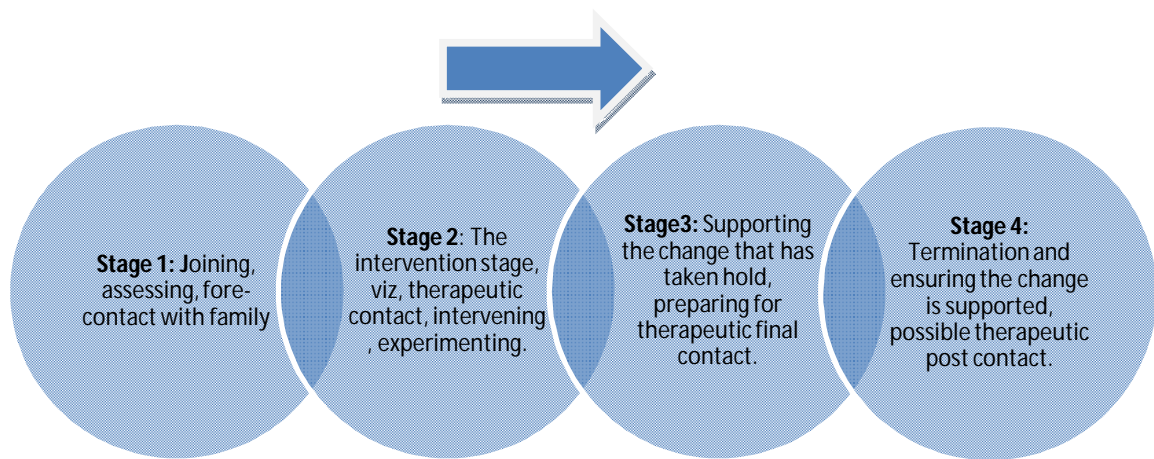
Figure 4.2: The Process of Systemic and Gestalt Family Therapy (adapted from Lynch and Lynch 2005: 210).

In sum, when evaluating the literature on Gestalt and Systemic family therapy (for example, Corey, 1996; Lynch & Lynch, 2005) it is emphasised that the therapist should have a solid knowledge of systems theory . Furthermore, the Gestalt family therapist should also be familiar with his or her own unfinished business with regard to his or her family of origin. This is to avoid possible projections into the therapy process. It is also recommended that the Gestalt family therapist experiences Gestalt therapy firsthand so that his or her own unfinished business may be attended to before administering family therapy to clients (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:215).

What has come to the attention of the researcher, is the contrast of information pertaining to Gestalt family therapy over the last 30 years. For example, the descriptions of Gestalt family therapy of Kempler (1974) emphasise the Gestalt concepts of Gestalt-experientialism, awareness and the family process. Kempler (1974) places more emphasis on the Gestalt-experiential process of family therapy, whilst the more contemporary authors (for example, Zinker, 1998; Lynch & Lynch; 2005), emphasise the *systemic orientation* when using Gestalt family therapy. With the systemic orientation in mind, it is also important to acknowledge that the individuals or the 'parental couple' within the family system may need to express their difficulties *separately* from the family therapy session. As emphasised in chapter One, the focus of the present study is on the family unit, with an added focus on providing the children in the family with a "voice", even if it means outside the family therapy session. The Gestalt therapist therefore needs to be acquainted with techniques that facilitate in understanding and assisting children with adjustment difficulties. For this reason, the following section provides Gestalt techniques in conducting play therapy with children.

4.4 A GESTALT APPROACH FOR CHILD OR PLAY THERAPY

Emphasised in Chapter One, the objective of using play therapy techniques in family therapy, is to assist young children in expressing their difficulties through play when verbal communication is not optimal. The therapist may decide to use child therapy or play therapy techniques to understand what may be troubling the child. According to classic literature on child therapy (for example, Axline, 1969; Melanie Klein in Saddock & Saddock, 2003) it is best served by administering *play* therapy techniques whereby the child reveals his or her feelings or thoughts 'playing' in the presence of the therapist. The therapist then interprets what the child has communicated in play, which may be in the form of drawings, clay, puppets, role plays, stories or games. The classical works of Oaklander (1988,1992) describe how Gestalt theory may be integrated when working with children. Since Gestalt therapy is a process therapy, the play therapist focuses on the 'what' and the 'how' of the client's behaviour, rather than the 'why' (Carmichael, 2006:125). It is further stated, that the I/Thou relationship is a significant tenet in Gestalt play therapy and the role of the therapist is to assist the child in discerning between figure and ground perceptions or the I/Thou. The Gestalt play therapist is directive and provides the child with specific tasks or 'experiments' which can be used as 'guided fantasies' reflected in storytelling, drawings or sand tray reproductions (Carmichael, 2006:126).

To assist the child within the family 'system', the Gestalt therapist could encourage suitable play therapy techniques during the family therapy session or conduct a play therapy session with the child alone. In support of conducting Gestalt play therapy techniques in a 'group' context, a study was conducted by Doorgapershad and Bauling (2003:73-81) whereby the impact of Gestalt play therapy techniques within a group context was tested on diabetic children aged between 8-12 years. Although the study did not involve the subjects' family members, the group context may serve as a comparison regarding a family therapy context whereby the children express themselves using Gestalt play therapy techniques in the presence of other individuals. Drawings were used and Oaklander's fourteen step model was administered to obtain insight into the feelings revealed in the drawings.

In the study, other methods for example, the 'monster' technique was also used in the sessions. The monster technique is a projective tool enabling the child to reveal thoughts and feelings in a less self-threatening way. The therapist obtains greater insight and understanding of what the child is experiencing. Conclusions of the study were that Gestalt group work combined with play therapy techniques, served to assist the children in dealing more positively with their illness and emotional difficulties. There is further support in the literature (for example, Gil, 1994; Landreth,

1991) that play therapy techniques are currently being recognised as a means to facilitate the expression and involvement of children in family therapy sessions. Landreth (1991:36); Lowe (2004:51) and Ramsden of Family Life Centre (2009) indicate that family therapists are increasingly aware of the benefits related to toys and art materials in family sessions when young children are present. The benefits include facilitating communication with young children through play and the creation of a more child friendly or inviting space for the child in family sessions. Furthermore, this prevents the child being a 'spectator' in the family therapy context, providing him or her with a 'voice' and allows parents to participate in their children's therapeutic process.

A detailed discussion regarding Gestalt therapy theory was provided in Chapter Two. The theoretical constructs underpinning the phenomenological existential therapy theory founded by Fritz and Laura Perls in the 1940's, also underpin the therapeutic concepts of Gestalt play therapy. All the concepts and principles provided in Gestalt therapy literature are therefore pertinent in understanding the child's psychopathology, development and psychotherapy (Carroll & Oaklander, 1997:184). The following section provides a brief overview of the core constructs in Gestalt theory and how they relate to the developing child.

4.4.1 Gestalt Principles and Understanding Children

To understand children from a Gestalt perspective, a brief overview of the core Gestalt theoretical constructs regarding children is pertinent. Carroll and Oaklander (1997:184-187) state that the core Gestalt constructs relating to the growth and development of children are; *organismic self-regulation and figure-ground, the field, awareness, contact and contact boundary, the self and creative adjustment.* These core constructs are now examined with regards to an understanding of children from a Gestalt perspective.

Organismic self-regulation and figure–ground

Organismic self-regulation and figure–ground forms part of Gestalt theory's personality development and is the organic process whereby the needs of the child are provided through experience which allows for learning, growth and development of the child. Organismic self-regulation or the process of gestalt formation and destruction entails a cycle of five stages (Blom, 2006:26). These five stages were discussed in Chapter Two, and are considered relevant from a Gestalt therapy perspective when working with adults and children alike. Blom (2006:24) asserts that the *figure-ground* is an important part of the concept of organismic self-regulation in that it is perceived as that which is the most significant moment for the child, namely that which attracts

the child's attention the most. The figure may be described as the greatest need at that significant moment for the child and once this need is satisfied and the gestalt is fulfilled, the figure disappears only to be replaced with a new figure (or need) which is reflected in the child's foreground (Blom, 2006:24).

The Field and Awareness

The field is the context within which the child is conceived and born. The field includes the resources from the environment that provide nurturing and the means to grow. The field includes his or her family, school and general environment. When the child experiences a need or a discomfort within the field, he or she seeks a way to satisfy this need and achieve equilibrium. As part of organismic self-regulation, *awareness i*s needed. Awareness enables the child's sensory-motor system, namely hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touch.

Contact and the Contact Boundary, the Self and Creative Adjustment

Experiences through these sensory-motor systems results in the child internalising them to aid further development or growth. The child interacts with his or her environment by *contact*, which is also the process of recognising a need and using the environment to fulfil it. The *contact-boundary* is the area at which the child experiences him or herself as that in the environment or field that is not recognised as 'me'. This enables the child to develop a sense of *self* and who he or she is, namely a sense of identity. The process whereby the child decides what to incorporate into the self or to reject is referred to as *creative adjustment* or figure formation. This process is continuous in both adults and children but as thinking individuals there is the capacity to reflect, symbolise and communicate these experiences. The child's capacity to 'represent' his or her mental world enables him or her to be self-reflective regarding existence and the experience thereof. Thus the child's perspective is his or her 'phenomenology' and is unique to him or her (Carroll & Oaklander, 1997:186).

Blom (2006:22) also emphasises the aforementioned core constructs but includes *holism, polarities and the structure of personality* as essential theoretical constructs for Gestalt play therapy. These constructs are now briefly discussed.

Holism

The concept of *holism* in Gestalt play therapy theory views children as 'holistic entities' in that they are the sum total of their physical, emotional, spiritual, language and behavioural aspects whereby these 'entities' can be identified but not separated from each other (Blom, 2006:23).

During therapy the child is made aware of experiences that impact on all the components or entities affecting his or her existence. Gestalt play therapy emphasises the importance of emotional, physical and spiritual factors including language, behaviour and thought processes, regarding children as holistic individuals (Blom, 2006:23).

Polarities

Organismic self-regulation results in the integration of *polarities* which consist of differences that are integrated by the individual. Examples of polarities are the extremes that an individual perceives between love and hate, fear and courage or good and bad. Polarities may be described as opposites that oppose or complement each other and may consist of various forms, be they emotions or personality traits (Blom, 2006:40). It is further stated that a lack of integration regarding polarities may result in fragmentation of the child or individual's holistic entity. Children under the age of six have difficulty in comprehending two different or conflicting emotions when experienced simultaneously, thereby contributing to fragmentation whereby one emotion may be suppressed. This fragmentation should be addressed during Gestalt play therapy with the aim of integrating polarities into the child's world (Blom, 2006:42).

The Structure of Personality

Adapted from the classical work of Perls (1969), Blom (2006:42-47) provides a description of the five layers of the personality. These five layers of personality are considered important in understanding children as well as adults.

1.   Synthetic or false layer

This outermost layer of personality is referred to as the synthetic or false layer and reflects the role individuals have in their lives. Children seek roles formulated by themselves or others and many unresolved conflicts may exist in this layer. Blom (2006: 42) further asserts that by acting out the roles that others expect of them, children who exist mainly according to the false layer have internalised external expectations and these depict the 'top dog' of the self. The top dog concerns demands that the child feels he or she must comply with. The opposite of top dog is the 'underdog' part of the self and is more pleasure seeking part of the personality thus often dominating the top dog of the self. According to Perls (in Blom, 2006:43) the top dog and underdog may be described as the most common bipolarities in individuals. Furthermore, these two polarities are prominent causes for conflict in the children's false layer of personality. Awareness should be promoted during Gestalt play therapy to address the conflict between these

two polarities as it may help the child to move away from fragmentation to a more integrated existence (Blom, 2006:43).

2.   Phobic Layer

The phobic layer concerns the layer of roles that the child uses to control his or her fears regarding the maintenance or continued use of the false layer. In the phobic layer, the child may behave according to the role expected of him or her, for example, taking on the role of the family 'clown' or prankster. This creates anxiety for the child although it is concealed by the behaviour or role that the child displays to the outside world. The phobic layer is followed by the impasse layer.

3.   Impasse Layer

The impasse layer concerns the belief that external support is not available to the individual who also believes that he or she cannot assist themselves in the difficult situation (Yontef & Simkin in Blom, 2006:44). Although children in the impasse layer are aware of the roles they adapt or play, they may express resistance that plays a significant role in Gestalt play therapy. Blom (2006:44) explains that resistance is due to a loss of contact with the child whereby the child uses resistance as a form of self-protection in order to avoid painful feelings. It is further asserted that the repeated use of resistance in the impasse layer reveals progress for the child in that he or she casts aside old strategies thus moving to a new phase of development. The impasse layer is followed by the implosive or dead layer.

4.   Implosive Layer

Individuals in the implosive layer may feel afraid to activate change in their behaviour feeling frozen or 'stuck'. However, because children in this layer are aware of their emotions and behaviour, they can commence experimenting with new behaviours although they may still lack the energy or impetus to do so (Blom, 2006:45). This layer is followed by the explosive layer.

5.   Explosive Layer

Children functioning at this layer can work on completing unfinished business, with the ability to experience and express their emotions and to tackle new behaviours (Blom, 2006:45).   It is further asserted that the journey of the child client's awareness of his or her process, emotions and resources to fulfil his or her needs in order to reach the explosive layer is a vital objective of Gestalt play therapy and represents the end of the therapeutic process for the client.

In sum, Gestalt therapy is a phenomenological, existential and holistic approach. The therapist can endeavour to understand the child by exploring his or her unique phenomenology through play therapy techniques and using Gestalt theoretical constructs to gain deeper insight into the child's inner world.

4.4.2   The Meaning and Functions of Play Therapy

What is play therapy? The definition selected for the present study is that of Axline (1989:14-150) which states that play therapy is "an opportunity that is offered to the child to experience growth under the most favourable conditions. Since play is his or her natural medium for self-expression, the child is given the opportunity to play out his or her accumulated feelings of tension, frustration, insecurity, aggression, fear, bewilderment, confusion". Gil (1994:12) distinguishes between directive and non-directive play therapy emphasising that both approaches may be beneficial to the child. The nondirective therapist observes the child as he or she plays and formulates hypotheses and interpretations over time. In contrast, the directive forms of play therapy utilise a more active and directive approach which are exemplified in the behaviour and Gestalt therapeutic approaches (Gil, 1994:13).

Landreth (1991:7) asserts that the world to children is filled with concrete realities resulting in their experiences being expressed or communicated through play. Play therapists need to move out of their 'world' of verbal expression and enter the conceptual-expressive world of children (Landreth, 1991:7). It is further emphasised that play comes naturally to children and is enjoyable, spontaneous and should be voluntary. The child plays because it is a means to relax, master an action, explore the world of illusion and expression (Schoeman, 2001:52). In her classical work, Axline (1969:i) explains that in play therapy experiences, the child is afforded the opportunity to learn about him or herself. Furthermore, the play situation allows for honesty whereby feelings and thoughts are revealed and the child learns to understand himself and other individuals to a greater extent. Axline (1969:ii) further asserts that in the play room with the 'adult therapist' the child is able to create his own world and play with objects that allow for projected identities. Play therapy is also based on the notion that play is the child's natural 'medium' for the expression of what and who he is. Instead of having to 'talk out' his feelings as is the norm in adult therapy, the child 'plays out' his feelings (Axline, 1969:9). Children's feelings are inaccessible verbally because developmentally they do not yet have the cognitive or verbal skills to explain what they feel (Landreth, 1991:13). An understanding of the child's developmental stage (as provided in Chapter 3) is also important in that it assists the therapist in understanding the age related needs of the child. According to Landreth (1991:13), children can

only engage in abstract thinking and reasoning at the age of approximately eleven years. Words are also symbolic and abstract in nature. For this reason, the child's world needs to be understood from a concrete perspective and play is the child's way of coping with the environment in which he or she is placed (Landreth, 1991:13). Where the expatriate child is struggling to adjust, his or her world needs to be understood by the family as well as the therapist. The following section emphasises how play therapy can assist the expatriate child.

4.4.2.1 The Function of Play Therapy for the Expatriate Child

Russ (2005:231) asserts that play ability and creativity is positively related to coping and adjustment. Russ (2005:231) provides the following aspects that play therapy facilitates:

- Problem solving that needs insight
- Flexibility in solving problems
- Divergent ways of thinking
- To be able to use alternative coping strategies in dealing with difficulties.
- The experiences of emotions that are positive
- The skills to understand the emotions of others

Russ (2005:234) concludes that where play therapy is focused and well-controlled, it may reduce fears and anxiety in children. Furthermore, the use of imagination and fantasy are important factors in reducing anxiety, assisting with internal conflict-resolution and mastery of developmental tasks and stressful life events. This view reinforces the function and advantage of using play therapy with expatriate children who may be struggling with any of the aforementioned problems. Clearly, the play therapist requires an optimal understanding of how children function at various age groups. The skills of the therapist also ensure that the play therapy is effective, facilitating positive changes in the child's behaviour. The following section explores the characteristics that may result in effective play therapy.

4.4.2.2 Characteristics of Effective Play Therapy

The characteristics of effective play therapy include the manner in which the therapist conducts him/herself and the aspects that the therapist needs to be aware of throughout the therapy sessions with the child and his or her family.

Schoeman (2001:53) provides criteria which facilitate the play therapist being able to establish a rapport with the child. Some of the essential criteria include awareness, patience, entering into dialogue with the child, kindness, joy, laughter, being in the here and now, avoiding criticism,

taking responsibility as a therapist, humility and sincerity. Axline (1969:15) posits that when using non-directive therapy with a child, it grants the child the permission to be himself or herself without judgement or pressure to change. By playing out his/her feelings the child is able to face them, to control or manage them in a more optimal way. In the play therapy context, the child may express himself or herself freely and fully in the presence of the respect and acceptance of the therapist (Axline, 1969:16). In this context, he can also hate and love freely, express dislikes and fantasies. All these behaviours should occur in the presence of an accepting, understanding, sincere and personable therapist (Axline, 1969:17). Downey (2003:333) posits that there are three criteria which make the therapy with children more effective, namely, that the therapist should have formal training in therapy, have flexible interpersonal skills and engender a positive expectation of therapy in the child. Oaklander (2007:18) expands on the criteria to be an effective play therapist, reflecting that it is the task of the therapist to assist the child in regaining the 'missing parts' of him or herself by using different expressive and creative ways or techniques. Furthermore, the techniques are important projections which provide a gateway to the inner world of the child. Using these projections assist the child in expressing emotions that are deeply seated and cannot be expressed by words alone (Oaklander, 2007:19).

With regards to the characteristics of Gestalt play therapy, Schoeman (2001:55) asserts that there are four essential *phases* in the play therapy process. The first phase includes establishing a sound relationship with the child. This would entail a genuine and respectful attitude towards the child. The second phase includes exploring how the child thinks and what the child's inner world consists of. The third phase encourages the development of insight whereby the child learns to take responsibility for his choices. The final phase allows for the therapist to encourage the child with regards to his/her new found empowerment. However, Carroll and Oaklander (1997:196) argue that the Gestalt play therapy process does not prescribe to a sequence of steps or phases and that it is driven more by goals to help the client rather than to accomplish a specific stage. This would be in keeping with the phenomenological and existential premises underpinning Gestalt theory as presented in Chapter Two.

Landreth (1991:15) and Schoeman (2001:56) emphasise that the therapist needs to be cognisant of the differences between an adult and a child client. Children use toys to express what they cannot verbalise and play is a means to organise their personal world. Unlike adults, the child's insight is limited and he cannot make decisions regarding the therapy session or what he needs to be helped with (Schoeman, 2001:56). Furthermore, the therapist has a sense of responsibility for the child and should remember that the child is immature and cannot perceive himself as a client.

To understand the child in the family therapy context, the therapist may need to obtain more information from the parents. However, unlike the process that would occur when a child comes exclusively for play therapy, the present study examines play therapy *within* the family therapy context. The question arises, how much information should the therapist obtain about the children before the family therapy session commences? The researcher feels that it may be beneficial to have an assessment interview first with the parents, in order to obtain information regarding the family history, the child's general functioning, how the family members react to stress, the developmental milestones within the family and what encouraged the family to seek therapy. Schoeman (2001:57) supports that specific physical or psychological stressors in the child's life should be explored, to create a better understanding of the therapeutic needs of the family or the child.

Once the therapist has learned that play therapy may be needed during the family therapy process, he or she also needs to be mindful of the family's values which determine and guide the child's development (Downey, 2003:325). This means that the therapist needs to be respectful of the family's beliefs and practices whilst conducting the therapy with the child, should it be required during the family therapy process. This emphasises the importance of ethical behaviour of the therapist. Koocher and Keith-Spiegel (1990:34) state that working with children and families can be filled with great acceptance of responsibility, intrusions, confusions and ethical dilemmas. It is for this reason, that the parents should be asked to provide informed consent for any therapeutic work that may involve their children.

In sum, the therapist needs to be mindful of the ethics, characteristics and important criteria of play therapy before commencing with it in the family therapy context. Downey (2003:332) states that effective play therapy occurs when treatment goals are defined and specific techniques for change are used. The researcher supports that by understanding the family's needs and problems before the family therapy occurs, specific techniques (for example drawings) for the children may be used in facilitating the family therapy process. The therapist also needs to be acquainted with play therapy techniques, understand why play is an important communication medium for young children, and understand how to interpret children's play according to sound theoretical principles. This leads the discussion to the forms of play that may be used in play therapy, specifically in a family therapy context.

4.4.3   Forms of Play Therapy

The present study's focus is on family therapy, with the proviso that a child requiring a form of play therapy technique can be invited to do this in the presence of the family therapy context. The therapist would work with play therapy mediums that are transferable and easy to provide during the family therapy session. Unlike play therapy where the therapist is alone with the child, the usual 'tools' in the play therapy room are absent which means that the therapist has to bring specific tools into the therapy room.   For this reason, a smaller number of play therapy techniques have been selected since they are practical and may be easily applied during a family therapy session. As previously stated, the child becomes verbally articulate after the age of nine years. For this reason, the following forms of play therapy are chosen to meet with the developmental needs of children aged four to approximately ten years. However, an older child who feels more comfortable in expressing himself or herself by using these forms of play would also be included. The play mediums have also been selected because they may be used by all members in a group or family context.

Zinker (1978:19) supports that creative experimentation in a group context (in this case a family) may be highly effective. By allowing the child to participate in creative play in the family therapy context, it is an opportunity for the child to release emotions, to express fears and hopes in the safety of the therapeutic environment. Schoeman (2001:65) indicates that the advantages of creative play includes inviting the child to be master of his/her own world of 'creation', allows for his/her inner information to be shared, and affords him/her the chance to unload any feelings of anger or sadness.   The selected forms of play therapy for the present study include creative play techniques, which consist of drawings, clay work, sand work and storytelling.

4.4.3.1 Drawings

Malchiodi (1998:1) asserts that over the past century there has been an increasing focus on the psychological and emotional expressions of children's art. It is further stated, that drawing has been recognised as one of the most important ways that children express themselves and has been linked frequently to the expression of feelings and personality. Therapists therefore recognise that drawing is an effective therapeutic modality because it assists children to 'communicate' in a way when verbalising their thoughts and feelings cannot be accomplished (Malchiodi, 1998:1).

In his classic work, Zinker (1977:13) describes artistic expression as a creative projection that involves narrative or dialogue with the self which is then shaped into a drawing or other form of

artistic expression. It is further stated, that creative projection is a form of releasing the self into the world and it is also a form of escapism. Gestalt therapy whether with children or adults, is phenomenological because the internal experience of the individual is respected and the therapy with the client is based on the client's own perspective (Zinker, 1977:123). The child client's drawing is an expression of his or her inner experience, a creative projection which the therapist explores together with the client. Gestalt therapists refer to this experience as an 'experiment' which asks the client to explore himself with the affirmation and encouragement of the therapist (Zinker, 1977:125). Also in support of drawings as a form of therapeutic expression for children, Oaklander (1992:175) states that drawings are useful as a diagnostic tool, specifically as a projective mechanism. How then does the therapist work with the children and their drawings?

Working with Children and Their Drawings

In keeping with the phenomenological perspective of Gestalt therapy, Malchiodi (1998:35) provides a phenomenological approach to understand children's drawings. Phenomenology as described earlier, is the exploration or study of events and accepting their uniqueness rather than describing them with preconceived ideas or beliefs. When studying children's drawings, the therapist who uses the phenomenological approach, places an emphasis on an openness to the possibility of many meanings (Malchiodi, 1998:35). The first stance that this approach uses, is one of 'not knowing', leaving the therapist open to the many facets of growth that are found within art related expression, namely emotional development, cognitive abilities, people skills and developmental maturity. Malchiodi (1998:37) postulates that children use art to integrate their internal perceptions and experiences but associate their external world experiences with their inner selves. This assists the therapist in using the material for forming and deepening the relationship with the child (Malchiodi, 1998:27). It is further cautioned that mental health professionals should be mindful of stereotyping children's drawings, especially the use of dark colours as signs of depression or abuse. Children, not unlike adults have a preference for colours or art styles and the therapist needs to be mindful of his or her own values when assessing the drawings. To enhance and understanding of the child's inner process, Oaklander (1992:175) discusses the use of clinical projective tests to assess children's drawings, for example the 'Draw a Person Test' or the 'Kinetic Family Drawing'. These projective tests may be useful when used in conjunction to other drawings that do not afford the therapist the understanding that is needed to assist the child.

Oaklander (1992:21) describes that an undirected method of allowing the child to express his inner world would be to ask the child to close his eyes, see his 'world' and describe or draw it on

paper. This includes the colour, shapes and space in the child's world, including where they see themselves. The drawing is then assessed by asking questions about aspects of the drawing. For example, "where are you in this picture?" or "what is happening here?" The therapeutic process also allows for the therapist to observe the child as he or she draws. As the child draws, the relationship with the therapist should be enhanced and dialogue is encouraged.

Oaklander (1992:27) asserts that family drawings are effective if the child is asked to draw family members as symbols or animals. This affords the therapist with information about the family members of the child, the roles of the members and where he fits in as a family member. Dialogue may also include questions about communication, feelings and so forth. An example would be of the child, stating that the mother was a 'butterfly' and he would rather be close to her than to his father, because the father was a 'wasp' and somewhat 'scary'. This could reveal the relationship patterns as perceived by the child and giving meaning to his fears regarding his father.

A favourite drawing technique described by Oaklander (1992:32), is that of the "Rosebush" fantasy. Children are requested to close their eyes, look inward and imagine that they are rosebushes. Prompting is encouraged with resistant children. When the drawing is completed, the therapist may ask "describe what kind of rosebush are you?" or "where are you located". The therapist writes the description down that the child provides of her drawing. Feelings are discussed and often come to the fore during the discussion of the drawing. Children may identify with the rosebush facilitating a discussion that is essentially about themselves and their world. Oaklander (1992:42) explains that drawings also facilitate the expression of fear and anger. The therapist may ask the child to 'draw his or her anger'. This enables the therapist to ask questions about the anger and what is making the child feel this way.

Painting and 'free drawing' whereby the child draws whatever he or she wants to may also be a useful way to establish what the child is currently thinking or feeling. Oaklander (1992:48) explains that painting is particularly therapeutic in that as the paint flows, emotions may be released. In the researcher's view, drawing is flexible and practical and could be used for all family members to express themselves. The following section explores drawings or art within the family therapy context.

Working with Families Using Art or Drawings

Hoshino (2008:42) describes the therapeutic process in working with drawings and families. One technique includes asking family members to draw a 'free picture' of whatever comes to mind.

Pictures may be placed on one large canvas or on individual papers. This process determines the family's dynamics and communication process. It allows for the members to describe their drawings. Systemic features for example, alliances, boundaries, roles and closeness can be revealed through the drawings. The family has to think about these systemic features and discuss them, thereby gaining an insight as to what is occurring within the family system (Hoshino, 2008:43).

Hoshino (2008:26) relates how feedback in the family system allows for the family to restore its homeostasis. Gestalt family therapy according to a systemic approach was described earlier in the chapter. It makes sense from a Gestalt perspective that feedback in the form of drawings for example, when applied during the family therapy session may create insight or awareness thereby resulting in a process of organismic self-regulation within the family system. The awareness would be created by discussing the drawings of the child in the family or all the family member's drawings.

Another drawing technique that is suited to family therapy, would be that of asking the family members to draw a large picture together. Oaklander (1992:46) asserts that this could be accomplished by drawing a large mural. It is stated that children especially, enjoy this experience and feel that they are 'particularly' included in the whole process with a special place in the picture. In the researcher's view, this form of art therapy is optimal for allowing children to feel comfortable with their parents in the room, in that they are expressing themselves as a family using a communication method that children can easily relate to. Furthermore, it makes the activity more enjoyable, less formal or daunting.

In evaluating art or drawing as a form of play therapy, Malchiodi (1998:47) cautions that therapists who are not at ease with drawing, may find it difficult to work with drawing in play therapy. Time is also an important factor, since children tend to become deeply involved in their drawings. Interrupting the drawing process may result in the child not being able to express an important part of his inner world. Malchiodi (1998:47) also states that the child needs to be comfortable drawing in the presence of the therapist. This relates to the positive approach and temperament of the therapist, whereby patience and an awareness of what the child's needs is important in building a safe space for the child to be in.

Hoshino (2008:47) affirms family art therapy or the use of drawings in family therapy, by stating that families have fun together, creating something artistic mobilises physical and creative energy and often has dramatic outcomes that bring about renewed insights and communication. Art in

family therapy transcends communication blocks and enables families to recognise poor communication styles and allows the therapist to encourage better patterns of interacting (Hoshino, 2008:48). Hoshino (2008:48) states that the family's ability to 'play' is also an interesting component in assessing and helping families to improve their relationship. Another form of creative play is the use of clay work.

4.4.3.2 Clay Work

Clay work, like drawing may be described as a creative projection whereby the child 'moulds' his inner experience into a shape and then shares his experiences through dialogue with the therapist. Oaklander (1992:68) explains that most children enjoy working with clay but that the therapist can explore whether the child would enjoy working with this method. Oaklander (1992:69) and Schoeman (2001:65) provide the ways in which the therapist can work with the child using clay.

The child may choose to sit at a table or if used in groups all members sit on the floor and receive a lump of clay. The child is then instructed to close his or her eyes and feel the texture of the clay. Questions are asked about its texture whilst the therapist also instructs the child to manipulate it between his or her fingers. The child is asked to pinch, roll and poke the clay thereafter moulding it into a snake. After this experience the therapist questions the child about his experiences whilst he/she felt the clay, asking "What did you like best?" and "What did it remind you of?" This allows the child to discuss his/her feelings and opens the door for the therapist to explore them further (Oaklander, 1992:71).

Oaklander (1992:71) describes another technique for children to project their inner experiences by working with clay. The child is asked to "be the piece of clay" whereby the child moulds the clay in the shape that he/she perceives is him/herself. When his is completed with this task, the therapist questions him about the clay figure, thereby gaining information about the child's self perception, his/her role in the family and so forth. Clay work allows for the child to express his/her emotions, whilst feeling 'safe' – the object of discussion is him/herself but the perception is that it is focused on the clay object. With regards to Gestalt techniques it affords the therapist the opportunity to work with polarities, empowering the child and creates a self-nurturing activity (Schoeman, 2001: 65).

In evaluating the use of clay in play therapy, it would seem that clay is a useful medium to allow the child to express him/herself and discharge feelings of frustration and anger. It also provides a creative method for the therapist to 'experiment' with the child and encourage dialogue with the

goal of helping the child with difficulties. Oaklander (1992:75-77) provides many methods of working with clay and indicates that it is a popular choice for younger children requiring play therapy. As supported by Zinker (1977:13) creative projections involve dialogue with the self and may take the form of 'clay' sculptures or paintings. Clay is an experiment encouraged by the Gestalt play therapist, whereby the child gives expression to his or her feelings and inner world. Oaklander (1992:77) also supports that clay work can be used in a group situation whereby the discussion is facilitated by the therapist with regards to the objects that each group member created. This could be applied in a family therapy context and used to explore the thoughts of all family members.

4.4.3.3 Sand Work

Similar to drawings and clay work, a sand tray with small figurines or toys is easily transferable and can be presented in the family therapy context. Oaklander (1992:166) posits that sand is a wonderful medium or working with children and adults of every age group. Axline (1989:50) and Landreth (1991:120) also advocate that sand and small figures are ideal play materials for play therapy although they do not provide essential techniques to conduct therapy with sand.

Oaklander (1992:166) provides the following methods of working with a sand tray. Several small objects or toys are placed in the sand tray. Depending on the needs of the child, the therapist either chooses the objects for the sand tray or allows the child to select them. The sand should be fine and easily moved or moulded to form hills or shapes. Water may be provided so that the child may create firmer shapes or water features. The sand creates a tactile and kinaesthetic experience whereby the child creates his own miniature 'world' which provides an ideal medium for discussion (Oaklander, 1992:167). The objects for the sand tray may consist of cars, trucks, planes, animals, fish and figures of people – namely, soldiers, ballerinas, cow-boys. There may be objects of nature, trees, pebbles and wood. Small pieces of furniture, bridges, fences and houses may also be included.

The child is asked to tell a story about the figures in the sand, what is happening or what is going to occur in the future. Each object is discussed and the therapist may comment on aspects of the figure arrangement in the sand. Landreth (1991:120) cautions that the use of specific toys can illicit different behaviours in children. Depending on the context, the therapist could use his or her discretion as to what toys would be appropriate for the family therapy context.

In evaluating sand work with the family or children, it provides a useful method to explore both the child's inner world and/or that of the family members in the session. By allowing the child to

play with the figures and objects in front of the other family members, they become aware of their own patterns of behaviour, roles in the family and how the child perceives them and his environment. The therapist can explore these aspects with the family members who may all be invited to participate with the sand tray play technique. Another creative technique is the use of storytelling, whereby the whole family may become involved. A discussion on this follows.

4.4.3.4 Storytelling

Oaklander (1992:85) advocates the use of stories in play therapy as it facilitates the child in becoming aware of his own experiences. Storytelling as a method of play therapy can take place in several ways. The therapist might make up her own story in the form of a metaphor, or she may read stories from books, illicit the child to tell stories from pictures, the use of puppets or the writing of poetry. Oaklander (1992:85) describes a technique of mutual storytelling whereby the child first tells a story followed by the therapist telling a story using the same characters that the child used but affording a more optimal solution. The child's story is a projection and allows the therapist to know more about his life experience. The stories exchanged are used to give the child an alternative to his or her current thinking. This method brings to mind the Gestalt 'experiment' whereby each story is a part of the therapist's creative use of experimentation. The researcher supports the use of this method, in that it provides for the observation of the child's posture, breathing, language and voice quality. Zinker (1977:29) refers to the creative leap in experimentation as the "culmination of one's clinical hunches and outrageous inventiveness". This could be applied to the story telling method in that the therapist needs to use the 'theme' of the child's story to reciprocate with a similar story that ultimately helps the child.

Schoeman (2001:66) provides that the story told to the child should be a generalisation, have elements of identification for the child, assist him/her with his/her own projection, allow for catharsis and assist the child in gaining insight into him or herself. It is further stated, that the story told by the therapist to the child should relate to the child's developmental phase and life situation, serve as a model in his life and contain positive coping structures.

Other methods to induce storytelling could be the use of pictures whereby the child describes the picture and tells a story regarding the characters or themes in the picture (Oaklander, 1992:89). This is another method of obtaining a projection from the child and could be done in the family context whereby each member provides his or her own 'story' around a picture or theme. The use of specific books or fairy tales may be used to explore emotions that are universally present, for example, hate, fear, love, loneliness and sadness. In the researcher's view, the therapist

could use creative experimentation and ask the child to present his own version of the 'fairy tale' thereby evoking informative projections from the child.

Puppets provide an easy and flexible method to evoke storytelling. Oaklander (1992:104) posits that it is easier for a child to talk by using a puppet than it is to express himself or herself directly. The puppet provides a distance or 'safe space' for the child to reveal inner thoughts. Oaklander (1992:104-105) provides useful methods to work with puppets. The child is asked to select a puppet from a pile and then to 'be the puppet'. The puppet is asked to introduce 'himself' and the therapist may become involved in dialogue with the child using another puppet. Oaklander (1992:105) emphasises that the therapist learns a great deal about the child from the puppet that he or she has chosen. It is further stated that puppets afford excellent methods to overcome resistance in children and can be effectively used in a group situation. In the researcher's view puppets may also be effectively used in the family therapy context whereby each member selects a 'puppet character' and then begins to interact with each other. Alternatively, two family members may converse whilst the family and the therapist watch, listen and/or ask questions. For this reason, Oaklander (1992:108) advises that the therapist has a wide selection of puppets, for example men, women, boys, girls, a witch, tiger or other animal figures.

In evaluating the story telling method in play therapy, it is a creative and convenient way to allow the child to express him/herself without feeling threatened or anxious. In a family therapy context it is ideal, in that the therapist can be creative in allowing each family member to 'feel safe' to express themselves. The parents can also relate an important message in the form of a story and the method could thus be role-modelled for the parents to use with their children outside the therapy room. Occasionally a child may display reluctance to participate in either storytelling or other forms of play methods. This is referred to as *'resistance'* and may occur particularly when children are asked to do something in a group or family therapy context (Oaklander, 1992:195). To deal with resistance the best action for the therapist is to reflect how hard is for the child but to take the resistance seriously and to persevere until the resistance is gone (Oaklander, 1992:195).

In sum, the present study's main focus is on family therapy with play therapy methods, in order to facilitate optimal communication between parents and children. Specific techniques that can be administered within the family therapy session were selected. Drawings, clay, sand work and storytelling were chosen because they are flexible and provide effective means to facilitate expression in younger children including adults. The researcher is of the opinion, that the experienced therapist is able to use techniques as *guidelines* for creative experimentation with

children and families but that ultimately each session is unique and the insight and skills of the therapist determines and navigates the therapy process. Oaklander (1992:194) supports that it is possible to continuously find new ways to work with children and that play methods for creative expression are constantly evolving and changing. An example of a creative way to use play therapy, is to include it in the family therapy session allowing the child or children the opportunity to express themselves where verbal methods are less successful. This is more closely examined in the following section.

4.4.4   Play in Family Therapy

Gil (1994:19) contends that the well known family therapists Carl Whitaker and Virginia Satir included in their theories the use of family play for all family members. Gil (1994:29) further states that the usefulness of play in family therapy, enables the therapist to observe how family members react to the children's behaviour. The therapist then offers alternative behaviours to replace the negative or dysfunctional behaviours.   It is further advocated that the play in these family therapy sessions may include the use of many play materials, for example, drawings, clay, psychodrama, role plays or puppets. Carmichael (2006:204) asserts that the use of play in family therapy should be applied with careful consideration regarding the family's difficulties. It should not be used to reduce anxiety within the family, but rather to increase it and thereby create an incentive for change. Webb (2003:127) advocates that before working with the family, the therapist has a preliminary meeting with the family and aims to gain a sense of the family's personalities and background. This assists the therapist to plan the intervention with the possibility of play during the family sessions.

The child of an expatriate family may be feeling powerless or angry at being placed in a strange new environment whereby he or she was never able to voice any feelings or objections to leaving the familiar place of birth. Oaklander (2007:77) states that working with the whole family about anger is important in assisting the child to deal with this emotion, but it also allows each family member to express views that they may not have been able to verbalise before. The sense of grief and loss experienced by expatriate families and children was discussed in Chapter Three. Oaklander (2007:119) contends that Gestalt therapy is an ideal discipline for working with children who experience grief, in that the therapy approach is focused and directive. Dealing with the children's grief in a session with an expatriate family, may also assist the parents in working through their own feelings of loss and grief regarding loved ones, pets and friends left behind. There are many possible issues involved when the child experiences a loss, namely abandonment,

confusion, guilt, loss of self and control, feelings of betrayal and unexpressed feelings of shame, anger, sadness and misconceptions (Oaklander, 2007:120).

Oaklander (2007:73) posits that the behaviours children bring to therapy reveal the way they try to obtain a feeling of self, a *sense of power in a world where they feel powerless* to show what they feel and who they are. During family therapy, the family therapist can reveal the child's frustrations and inner difficulties to the parents by using appropriate projection techniques used in play therapy. In this way, the parents may gain a greater understanding of their child's needs and emotions. An important reason to address emotional difficulties in children, is that without intervention, the child's introjections and way of 'being in the world' may 'haunt' him or her throughout adulthood (Oaklander, 2007:74). Emotional difficulties in families may be a challenge for the therapist, whereby each family member may want to express their difficulties without acknowledging the rights of the other members. To create structure, Webb (2003:127) posits that ground rules are important when working with the entire family. The objective is to 'role-model' specific behaviour in the session that can be emulated when at home. Examples of rules for the family session include; no insults, respectful behaviour when one individual talks and parents being in charge of the setting of limits for their children (Webb, 2003:127).

Gil (1994:33) posits that the main advantage of play in family therapy is that it strengthens both therapeutic approaches and affords the children the opportunity to express stifled emotions in nonverbal or verbal form using symbols in play. Ramsden (2009), head of family counselling at The Family Life Centre in Johannesburg, supports that the use of children's play in family therapy is beneficial in that it allows the therapist to observe how the parents communicate with the children as well as each other when the family is together. Another advantage of including play in family therapy, is that it creates the opportunity to diagnose or assess the main problems in the family, thereby providing information for the therapist to design a suitable intervention plan (Gil, 1994:41).

In sum, the inclusion of play in family therapy provides an opportunity for the parents to learn how to improve their communication and interaction with their children in a healthier and more pleasurable manner. It also allows the therapist to utilise creative techniques to assist families in overcoming their difficulties and paves the way for new ideas. It is this constant evolving of techniques that leads the discussion to the next section which examines the changes and trends of family therapy, specifically Gestalt family therapy.

4.5   CURRENT TRENDS IN POSTMODERN FAMILY THERAPY

The purpose of including a discussion on the current trends in postmodern family therapy is to provide a current theoretical landscape which reveals that family therapy approaches are not impervious to criticism and changing theoretical influences. This is significant, in that the Gestalt family therapist is also working in a changing world, a postmodern environment influenced by religious freedom, increased global relocation, consumerism and escalating access to news about global events. As mentioned earlier, the modern family may no longer only be defined in the traditional way, namely as the nuclear family, due to the escalation of single parent families, gay families and other definitions of postmodern families. As with the changes occurring in society, the mechanisms used to assist people may also need to be current, reflecting the ethos and requirements of the *zeitgeist*.   This has been exemplified in the evolution of theoretical approaches of family therapy since the 1950's.

 Auerswald (1987:322) argues that out of the five paradigms in the family therapy field, the original approach, namely, psychodynamic theory has largely fallen into disuse by family therapists. It is further stated that the family systems, general systems and cybernetics have converged into 'family systems theory'.   Nichols and Schwartz (2008:299) evaluates family therapy in the twenty-first century and states that the boundaries between family therapy approaches or schools of thought have become increasingly blurred. It is further stated, that there is a growing recognition of the need for techniques to deal with specific populations and problems regarding family therapy.   Kaslow (2000:1-35) conducted a study regarding the evolution of family therapy and its theoretical approaches worldwide. It was found that over the past three decades new family therapy theories have been popularized and used in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, England, Germany, Mexico, Scandinavian countries, South Africa and Yugoslavia.   The study revealed how political and cultural changes in various countries impacted on the development and evolution of family therapy. Of particular relevance to the current study, is South Africa, where it was found that due to the rapidly increasing divorce rates in the 1970's, the need for family therapy significantly escalated in South Africa (Kaslow, 2000:18). Furthermore, the traditional diversity of cultural influences, rituals and beliefs began to be questioned, thereby accelerating the process of urbanisation and acculturation.   Nelson Mandela's speech in 1996, facilitated in deconstructing South Africa's previous political structure, challenging communities to unite in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the country.   The message created a deep significance for the therapeutic community, facilitating changes and

growth in family therapy methods in order to accommodate the diverse cultural groups in South Africa (Kaslow, 2000:21).

From the aforementioned study, it is evident that the constant changes in societies worldwide have an impact on the evolution of family therapy. With traditional family structures changing and evolving, the modern therapist may need to have a more eclectic approach regarding ways to assist families in dealing with difficulties. Rivett and Street (in Cook, 2007:99) support that there may be restrictions in applying a single theory to understand family problems. It is advocated here, that family therapists should be able to combine cybernetic and discourse theory in family therapy. It is therefore believed, that a combination of these approaches would provide optimal results for the client family. Sullivan (2005:184) takes the argument one step further, and states that therapists should not remain faithful to one theory amid the increasing complexity of families, individuals and the world as we know it. It is further stated that the therapist should know a variety of theories, but work with the one that fits with his or her stage of professional development. Sullivan (2005:184) posits that ideally therapists should adhere to an ecumenical world of family theories, this approach being best suited to complexity of today's evolving lifestyles. Brown and Christensen (1999:227) contend that postmodernist family therapists adopt a role that is largely collegial rather than directional based, with the belief that no individual view of reality is intrinsically correct.

Integral to the present study, are the changes that have occurred in Gestalt theory. Latner (1992:1-3) argues that although Gestalt therapy became less focused upon in the late 1960s and early 1970's, it continues to evolve and grow. The most significant trend in the development of Gestalt therapy is the move away from the total reliance on the work of Fritz Perls and a greater adherence to the works of other Gestalt theorists (Latner, 1992:1). Since the 1951 publication of Perls' book 'Gestalt Therapy', the psychology books, values and standards for contemporary publications have evolved and many modern professionals find Perls' original book perplexing (Latner, 1992:2). This has resulted in Gestalt therapists applying the principles provided in Perls' classical work with less clarity and precision over the years. Because of the confusion, the important trend in the last ten years, has been focused on remedying this situation by motivating Gestalt authors to improve the understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of Gestalt theory in Gestalt related journal articles (Latner, 1992:3). It is further stated that as a result of this trend, Gestalt therapists are now more active in attempting to augment both practice and theory. This trend is exemplified in the following journal article. Philippson (2002:1) advocates that Perls' 5-layer theory (Perls, 1969) needs to be examined according to its relevance to modern Gestalt

therapy. It is argued that the five layer theory results in the therapist and the client with the existential uncertainty of the impasse, namely where there is no satisfying outcome or answer. Phillippson (2002:2-3) further assesses whether long or short term therapy is viable for clients, especially where money and time constraints impact on the choice of therapeutic approach. This would be pertinent for Gestalt family therapy and reminds the therapist to tailor the intervention to best fit with the clients' needs.

In sum, one of the important challenges of the family therapist is to remain abreast of current trends pertaining to the theory of his or her choice. As discussed in Chapter One, global relocation has increased significantly, creating different types of challenges for therapists confronted with expatriate clients. Furthermore, family structures have changed, resulting in a change of client expectations and needs regarding therapeutic interventions. The contemporary client or 'patient' no longer has the time or financial means to spend many years on the psychotherapist's couch. The constant changes in society may well challenge therapists of all theoretical affiliations to tailor their interventions accordingly.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the process of family therapy as an intervention. The historical development of family therapy commencing in the 1950's was discussed and related to current trends in theoretical thought. The family was defined and the life cycle of the family was presented.

A review of selected approaches to family therapy examined and evaluated the various schools of thought adapted from the classification system of Carr (2000), which categorised the theories according to areas of concern, namely; behaviour patterns, context and belief systems. The review included a discussion of the main concepts, techniques, the role of the therapist and an evaluation of each therapeutic approach.

The Gestalt approach was contextualised in the therapeutic approaches that focus on context. It was concluded , that the Gestalt approach as well as the others falling under experiential therapy, contain concepts that have been derived from psychodynamic theory, for example the concepts of projection, object-relations and splitting.

Systemic and Gestalt family therapy was discussed with a detailed exploration of the family therapy process, incorporating both systemic and Gestalt principles. The present study's main focus is on family therapy with play therapy and creative methods to facilitate communication between parents and children. Specific techniques that can be administered within the family

therapy session were selected. Drawings, clay, sand work and 'storytelling' were discussed because they are flexible and effective means to facilitate expression in younger children and are easy to apply in a family therapy context.

Finally, current trends in postmodern family therapy were examined. It was found that family therapists are cautioned to keep abreast of changing theories, techniques and trends in family therapy. The Gestalt theory of Fritz Perls and his colleagues have been challenged over the last forty years, with many Gestalt practitioners seeking new ways of applying Gestalt principles without losing the original Gestalt theoretical framework.

The previous theoretical chapters addressing Gestalt theory, adjustment theory and family therapy theory with play therapy, have now been completed. The following chapter describes the methodology used in the present study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.   INTRODUCTION

Chapter One introduced the main objective of this study, namely to explore the 'phenomenological field' of South African expatriates living in Dubai, and to establish from the data yielded, what Gestalt techniques would benefit the expatriate family's adjustment process. Chapter Two introduced the philosophical paradigms of phenomenology and existential phenomenology, both of which also underpin the philosophical paradigm of Gestalt theory. A phenomenological research approach was considered to be a suitable method of inquiry for the present study, and its relevance will be further discussed in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is firstly to outline qualitative and quantitative research methods, emphasising their differences, so as to motivate the use of phenomenology (being part of the qualitative research approach) as a method of inquiry for the present research.   Thereafter, the research aims and research questions are presented. The research design and the research methods are then provided, followed by the research procedure concerning the present study. The final section examines the ethical issues which the researcher had to be cognisant of whilst conducting the study.

5.1   QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The researcher understands that it is prudent to be well informed as to the differences between quantitative and qualitative research and then come to a decision as to which approach would be most appropriate for the study to be undertaken (Fouché, 2002:105). For this reason, a comparison of qualitative and quantitative approaches are now provided. Thereafter, a rationale for using a qualitative approach is provided in order to emphasise why this approach was deemed suitable for the current study.

5.1.1   The Nature of Qualitative Research

Fouché and Delport (2002:79) contends that the reason why the qualitative and quantitative approaches are so contrasting in nature, is largely due to their methodological paradigms. In contrast to the quantitative paradigm, the qualitative paradigm has been formed from an anti-positivistic stance which is interpretive and tends to understand social phenomena and the meaning that individuals attach to occurrences in their life (Fouché & Delport, 2002:79). Furthermore, the data yielded is descriptive, while in the participant's own words, reflecting his

or her values and beliefs. The qualitative researcher is on a quest to understand rather than to explain, using naturalistic observation in place of 'controlled' measurements or statistical methods thereby obtaining data from small sample groups instead of the larger samples preferred in quantitative research (Fouché & Delport, 2002:79).

The language used to describe qualitative research is different to that used when conducting quantitative research. The qualitative researcher should therefore be mindful of using terminology that is not related to the qualitative paradigm (Parker, 2005:14; Bannister, 2005:161). For example, a qualitative researcher would not refer to him or herself as an 'experimenter' but would apply the term 'researcher' (Parker, 2005:14). It is further recommended in Bannister (2005:161) that qualitative researchers refer to the subjects as 'participants' thereby reinforcing the underlying philosophy of qualitative research, whereby the researcher is as much a 'participant' as the individuals partaking in the study.

Qualitative research is an inductive process in which themes arise through the analysis of data that are largely comprised of the detailed perspectives and meanings that research participants assign to their every day experiences (Fouché, 2002:27). The research participants' perspectives serve as a way to explore certain ideas or problem areas identified for study. Conducting qualitative research also means that the naturalistic researcher is also a participant observer who acknowledges the role that he or she has in the discovery of new information (Gillham, 2000:7). Bryman (2008:366) states that qualitative research is a "research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data ... it has become an increasingly popular approach to social research". Thus a qualitative research approach is distinguished from a quantitative method of research in that it is not concerned with statistical methods of inquiry, but rather with the analysis of social phenomena using data collection techniques in the form of interviews, case studies, focus groups and whatever may be deemed necessary in the process. Parker (2005:2-3) asserts that the use of qualitative methods in psychological research could be described as an elaboration, exploration and systemization of the meaning of a particular phenomenon whereby the researcher is "central to the sense that is being made." Hence, qualitative research may be described as the process whereby the researcher is the 'observer' of subjects being studied in their natural settings, resulting in findings that are generated from meanings, words and perceptions gained directly from the subjects and therefore not derived by using statistical methods.

Neuman (1997:331) posits that qualitative research has six essential characteristics. *Firstly*, the context is critical in revealing that the qualitative researcher needs to look closely at the social

context within which the study takes place. This would imply that the same events or actions of individuals may have different meanings in different cultures or eras in history. *Secondly*, the qualitative researcher frequently uses the case study approach whereby one or more cases are examined at great depth. This is referred to as an immersion into the intimate knowledge of individuals' lives and culture through which the researcher examines the actions and words of people. *Thirdly,* the researcher's integrity is essential in that he or she needs to depict the data as it is being aware of his or her own impact on the research outcome or results. *Fourthly*, a qualitative researcher begins with a research question and theory develops during his or her data collection process known as grounded theory. *Fifthly*, the passage of time is of significance in qualitative research, in that qualitative researchers analyse the sequence of events regarding their case studies, monitoring and noting when specific events occurred. *Finally*, the interpretation of data is presented in discussions, with the only visual presentations being photographs, maps or diagrams indicating how thoughts and ideas are related (Neuman, 1997:334-335).

The following section now elaborates upon quantitative research.

5.1.2   The Nature of Quantitative Research

The quantitative paradigm is underpinned by positivism which views scientific explanations to be based on universal laws, therefore being *nomothetic (*Fouché & Delport, 2002:79). It is also stated, that the social world is measured objectively and hypotheses regarding this reality are tested to enable the control and prediction of behaviour. Furthermore, a quantitative study tests a theory that includes variables and is measured by using statistical methods to ascertain whether the predictive aspects of the theory are true. Bryman (2008:140-141) posits that quantitative research has historically been a dominant strategy for conducting research in the social sciences, however since the 1970's its influence has decreased somewhat, resulting in allowing qualitative research to gain more recognition.

Fouché and De Vos (2002:138) assert that quantitative research includes experiments, surveys and content analysis. Neuman (1997:176) states that experimental research in the quantitative studies is based on the principles of positivist thinking. Positivist researchers are interested in precise quantitative data and employ scientific techniques and statistics to arrive at the 'truth' regarding the chosen areas of study (Neuman, 1997:65). Quantitative research supports deductive theory, whereby a hypothesis is subjected to empirical examination in order to ascertain whether it may be validated or falsified (Bryman, 2008:9). The researcher working

within a positivistic paradigm also utilises a different vocabulary than that used in qualitative research. The incentive to use 'scientific language' is to express scientific thinking and logical reasoning which reflect the pursuit of truth or 'sound facts' in research (Neuman, 1997:65). Quantitative research is not only used in the social sciences but applied in the natural sciences as well, for example in chemistry and physics or in related fields, namely agriculture, engineering and medicine (Neuman, 1997:176).

Table 5.1: Contrasts between Quantitative and Qualitative Research (Adapted from Bryman, 2008:39; Neuman, 1997:329).

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Numbers are used to explain the data	Words are used to explain data
Point of view of the researcher is displayed in the interpretation of the data	Points of view of participants are displayed in the data analysis
The researcher has a distant role with regards to subjects when gathering data	The researcher maintains a closer role with regards to participants
Theory testing existing theories and also formulating new theories	The theory is emergent in the interpretation of results
Wider and more numerous sample groups are used	Contextual understanding using a smaller sample group
Hard, reliable data that is analysed by using statistics, charts and tables.	Comprehensive data in the form of words from transcripts, observations, themes
Conducted on a macro level	Conducted on a micro level
Behaviour of subjects is studied	Meaning provided by participants is analysed
Research is conducted in artificial settings	Research is conducted in natural settings
Wider and more numerous sample groups are used	Contextual understanding using a smaller sample group
Fouché and Delport (2005:75) add the following contrasts:	
Epistemological roots in positivism	Epistemological roots in phenomenology
Research methods utilise deductive logic	Research methods utilise inductive logic
The research design is standardised according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated	The research design is flexible and unique and evolves or changes throughout the research process.

The abovementioned discussion regarding the nature of quantitative and qualitative research reflects the *contrasts* in the two different approaches. These contrasts are summarised in Table 5.1 (Page 137).

Although there are contrasts or differences between the qualitative and quantitative approaches, certain similarities are examined in the next section.

5.1.3   Similarities between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Despite the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, Bryman (2008:394-395) provides the following similarities between the two approaches. Firstly, both approaches seek to collect as much data as possible, while endeavouring to answer research questions. Secondly, quantitative and qualitative researchers are concerned with the variations they discover regarding the units of analysis explored. Furthermore, both approaches emphasise the frequency in which certain kinds of behaviour occur, namely how often a specific theme arises and acts as a catalyst in formulating the findings of the study. Finally, both approaches also try to prevent distortion or bias in the research process, and argue the importance of transparency regarding how the research findings are achieved. Transparency relates to the honesty, authenticity and trustworthiness of the research findings, namely that the observations, interpretations and findings are credible and carried out in good faith. This is emphasised in Flick (2009:392) where credibility, dependability and trustworthiness are provided as important criteria for research.

The Wikipedia encyclopaedia (2008:1) asserts that *both* qualitative and quantitative research methods aim to attain validity and reliability in the research outcomes. Although the methods of obtaining validity and reliability differ in the two approaches, the objectives remain the same. Validity refers to the "integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" and reliability indicates "the degree to which a measure of a concept is stable" (Bryman, 2008:698-700). Regarding the different methods in attaining validity and reliability, the quantitative research approach uses various statistical tools to ascertain whether the instruments used to obtain data are in fact, measuring and reflecting as they were intended to do.

Bryman (2008:377) contends that both qualitative and quantitative research approaches strive to attain validity and reliability in their studies. Quantitative methods employ statistical means to attain validity and reliability. Qualitative researchers rely on different means, namely *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* (Bryman, 2008:379). These concepts are discussed in Section 5.7.

The contrasts and similarities between qualitative and quantitative research allude at the advantages and disadvantages of each approach which will now be examined more closely.

5.1.4   A Critical Evaluation of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Neuman (1997:332) asserts that researchers adopting a positivist stance frequently question how qualitative research can be unbiased or objective. According to Bryman (2008:390), this is a common criticism regarding qualitative research. Another common criticism levelled at qualitative research is that studies of this approach are difficult to replicate, whereas quantitative studies are structured and easier to repeat using the same data collection techniques (Bryman, 2008:391). It is further asserted that another frequent critique of qualitative research is that the findings of a few cases cannot always be generalised to other settings. Bryman (2008:391) argues in defence of qualitative research, stating that individuals interviewed in qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population, and that findings are meant to generalise in theory rather than to population groups.

Neuman (1997:333) contends that researcher integrity in qualitative research is a real 'issue' frequently motivating a greater reliance on quantitative research, since it requires stringent statistical methods. However, it is further argued that opportunities for the dishonest researcher may exist in both quantitative and qualitative research. Readers of qualitative research place their trust in the researcher, whereas supporters of quantitative research place greater trust in the positivistic research methods and statistics (Neuman, 1997:333).

As part of the qualitative research approach, the phenomenological system of enquiry was selected for the present study. The concept of phenomenology was described and defined in Chapter One. The following section describes why the phenomenological research approach is relevant for the present study, providing the main theoretical concepts underpinning phenomenology as a research method.

5.1.5   Phenomenology as a Qualitative Research Approach

Fouché and Delport (2002:265) posit that in the research process, the first step is to select a paradigm and to contextualise it within the place of literature and theory. As stated in Chapter One, the overall philosophy or 'paradigm' underpinning the present study is phenomenological, which may be described as the 'meta-theoretical perspective' of this study. Chapter One and Chapter Three defined and described phenomenology. Phenomenology was described as the study of human experience by focusing on the subjective experiences and observations of individuals (Hazler in Haley *et al.*, 2003:184). Wilson (2002:10) posits that phenomenology is not a hypothesis testing mode of research, nor is it one that is guided by theoretical models.

As mentioned in Chapter One, to investigate the present study's research problem, it would require a research approach *that befits the phenomenological paradigm,* and assists in addressing the research questions and objectives of the present study. Bryman (2008:395) supports that the research approach should be appropriate to the research questions and objectives in a study. Fouché (2002:273) describes phenomenology as the researcher being able to enter the participants' life world or *Sitz im leben,* and to place him or herself in the participant's shoes. Furthermore, this is achieved by naturalistic methods of study, analysing conversations and interacting with participants. Since the objective of the present study is to explore the adjustment experiences of South African expatriate families living in Dubai, the researcher intended to enter into a fellow expatriate's 'world' by utilising the most appropriate research method, that not only befits the researcher's world view, but also enables the researcher to fulfil the research objectives by using naturalistic methods of study, namely, to gain insight into expatriate families' experiences. The use of the phenomenological approach to obtain data, also supports the Gestalt theoretical perspectives integrated in this study. Clearly, the analysis of conversations and interaction with participants from a phenomenological perspective exclude the use of statistics and experiments that constitute a quantitative research approach. To understand how phenomenology is applied as a research method, its methodological assumptions are now discussed.

5.1.5.1 Theoretical Assumptions Underpinning Phenomenology as a Research Method

In contrast to the positivist approach used in the study of the natural sciences, the long standing debate about a more 'appropriate' way to study human beings, lead to *interpretivism,* a term denoting an alternative to positivistic thinking or orthodoxy (Bryman, 2008:15-16). It is further stated that supporters of *interpretivism* hold the view that subject matter of the social sciences, is different from the natural sciences, and hence requires a *different research procedure*, namely one that reveals the uniqueness of human beings. The division in thinking, regarding the research methods of human behaviour, is reflected historically in the works of the social science writers namely, Max Weber (1864-1920) and Alfred Schutz (Bryman, 2008:15). It is further provided that the *interpretivistic* approach and ideas of these writers lead to the use of phenomenological methods enabling the study of human behaviour.

Bryman, (2008:15) posits that the initial application of phenomenological ideas to the social sciences has been attributed to Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), whose work was strongly influenced by the phenomenological philosopher Husserl. It is further provided that Shutz questioned the use of research methods applied in the natural sciences, there being inappropriate for the study

of human behaviour and argued that the social scientist needs to gain access to the *individual's thinking* in order to interpret his or her actions. Shutz's major writings only became known to English social scientists in the 1960's after having been translated from the original German texts and subsequently influenced how social scientists studied human behaviour (Bryman, 2008:15).

In the 1960's, Amadeo Giorgi also provided valuable insights regarding the use of phenomenology as a system of enquiry for psychological research. In one of his later works, Giorgi (1980:79) describes phenomenology as "the study of phenomena as they are experienced and lived by man". Jurema *et al.* (2006:1) expands on this description, and states that phenomenological enquiry entails the unravelling of the internal structures of meanings, and not demonstrating or proving a specific idea or phenomena. It is further stated, that in phenomenological research there are no hypotheses that guide the work and no truths to be validated or confirmed. Phenomenological research commences with the 'lived experience' and the unique (Jurema *et al.*, 2006:1).

Cohen and Daniels (2001:1) contend that phenomenological research in psychology is aimed at understanding 'ourselves and others' this requiring a process of self-reflection by the researcher, whereby he or she needs to suspend his or her biases, notions and knowledge regarding the topic of investigation. Therefore, when the researcher analyses the material from a transcript, he or she needs to '*bracket*' his or her conceptions while focusing entirely on the subjective 'world' of the individual who is being studied.

Mohamed-Patel (2008:109) provides that the methodological assumptions of phenomenology include the *description of experience, the role of the researcher, the transcendental attitude,* and *the nature of essences.* These assumptions are now briefly examined.

- *The description of experience*
  Phenomenology provides researchers with the opportunity to clarify and describe how the participants experience their world. The main purpose of the phenomenological method is to understand so as to provide what has been observed in a manner that remains true to the facts (Pivcëvic in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:109).
- *The role of the researcher*
  Giorgi (in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:11) indicates that phenomenological researchers should be aware of their role in the research process, and make it an important part of the research. It is further stated that the researcher should acknowledge where any preconceptions may influence the research. To identify where the researcher's own

experiences and preconceptions may influence the data from the participants, 'bracketing' is used. Bracketing is used to comprehend the experiences of the participants as they are truly are (Giorgi in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:112). Bracketing is thus used to avoid the researcher's own preconceptions from blocking the interpretation of the participant's own unique experience or world view.

- *The transcendental attitude*

  When the researcher brackets assumptions and presuppositions repeatedly with care, a greater level of reflective awareness is achieved. By repeatedly bracketing, the researcher should move from a state of 'natural attitude' to a transcendental attitude, called reduction (Valle & King in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:112).

- *The nature of essences*

  The structure, or 'essence of experiences' is focused on in phenomenology. The analysis of the essences of experience in phenomenology entails the move away from description of the phenomenon, to a deeper understanding regarding the nature, core meaning or essence of the same phenomenon (Kruger in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:112).

The aforementioned theoretical assumptions underpinning phenomenology as a research method, have been reflected in the research approach selected for the present study. Furthermore, a phenomenological research approach was selected because the intention was to gain a deeper understanding and insight into the experiences of a sample group of South African expatriate families living in Dubai. The purpose was to examine meanings, perceptions and experiences of the expatriate families and focus group participants, through an in-depth exploration by using a small, purposively selected sample group.

A qualitative approach was therefore selected because it befitted the existentialist nature of the expatriate's new 'world' or lifestyle which in the researcher's view, could best be described in the expatriate subject's own words and from his or her own perspective. To enable the researcher to focus on the aforementioned areas of interest in the study, the necessary aims and research questions were formulated. These are now presented in the following section.

5.2 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims of the present study were derived and formulated from the factors mentioned in the problem statement provided in Chapter One. For clarification, the problem statement is provided again:

Expatriate children and their parents face the challenges of adjusting to foreign conditions namely; different laws, social systems, possible lack of emotional support, different climate and living conditions and loss of the familiar lifestyles they are accustomed to. These challenges may present as a crisis for those families who do not have the coping skills or resources to adjust to their new lifestyle. As a result, many families are repatriated to their home countries at great emotional and financial cost. From the literature, therapeutic practice appears to lack specifically designed interventions, particularly addressing the needs of expatriate spouses and children. Exploring the expatriate family's journey through the adjustment process in a foreign environment, may deepen our understanding of this life-changing event, and assist therapists to provide expatriate families with the support that they need.

In support of the problem statement the current study may be described as mainly exploratory in nature. Fouché (2002:109) asserts that exploratory research is frequently used to obtain qualitative data and that it is conducted when there is a need for more information in a specific field of interest. To this end, one of the main motives of the present study, is to gain more knowledge and insight into the adjustment process of South African expatriate families residing in Dubai, by exploring their experiences from a qualitative perspective. It is further hoped, that the information obtained from the data would also amplify the current knowledge based on Gestalt therapeutic techniques specifically in assisting the adjustment process of expatriate families.

5.2.1 The Aims and Objectives

The research aims and objectives were presented in Chapter One. However, for clarity regarding the ensuing discussion, they are now revisited.

5.2.1.1 The Aims

Previously mentioned in Chapter One, the definition of 'aim' by Fouché (2002:107) stated that "the words goal and aim are used interchangeably and means an end towards which effort or ambition is directed ... the terms goal, aim and purpose are frequently used interchangeably and implies an end toward which ambition or effort is directed". Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:15) defines 'aim' as an 'intention or purpose ... to propose or intend". Thus in the present context the aims presented reflect the intention or goal of the researcher. The aim further represents the 'idea' of what is perceived to be possible or feasible. The aims are as follows:

- The primary aim of the study is to qualitatively explore the adjustment process of a sample of South African expatriate families living in the city of Dubai.
- The secondary aim is to utilise the data yielded in the study to assist in formulating Gestalt family and child therapy techniques specifically tailored for expatriate families experiencing adjustment difficulties.

5.2.1.2 The Research Objectives

Fouché (2002:107) describes an objective as a concrete, measurable aim. It is further stated that the goal may be differentiated as the purpose or aim, whilst the objectives are the steps that need to be taken within a time-span to achieve the 'dream'. Collins Paperback Dictionary (2003:558) defines objectives as "aim or purpose ". The objectives were as follows:

- To interview expatriate families, including individuals within a focus group, in order to obtain their phenomenological perspectives and experiences of their adjustment process in Dubai. A semi-structured interview was to be used, and the interviews were to be recorded with the use of a tape recorder. Thereafter, the researcher intended to transcribe the interviews and analyse them by using a phenomenological system of data analysis. Where children completed drawings during the interviews with the families, the drawings were to be analysed and compared to the transcribed data. An in-depth review of the literature was planned to facilitate the literature control once the data had been analysed.
- To formulate Gestalt techniques from the information yielded in the family case studies, the focus group discussion and the literature. The Gestalt techniques were planned to provide counsellors and therapists with methods in which to assist expatriate families.
- To present the findings from the study and the formulated Gestalt techniques, in a written research report.

Emerging out of the aims and objectives of the current study, the following research questions are provided.

5.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to De Vos (in Cook, 2007:16), a research question is most important when the researcher is working within a qualitative paradigm that seeks to understand the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences. Flick (2009:103) states that "research questions are like

a door to the research field under study. Whether empirical activities produce answers or not depends on the formulation of such questions". The two research questions for this study are:

- How do South African expatriate families adjust to the living conditions in Dubai?
- What Gestalt family and child therapy techniques could be administered to expatriate families to optimise their adjustment process?

Importantly, the research questions are understood to influence the *methods* and activities used to conduct the study (Flick, 2009:103). In keeping with this process, the researcher considered what qualitative research methods would assist in addressing the aforementioned research questions. The following section discusses the research design or strategy, regarding the use of qualitative research methods selected for the current study.

5.4   THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is described as a framework for the collection and analysis of data, also reflecting the essential aspects of the research process (Bryman, 2008:31). Flick (2009:128) posits that a research design reflects how the study is planned and how the research material will be collected in order to answer the research questions. The research design should not be confused with the *research method*, which is the technique for collecting information and may involve 'research tools', for example, interview schedules or questionnaires (Bryman, 2008:31).
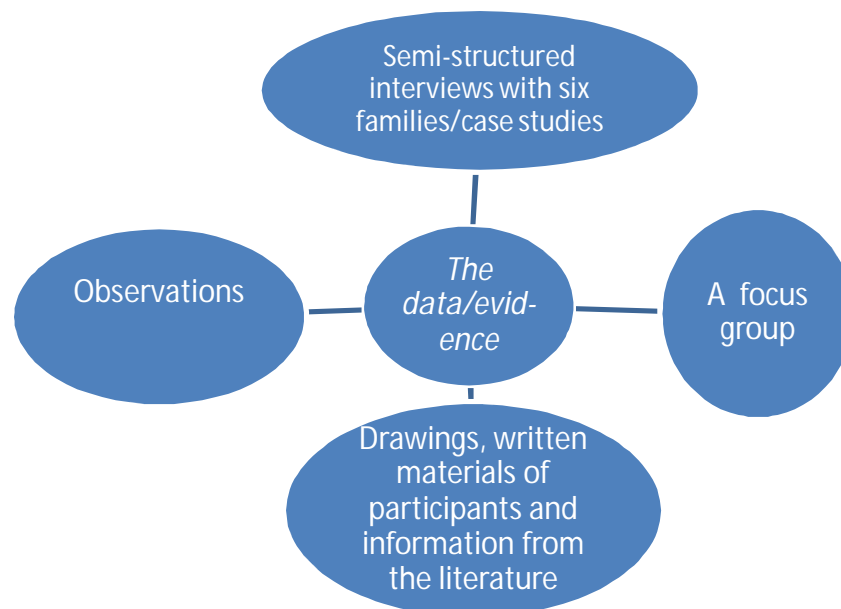
Figure 5.1:   Multiple Sources of Evidence to Achieve Triangulation

The present study made use of a *collective case study design, observations, children's drawings* and a *focus group*. The rationale for using these forms of qualitative research methods, was to attain in-depth information from the available sample group in Dubai.

Furthermore, it was also the intention of the researcher to achieve s*aturation* of data by using different qualitative research methods. In the researcher's view, obtaining data from several case studies was viewed as a way of establishing whether the data from these case studies was consistent, thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings. The concept of triangulation was discussed in Section 5.1.3., where it was revealed, that triangulation could be achieved by utilising several different methods to obtain data.   Figure 5.1 (Page 145) depicts the different methods of data collection, or different sources of evidence used in order to achieve triangulation. The following sections now describe the different methods of data collection or multiple sources of evidence used in the present study.

5.4.1. Qualitative Case Study Design

In qualitative research, case studies are often favoured since they yield intense and detailed information through the use of qualitative methods, for example, unstructured interviewing (Bryman, 2008:53). Chapter One defined a case study as being a unit or a group, such as a family or class, school or community, and is a study that investigates these 'cases' so that specific research questions may be answered (Gillham, 2000:1). Flick (2009:134) supports that the expression 'case' is understood in research as pertaining to individuals, social communities, (example families), organisations or institutions.

There are several descriptions of case study research. Yin (2003:14) contends that the case study as a research strategy, entails the design, data collection techniques and appropriate approaches for the analysis of data, so making "case study" a comprehensive research strategy. Gillham (2000:1) describes case studies as "a unit of human activity embedded in the real world". Yin (2003:2) asserts that the case study method allows researchers to encompass the meaningful characteristics of real life events. It is also defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003:13). It is further emphasised that the case study method is particularly useful to investigate contextual situations or conditions which are important to the phenomenon of the research.

The researcher chose to use a qualitative multiple descriptive case study approach since it facilitated the collection of data from several cases. In this approach, the researcher analyses each individual case and compares the results to similar cases, although the cases may differ in

certain ways. This approach may also be described as a collective case study. The *collective case study* entails multiple cases studied with the objective of investigating a phenomenon (Fouché, 2002:275; Silverman, 2005:127). The collective case study furthers the researcher's understanding about the population and the social phenomena being studied, with the interest in the individual case being 'secondary' because the researcher's main interest lies within the data yielded from a *group of cases* (Fouché, 2002:276). The present case study approach was therefore selected, to gain an understanding of the experiences of a sample group of South African expatriate families who were identified as being representative of the aforementioned population. In the case study approach, inductive reasoning is applied whereby the researcher reveals the relationships between elements in the data, thereafter formulating her conclusions. This process is followed in Chapter Six, whereby the data and the related interpretations are discussed in depth.

The present study aims to be both *exploratory and descriptive* in nature. Fouché (2002:108) states that exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into situations, phenomenon, individuals or communities. Furthermore, the need for the research may be due to a paucity of information regarding the phenomena of interest. Exploratory research thus addresses the 'what' question in the research process (Fouché, 2002:109). The descriptive nature of the current research addresses the 'how and why' questions of the study, and the researcher aims to gain in-depth meanings whereby the use of case studies are best used to obtain results (Bless & Higson-Smith in Fouché, 2002:109). In the researcher's view, the phenomenological perspective of the present study may well be described as a naturalistic inquiry, in that the participants in the case studies recount their experiences regarding the context wherein they are found. By being in the natural setting of the participants in the cases studied, the researcher endeavoured therewith to understand the meaning that was assigned to their experiences.

The Advantages and Limitations of the Collective Case Study Design

Flick (2009:134) posits that case study designs can include the essence of the study in an exact and comprehensive manner. Another advantage, is that this method is not restricted regarding the information outcome of the research and a variety of methods to extract the information may be used (Flick, 2009:134). The limitations of this design may lead to problems of generalisation which may be ameliorated by conducting a series of case studies (Flick, 2009:134). For this reason, a focus group was included in the present study as part of the case study research method. It is evident to the researcher, that there are differing views regarding the number of case studies that ought to be used in a qualitative study. Poggenpoel (2009) posits that four case

studies should provide sufficient material for data analysis in a study, and that any surplus data from similar case studies, or for example, a focus group included in the research, may be useful as a method of cross-referencing the data. The collective case study in the present research consisted of six South African expatriate families living in Dubai, with the seventh family serving as the pilot study. The families were obtained by using the following sampling technique.

5.4.1.1 Sampling of Collective Case Study Participants

Flick (2009:134) states that in case studies, the method of *purposive sampling* is used. Purposive sampling has been used in the current study. As described previously, purposive sampling entails the selection of participants who meet with the research goals of the researcher. This may be further defined as: "Purposive sampling considerations often apply to the sampling of cases in which the research will be conducted and then to people within these cases" (Bryman, 2008:414). Maxwell (in Fischer, 2002:72) posits that the goal of purposive sampling is to adequately capture the heterogeneity of the population, thereby implying that the 'subsets' of the greater population of interest is thus represented.

Flick (2009:134) confirms that the term "case" may be applied to groups of individuals, for example, families as participants of case analysis. In the present study, South African families were selected as an attempt to capture the heterogeneity of the greater population group of South African expatriates residing in Dubai. Eight families were initially identified as the case studies to be interviewed. However, two families returned to South Africa, leaving six families as part of the family case study group. These six families were identified as reflecting the characteristics of the *population* of South African expatriate families living in Dubai. The South African focus group members were identified as the 'spokeswomen' for their families, and therefore the researcher perceived them to be inclusive of the total sample group, also reflecting the characteristics of the population. The *population* is described as the grouping of individuals who have the characteristics being researched, and to whom the findings will be generalised (Cook, 2007:25). Seaberg (1988:240) describes the population as the 'total set' from which the individuals of the research have been selected. The current study's population thus consists of all South African expatriate families, who lived in Dubai during the period January to December 2008.

Barbour (2008:36) supports that purposive sampling used in qualitative research should also reflect the diversity within a group of people. For this reason, the researcher attempted to obtain a sample group that reflected the diversity of the greater South African population group

living in Dubai. This was achieved by selecting families representing different South African cultural groups, for example, a Zulu speaking family, an English speaking family and a South African Muslim family were included in the sample group.

The sampling procedure included the assistance of the South African Women's Association (SAWA) in Dubai. SAWA in Dubai, is an association formed several years ago by a group of South African women expatriates who wished to support other expatriate women by providing regular breakfast meetings or discussions regarding the laws, customs, social activities and living conditions in Dubai. The association serves as a means for new South African expatriate women to befriend other expatriates and form a network for social events and other common areas of interest. The researcher had been a member of SAWA since arriving in Dubai at the beginning of 2008. After being approached by the SAWA committee to assist with meetings and social events, the researcher was in turn, offered assistance from the SAWA committee in providing the names of participants regarding her research. The SAWA committee members also assisted the researcher in obtaining participants for the focus group.

The criteria for inclusion in the sample consisted of the following:

- A South African family residing in Dubai, with a minimum of three months in the city as an expatriate. The family should have children under the age of 19 who were willing to be interviewed or provide a creative expression of his or her experiences, for example, in a drawing.
- The family members should be willing to discuss their experiences regarding their adjustment process as expatriates.
- The family should be willing to be interviewed in their home environment if possible.

As mentioned previously, initially eight families volunteered to take part in the study. However, two families returned to South Africa before they could be interviewed, reducing the family sample group to six families. The researcher managed to obtain a seventh family, whereby all members were willing to participate as the pilot study. A biographical description of the case study sample group is provided in Table 5.2 (page 150). Patton (2002:244) posits that there are no fixed rules for the sample size in a qualitative inquiry, but that it depends on the purpose of the enquiry and the availability of resources, all of which afford credibility to the study. With this in mind, the researcher identified that a focus group would be another available resource with regards to obtaining additional data.

5.4.2 The Focus Group

Flick (2009:195) posits that a focus group is a means of extending the scope of data collection, this being aimed at "collecting the data in a context and to create a situation of interaction that comes closer to everyday life". Bryman (2008:474) describes the focus group method as a form of group interview in which there are many participants, with the emphasis on discussing a defined topic using social interaction with the aim of the 'joint construction of meaning'.

Table 5.2: Biographical Description of the Participant Families

Description	Pilot Study Family	Family A	Family B	Family C	Family D	Family E	Family F
Number of children:	3	2	1	2	2	1	2
Age of Mother:	47	46	28	43	47	42	48
Father:	49	52	32	41	55	55	46
Child 1 : Child 2 : Child 3 :	12 14 19	14 9	5	14 10	14 18	13	14 15
Months/years in Dubai:	4 years	3 years	6 months	3 years	5 years	4 months	5,5 years
Reason for relocation:	Company transfer	job offer	Job offer	Job offer	Company Transfer	Company transfer	Job offer
Occupation of father:	Manager	Engineer	Surveyor	Marketing manager	Project manager	Construction Planner	Senior Project Manager
Occupation of mother:	Housewife and volunteer worker	Housewife	Housewife	Teacher's Assistant	Housewife	Housewife	Housewife and community work volunteer
Home language:	Afrikaans	English	Zulu	English	English	Afrikaans and English	English

The two primary techniques used by qualitative researchers are participant observation and individual interviews. The focus groups or group interviews include these techniques but retain a unique research method (Madriz, 2003:363-364). It is further stated, that focus groups are a way of listening to individuals in a safe environment, where they can share ideas, beliefs and attitudes as a group of individuals from the same socioeconomic or similar backgrounds.

The rationale of using a focus group in the present study is presented in the following discussion, with a view of integrating the advantages of using this method for data collection.

The Advantages and Motivation for the use of a Focus Group

Focus groups facilitate the gaining of many 'voices' of participants during the data collecting stage. The group validates the experiences of other subjects by their similar socioeconomic – backgrounds as well as similar attributes (Madriz, 2003:373). Flick (2009:203) supports that focus groups may be used on their own or in combination with other methods, namely observations, surveys or interviews.

For the present research, the focus group was thereby deemed to be an enhancement of the data obtained from the family case studies. In the researcher's view, the spouses selected for the focus group were representative of expatriate South African wives and mothers who had their opinions and experiences to share regarding own adjustment process, including that of their children and partners. This process is supported in Madriz (2003:375) where it is emphasised that discussion within the group increases empathy regarding common problems and experiences and encourages self-disclosure. Focus groups are valuable in cultures where women's opinions may not be appreciated or valued, and are therefore an appropriate methodology for women who may be isolated because of culture, race or colour (Madriz, 2003:383). The group empowers the women to take control of the discussion process and move the conversation around what is important to them, so compelling the researcher to expand her information and gaining a deeper perspective of the experiences of expatriate wives. Focus groups are an important technique because they afford the researcher a method to hear many voices regarding a topic of study, and allows for freedom of expression in individuals who may not have the opportunity to socially voice their opinions and difficulties (Madriz, 2003:384).

Fontana and Frey (2003:72) advocate that questions in focus groups may be unstructured or open-ended regarding phenomenological objectives, and the interviewer should be flexible, objective and persuasive. This approach was adhered to for the current focus group.

In sum, the motivation for including a focus group in the present study was as follows:

- To enhance the data obtained from the family sample group, with the aim of increasing the credibility and validity of the findings.

- To obtain saturation of data thereby ensuring comprehensiveness regarding the data.

- To have the opportunity of gaining the perspectives of South African wives and mothers living in Dubai, concerning their experiences of expatriate life and the impact it has on their families.

The Limitations of a Focus Group

During a focus group, participants may feel pressurised to agree with others and the researcher should encourage a feeling of openness, which should elicit honest and sincere responses (Madriz, 2003:381). The interviewer has to guard against certain people dominating the group, as it is necessary for the whole group to be given a chance to provide a response (Fontana & Frey, 2003:73). This somewhat prevents 'group think' should one person dominate the group and so seek to influence the procedures. Furthermore, the interviewer should also be mindful of the shifting dynamics within the group, as well as be concerned about the questions that she or he intends to investigate (Fontana & Frey, 2003:73). Bryman (2008:488) asserts that focus groups are difficult to organise due to the lack of certainty regarding the number of individuals participating on the given day. The researcher was afforded the opportunity to conduct a focus group whereby it was estimated that a satisfactory number of participants would attend. The following section addresses how the sampling for the focus group occurred.

5.4.2.1 Recruitment and Sampling of the Focus Group

Barbour (2008:135) contends that on average, focus groups tend to consist of approximately 8 – 12 members, however, it is suggested that it may be useful to slightly over-recruit due to the likelihood of some members not attending on the given day. To ensure that the group members share attributes that are considered important for the study, a purposive sampling method is employed whereby individuals with specific characteristics are selected for the focus group. Similar to case study research, the goal of purposive sampling serves to ensure that the heterogeneity of the population is represented (Maxwell in Fischer, 2002:72). Members may be recruited because of shared experiences, age, gender or other attributes that pertain to primary focus of the study (Barbour, 2008:136). In the present study, the assistance of the South African Women's Association (SAWA) played an important role in recruiting participants for the focus group. The criteria for the focus group would be that the participants were:

- South African women expatriates residing in Dubai for a minimum period of three months;

- Be interested in sharing experiences regarding the adjustment process of their families and themselves;

- Residing in Dubai with their immediate family;

- Be a member of SAWA.

Bryman (2008:482) reports that members in a focus group tend to express their opinions more openly when they know each other, thereby feeling secure enough to express their views and experiences. It is for this reason, that the researcher identified women of similar interests, culture or backgrounds and who were also acquainted with one another. The sampling or recruitment for the focus group entailed the invitation to 20 SAWA members, of which 15 participants replied and attended on the given day.

In sum, this section on research design described the strategy or framework within which the researcher aimed at obtaining data from the participants. To do this, the researcher needed to obtain the relevant sample groups. A detailed description of the participants within the two sample groups was provided. The advantages and limitations of the case study method, and the focus group method were also explained. The next stage of the research would be to ascertain what *tools* could be used to extract the information or data from the participants. The following section provides the methods of data collection, together with the analysis techniques used in the present study.

5.5   METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The present research is described as a phenomenological study in that it examines the meaning that South African families assign to their experiences as expatriates living in Dubai. For this reason, the research method or technique needs to facilitate entering the participant's 'life world' or life setting. Fouché (2002:273) asserts that this is accomplished by using naturalistic methods of study such as, the analysis of conversations and the use of interpretive enquiry that entail long interviews or participant observation. Furthermore, several individuals who have experienced the particular phenomena identified by the researcher, are interviewed or observed in order to collect data that is then examined for meanings, themes and descriptions of experiences (Fouché, 2002:273). This process has been identified as appropriate for the present study. A description of the qualitative methods used to obtain data from the sample group are now provided.

5.5.1   The Pilot Study

The pilot study is viewed by the researcher as an important part of data collection methodology in that it provides the *framework* regarding how the case study interviews may be carried out. Drummond (1996:88) and Yin (2003:79) confirm that the aim of a pilot study is to identify potential problems in the collection of data and to test whether the research design is feasible and appropriate for the study. Furthermore, the pilot study may be described as a small-scale trial of the study to be undertaken. The advantage of conducting a pilot study with interviews is that it allows the researcher to enhance interviewing skills, while it identifies problems in the questions formulated and how much time is required to complete the questionnaire (Drummond, 1996:89-90; Strydom & Delport, 2005:331). However, it is further cautioned, that not all pilot studies emphasise the limitations or flaws in the study, especially if it is not fully representative of the sample group selected for the main study.

The researcher aimed to use the pilot study to explore the best method of interviewing the families, namely by observing whether a structured or semi-structured interview procedure would be suitable. It was also aimed at investigating any areas that the researcher would need to be mindful of when interviewing the other families. In this way, as part of the method of collecting data for this research, the pilot study served as a useful guide in formulating the semi-structured interview method and what process the researcher should follow regarding the other case studies.

5.5.2   Interviews with Families

Section 5.4 described the research design applied in the current study. A collective case study approach was decided upon whereby seven families were identified as the 'case groups' to interview, with one being the pilot study and therefore not included in the base for analysis. Yin (2003:83) asserts that evidence for case studies can be derived from many different sources, for example, documents, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and archival records. For the present study, a semi-structured interview was used to obtain data from the participant families. Yin (2003:89) further supports that the interview is the most important source of information when conducting case study research.

5.5.2.1   The Semi-structured Interview used in Collective Case Studies and Focus Group

The literature, for example Fontana and Frey (2003:68) and Gillham (2000:65) posit that the semi-structured interview may be the most valuable research tool in case study research, since its main advantage lies in the flexibility of the questioning, and the freeing of the participants to provide more in-depth information. This type of data collection is thus a form of 'guided conversation'

rather than structured queries (Yin, 2003:89). An advantage of a semi-structured interview is that it facilitates in obtaining the perspectives of the participants without the researcher dictating the direction of the interview, which is often the case when structured methods are used (Barbour, 2008:119).

Rapley (2004:17) argues that there is no fixed rule regarding the questions used in the interview, even though it may consist of a list of key words or finely structured questions. The questions may also change during the research project and the list of questions 'mutate' in relation to the individual being interviewed (Rapley, 2004:18). It is further stated that the researcher does not necessarily need to follow the questions initially prepared, but rather to follow the interviewee's process and allow him or her to speak freely about their experiences. Rapley (2004:18) encourages the use of a tape-recorder which allows the researcher to interact with the participant rather than writing notes. The recording also allows for accuracy regarding the discussion.

Fontana and Frey (2003:62) provide that the qualitative interview may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured, and may be used to investigate an individual or group perspective. A structured interview does not always allow for a more optimal understanding of the subjects' world and brings to mind the congruence or truthfulness of the participants' response, since it was not spontaneously provided (Fontana & Frey, 2003:70). Gillham (2000:65) emphasises that the semi-structured interview should convey the key issues in the study and be so structured as to create the most optimal responses in a face to face interview.

The aforementioned advantages of using a semi-structured interview method motivated the researcher to apply the method both during the interviews with the six families and in an 'open discussion' approach with the focus group members. Further advantages of this interview method are provided by Fontana and Frey (2003: 62-70) and Burman, (2005:50-60):

- Firstly, interviewing the participants allows for the examining of issues that may be too complex to explore by using quantitative methods.
- Secondly, the use of a semi-structured interview may facilitate the exploration of areas that contain contradictions or gaps, allowing for the researcher to question the participants in more depth. Interviewing the children and the parents of the families according to a semi-structured interview method, allows the participant families the opportunity to provide richer data in a relaxed and open atmosphere. The participants

feel that they could provide information that *is meaningful to them,* including the researcher.

- Kitzinger (1995:299) states that focus groups are a form of group interview that benefit from the communication between research participants, with the objective of generating data. The researcher also used the semi-structured interview in the focus group in order to encourage participants to share their perceptions and experiences in an open and less rigid environment.

The limitations of 'interviews' as a data collection technique include response bias, interviewees providing answers that are not entirely honest, and poorly constructed questions (Yin, 2003:86). In an endeavour to foresee difficulties in the interview process, the researcher thus conducted a pilot study in order to assess where adjustments could be made so that the ensuing case studies would yield as accurate and in-depth data as possible. The pilot study was also planned to allow the researcher to experience an interview with the whole family and to ascertain whether the questionnaire would facilitate the discussion with the family. To the researcher, the pilot study provided an essential guide, in what behaviours or questions to avoid or integrate in the other family interviews. A more detailed discussion regarding the outcome of the pilot study is provided in Section 5.6 depicting the procedure of the study.

In sum, the semi-structured interview was used when interviewing the six participant families, as well as a means to facilitate discussion with the focus group. To enrich the data, the drawings of the children were also used (where possible) as a means to understand their experiences.

5.5.3   Analysis of Children's Drawings

The use of drawings, especially the artwork of children is evidenced in child therapy and assessment techniques as a means to understand the child's inner world. An example of a recognised method to understand unspoken emotions and the needs of clients, is the Draw-a-Person (DAP) test which is clinically recognised as a projective tool (Sadock & Sadock, 2003:178). Throughout the developmental stages, drawings done by children express their creativity, reflect their body image and emotional impulses (Sadock & Sadock, 2003:32). Kerr (2008:xiv) posits that art and drawing may encourage family members to articulate emotions and thoughts, and in doing so, facilitate individual self-expression when dialogue is problematic. The classical work of Zinker (1977:240-241) also identifies the use of drawings or art as creative means to gain inner awareness and from a Gestalt perspective, obtain a deeper understanding of the individual's process.

From the aforementioned examples, there is evidence in the literature that the use of drawings may assist in understanding children and adults alike. This evidence motivated the researcher to include the analysis of the children's drawings, so as to attain a greater understanding of their adjustment process. The data obtained from the drawings was also understood as a way to further enhance the information obtained from the family interviews. The drawings obtained, were derived from three children of different families. Most children in the families interviewed, preferred to discuss their experiences of Dubai. However, the three drawings that were obtained provided valuable information concerning the children's experiences of Dubai.

5.5.4 Observations and Field Notes

Bannister (2005:17) advocates that all psychological research involves some form of observation. Gillham (2000:49) posits that observation is a positive supplementary technique providing an 'illustrative dimension' to the data, and is a powerful means when used in case studies. It is further stated, that observing supports the concept of *convergence* in research as this entails the gathering of different kinds of evidence or data using different methods. Yin (2003:93) supports that observational evidence is valuable in providing additional information about phenomena being researched. The term 'observation' in the present context, is concerned with the perceiving of phenomena as they happen in natural settings, and is used in opposition to an 'artificial' or constructed environment such as an experiment which is frequently used in quantitative research (Bannister, 2005:18).

Yin (2003:92) states that making a field visit to the 'site' of the case study, creates an opportunity for direct observation. For this reason, the researcher endeavoured to observe the families in their homes (their natural environment or site) when interviewing them. Smith and Osborn (2008:63) assert that individuals usually feel more comfortable in a familiar setting, especially within their own home, and therefore it is advantageous to conduct research interviews in this environment. Flick (2009:226) supports that participant observation includes a field strategy that may be combined with interviewing and document analysis.

Observing the home environments of the participants may provide valuable clues relating as to how the families have adapted to their living conditions in Dubai. For example, the families that enjoy the culture of the region, might display Arabian decorations in their homes. The observation of family dynamics has been advocated by family therapists, for example, Minuchin (in Bannister, 2005:21) assessed family behaviour by how the members communicated and behaved around each other. In the present study, the aim to observe patterns of behaviour was

to enhance the data and not for therapeutic purposes. The observation of the family regarding their gestures, clothing, facial expressions, body movements and other non-verbal behaviour could serve not only to enrich the data but to reinforce information yielded in the interview and so enhance its meaningfulness.

Except for one interview, a research assistant was present during the interview process, and this served as an endeavour to increase the reliability of the researcher's observations, in that *observations* were compared and analysed after each interview. In support of this approach, Yin (2003:93) advocates that it is advisable to have more than one observer when obtaining evidence, thereby ensuring greater reliability as to what is observed. A limitation in using this method, is that it is not possible for all phenomena to be observed in the research contexts (Flick, 2009:232). In the researcher's view, another limitation of this method, is that one needs to guard against one's own prejudices whilst observing participants in their environment. Observations made regarding the families and their homes, their patterns of interaction, and mannerisms were recorded in the field notes. The researcher's personal responses and thoughts were also recorded in a journal and an endeavour to bracket her own perceptions was included in the process.

This brings the discussion to the data analysis methods identified for the present study.

5.5.5 Data Analysis Techniques

An optimal outcome of phenomenological research methods relies on the extent to which the researcher is able to expose the participant's unique experiences of the phenomenon that is being studied (Valle & King in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:120). Fouché and Delport (2005:74-75) explain that the qualitative research paradigm has epistemological roots in phenomenology and involves the identification of the participant's values and beliefs all of which underpin the phenomenon. The question therefore arises as to *how are* these aforementioned experiences, beliefs and values of the participants *accessed* by the researcher who follows a phenomenological research approach?

In one of the earlier works on phenomenological psychology, Giorgi, Fischer and von Eckartsberg (1971:10) posit that in interpreting the data, the researcher should focus firstly on what the participant experiences and then ask questions about the phenomenon. Thus the primary emphasis is on the phenomenon itself, and how it is experienced by the participant. Phenomenological research focuses on the *meaning* of phenomena, and therefore by analysing the meaning, the relevance of the experience for the participant, becomes comprehensible to the

researcher (Giorgi *et al,* 1971:10).   Giorgi (in Mohamed-Patel, 2008:120-121) provides steps pertaining to the empirical phenomenological analysis of data and these are noted as follows:

- The researcher peruses through the entire data to obtain a sense of what is conveyed.
- The next step is to delineate transitions in meaning with the aim of discovering the participant's experience.
- Redundant areas of the data are eliminated, after which the meaningful areas or 'units' are related to the whole experience of the participant.
- The essence of participant's experiences are related to the phenomena being studied, with each unit being examined closely with regard to the meaning it represents to the participant. The units are then explained as well as understood according to the theory relating to the phenomena being studied. The objective of this method is thus to describe the *themes* in the data that reflect the experience of the participant, with regard to the phenomenon focused upon.

The literature on qualitative data analysis (for example, Bryman, 2008:554; Cresswell, 1994:154-155; De Vos, 2005**:**334 and Silverman, 2005:183) provide similar steps and procedures regarding the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data.   Their steps are broadly summarised as follows:

- Data collection and recording.
- Generating categories, themes and patterns of the entire data.
- Researchers induce themes from the text itself. The way to establish themes according to Miles and Huberman (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:275) is that researchers commence with general themes derived from reading the literature and add more themes or subthemes as they proceed. The researcher's theoretical stance, the information from the literature and the characteristics of the phenomena being researched, impact or influence the themes researchers identify.
- *Coding the data.*
  Bryman (2008:550) posits that coding is the starting point for most qualitative data analyses. Ryan and Bernard (2003:274-278) state that coding enables the researcher to make decisions and judgements concerning sections of the text, with the tasks including the identification of themes, marking of texts and constructing models. It is further stated that themes are abstract constructs that researchers identify before, during and after having collected the data.   Codes act as 'tags' to mark texts for subsequent

retrieval and mark sections of the text like simple phrases and work as 'values' regarding units of the text (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:277). Richards (2005:85) explains that coding generates new ideas and is a method used by most qualitative researchers. Lofland and Lofland (in Bryman, 2008:550) provide some questions that are useful in developing codes:

- What does this item of data represent?
- What is this item of data about?
- Of what topic is this item of data an instance?
- What is happening here?
- What are the individuals doing?
- What do they say they are doing?
- What kind of event is happening?

Bryman (2008:550) cautions that coding should be repeated, reviewed and re-evaluated in relation to the transcripts. One word or phrase should be applied to describe a phenomenon. It is further stated that the researcher needs to examine how the codes relate to concepts in the literature. In evaluating the use of this coding method, Bryman (2008:553) states that this method may result in the loss of contextual meaning in the data. This method is further criticised for creating a possible fragmentation of the data, resulting in a loss of flow relating to the participant's narrative. Barbour (2008:2003) asserts that according to the individuality of the researcher, the process of data analysis includes finding a method that works for the researcher. Phenomenological research does not prescribe the use of one specific process in data analysis and may be an integration of many methods (Mohamed-Patel, 2008:122). For this reason, the guidelines provided in Bryman (2008:550-550) as well as Tesch's eight steps in Creswell (1994:154-155) were applied in combination as a method of data analysis for the present study. These steps are further discussed in the following section pertaining to the research procedure.

5.6   THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This section provides a detailed account of how the research in the present study was conducted. The research procedure entailed the following phases:

1. A literature search to ensure the feasibility and value of conducting the study. The formulation of a research strategy and methods of data collection for analysis. Identifying a sample group.
2. The formulation of an interview schedule.

3. Conducting the pilot study.

4. Conducting interviews with six participant family case studies.

5. Conducting the focus group.

6. Analysing the data from both the focus group and the six family cases, and then conducting an in-depth literature survey in order to include a literature control together with a discussion of the findings.

7. Writing up the results for the research report.

With the above phases in mind, a description of the research procedure follows.

Phase 1: The Literature Survey and Identification of Sample groups

The first phase of the research process was to ensure that the area of study was viable and would make a contribution to the field of Gestalt therapy and the difficulties related to expatriate adjustment. Previous studies on expatriate adjustment were perused to obtain insight as to what research had already been done, (if any) in the field of expatriate family adjustment and Gestalt family therapeutic techniques. Upon identifying that the study was feasible, a review of the relevant literature further assisted in identifying what research approach and strategy would be appropriate for the study.

Barbour (2008:197) explains that certain qualitative schools of thought advocate that data needs to be approached *without* the recourse of preconceived theoretical perspectives. It is further argued, that this is 'simply not possible' as the approaches to qualitative research *already include* the cultural assumptions, together with the research questions already deeply embedded in the world view of the individual conducting the research (Barbour, 2008:197). It is further advocated that because of the influence of the preconceived theoretical frameworks, that the qualitative researcher identifies these theoretical areas and continuously questions them whilst conducting the research. The literature search in this phase of the present study, assisted in establishing whether the area of intended research would amplify the existing knowledge base regarding expatriate family adjustment, Gestalt family and child therapy, and the reasons for families succumbing to premature repatriation due to adjustment difficulties. Once the feasibility of the study was identified, the process moved to the next stage, namely the selection of a sample group.

After obtaining formal permission from Huguenot College in South Africa to proceed with the study, the researcher focused on gaining access to the 'field' or context of the research, namely the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. As part of an enquiry into the viability of

conducting research in the field, the researcher established contact with the South African Consulate General in Dubai and arranged a meeting to discuss the intended research. As previously mentioned, the researcher was offered assistance from the South African Women's Association (SAWA) regarding the provision of participants who would be interested in assisting with the study. As the researcher was also a recent expatriate in Dubai, and already a member of SAWA, the assistance of the SAWA members in providing the opportunity to contact participant families, was welcomed by the researcher. The names of interested participants were given to the researcher, and she contacted them telephonically in order to arrange the interviews.

Phase 2: The Interview Schedule

For the purpose of the current study, an interview schedule was formulated to obtain data from the participant families and the focus group. Each participant family was viewed as a 'case study', with six families having been interviewed. Before commencing with the six family interviews and the focus group, a family representing the pilot study was interviewed.

A list of questions were formulated in discussion with a fellow psychology student and colleague in Dubai, and included the researcher's perceptions as to what questions would be pertinent for the study. To enable the formulation of an interview schedule, a pilot study was included, to identify not only what questions were most pertinent, but to gauge what procedures should be avoided or included in the other interviews.

Phase 3: The Pilot Study

In conducting a pilot study, the researcher applied the following procedure:

- A list of questions were formulated and discussed with a fellow expatriate who had not only conducted her own research on migrant workers in New Zealand, but worked in the same field of counselling as did the researcher.
- A review of the literature regarding the advantages and methods of interviewing for case study research was conducted.
- A South African family living in Dubai, volunteered to participate for the pilot study. The researcher was invited to the family's home and interviewed the parents and two children.
- With the consent of all family members, the interview was recorded to facilitate the writing of a 'pilot study' transcript that could highlight any flaws or areas that required change for the interviewing of the other case families. The researcher was welcomed into

the home and offered refreshments.   A letter of introduction was presented to the family and the nature and purpose of the research was discussed. Consent was obtained from all parties. The interview lasted approximately three hours.

- The recording of the interview was transcribed and assessed. Field notes were made concerning areas that required change or improvement for the other interviews. The researcher recorded her personal reflections in a journal.

The pilot study provided the researcher with valuable information regarding a more optimal interview process with the other participant families. It was found that the researcher needed to be mindful of the time allocated to the interview process. During the pilot study interview, the researcher noticed that the children were becoming restless and fatigued. This indicated that the researcher needed to be more mindful with regards to the personal circumstances of all family members, as well as the time or day of the week when the interviews were to take place. It was also noted that during the interview, the participants volunteered more in-depth information when allowed to talk freely about their experiences. At times, the mother in the family became somewhat emotional, and this highlighted the importance of bracketing for the researcher, so as not to over-identify with the participant's own unique experiences. The pilot study therefore emphasised, that although the interview was aimed at being 'research focused', it could also elicit emotional responses from the participants and the researcher needed to be aware of her own reactions and responses if this occurred. Keeping a journal and field notes assisted the researcher in recording her observations as well as any personal reflections.

The observations and experiences during the pilot study motivated the use of the interview schedule mainly as a 'guide' for the interviewing of the six family case studies. The pilot study revealed that the use of a semi-structured interview would assist the researcher in *listening* really carefully to what was being said, rather than focusing on asking the 'next question' reflected on the schedule.   The pilot study also revealed to the researcher, that by allowing the participant the freedom to describe his or her experiences in his or her own way, an opportunity to probe related areas of interest in the individual's life, presented itself. From the pilot study, the researcher discovered that the semi-structured interview would provide the participants with the freedom to reveal their adjustment experiences from *their perspectives*, rather than responding to a rigidly administered set of questions that would dictate the nature and flow of the discussion.

Once the interview schedule was completed and the sampling of the families had occurred, the interview process began.

Phase 4: Interviewing the Participant Families

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on the six families who volunteered to participate in the study. Out of the six families interviewed, one family elected to meet the researcher and her assistant at a shopping mall. The other five families were comfortable with having the interview within their homes. Before each interview, the researcher telephoned the parents and arranged a suitable date and time that was convenient for all family members. Since the interviews occurred in the homes of the families, the researcher firstly ensured that the participants were comfortable with the procedure. A covering letter from the university regarding the researcher's background was provided, and the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the research. It was explained that all participants would remain anonymous and any names in the transcripts would be changed to protect the identity of the participants. It was also emphasised that the interviews were voluntary and that there would be a research assistant present during the interviews. Permission from the family members to include the presence of a research assistant was obtained before the interviews commenced.

 A biographical questionnaire was provided for the parents to complete (Refer to Annexure B). All family members were asked to provide their written consent for the interview and it was explained that any member could withdraw should they feel the need to discontinue. Children provided their written 'assent' for the interviews (Refer to Annexure A). Extra time was taken to explain what would occur in the interview process and participants were invited to ask questions or express any concerns.   From the pilot study, the researcher observed that although participants readily volunteer to discuss their adjustment experiences, they may at times, feel overwhelmed at the sudden awareness of their difficulties. For this reason, the researcher deemed that it would be fair and ethical to offer the *free services* of a counsellor in Dubai, who had volunteered to offer emotional support to those participants who requested it.   The counsellor was a South African expatriate with extensive experience in counselling migrant workers, refugees and other expatriates.

Since five of the six interviews were conducted in the homes of the families, the atmosphere was mostly relaxed and informal. The researcher obtained the families' permission to audio record the interviews which lasted approximately three hours. The length of the interview process would also depend on the hospitality of the participant families, whereby small refreshments were

usually offered. Although the interview schedule provided a useful structure and guide in the interview process, the participants readily provided descriptions of their experiences without much prompting. In some cases, the interview process entailed more probing, clarification and reflecting in order to elicit information from each participant's experience of being an expatriate in Dubai. Where the children did not wish to discuss their experiences, they were invited to provide drawings. The researcher provided the crayons and paper for this purpose.

The researcher was mindful of the time during the interview and 'checked' with the family when it was perceived that members were fatigued or they required a break. Being in the family home afforded the researcher the opportunity to observe the members within their environment or 'field' and observe *how* they lived. Upon completion of the interview process, each family was thanked and assured that if they had any queries or concerns they could contact the researcher.

As previously indicated, the researcher was also mindful of her role as a 'research instrument' and kept a research journal, documenting personal biases and reflections after each interview. Observations and field notes were used as added information, especially when they were added to the data analysis at a later stage. The research journal also provided the researcher the opportunity to critique or 'bracket' her own thoughts and behaviour during the interviews. It was thought that ongoing self-awareness was essential to prevent personal feelings or biases from contaminating the interview process and the relationships with the participants. Although the researcher's assistant did not ask questions in the interview, he made observations during the interview process and discussed these with the researcher after each interview.

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the tape recording onto a transcript for data analysis. The relevant field notes and observations were attached to each transcript.

- *Phase 5: The Focus Group*

Upon completion of the interviews with the families, the researcher began recruiting participants for the focus group. This was done with the assistance of the SAWA committee members who arranged a breakfast as part of the group meeting. Electronic invitations were extended to interested individuals announcing the purpose of the group meeting, date and venue, as well as a description of the researcher and the nature of the research project. The announcement was an invitation to the South African expatriate women to share their views on expatriate families and adjustment to living conditions in Dubai.

Barbour (2008:135) states that certain focus group literature advocate 10-12 members for this type of study, whilst many focus group researchers recommend approximately 8 individuals. For the present study, 15 South African expatriate women attended the focus group. Barbour (2008:135) supports that focus group discussions are not an 'exact science', and that it is prudent to 'over-recruit' as there may be less people attending on the given day.

The researcher informed the group regarding the nature of the meeting and what the topic of research entailed. All participants were informed that their opinions were valued and there are no right or wrong answers. A brief questionnaire regarding biographical details was given to the group (Refer to Annexure B). The biographical questionnaire included an open ended question which also allowed members to anonymously express their views in writing if they wished to do so. The purpose of the questionnaire was provided partly in anticipation of participants who were unable to share their views in the discussion. An interview guide or questionnaire based on the one used for the six family case studies, assisted the researcher in questioning the group. A semi-structured interview was therefore applied.

It was agreed that the meeting would be recorded and that the discussion would be used for research purposes. The members of the group were familiar with each other and an informal atmosphere allowed for open discussion regarding their experiences and views. The researcher had to be mindful of certain individuals 'holding the floor' and would have to interject in order to allow other members to speak. The focus group meeting took approximately two hours.

After the focus group was held, the researcher transcribed the discussion onto a transcript and recorded any valid observations and ideas in her research journal.

Phase 6:   The Data Analysis

As mentioned in the previous section, the guidelines provided in Bryman (2008:550-550) as well as Tesch's eight steps in Creswell (1994:154-155) were combined in application, as a method of data analysis for the present study. The steps followed in the current study were as follows:

- After completing the gathering of data from the interviews and focus group, the tape recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim. Thereafter, all the transcripts, drawings and field notes were carefully perused to obtain an overall picture of the data.
- The interview scripts and the script obtained from the focus group were analysed to acquire the underlying meanings from the information shared by the participants.

- After having studied the transcripts, the identified topics were placed in clusters and arranged in columns in table form.

- The lists were then coded and organised, whilst still checking for new categories not yet identified.

- The transcripts, drawings, notes and observations were all reviewed again and topics, themes and ideas were placed into categories with the aim of finding relationships or connections within these categories.

- Data that related to the main categories were arranged for analysis.

- The data was re-examined until no new themes or ideas could be recognised.

- During the data analysis process, the researcher received the assistance of an external independent coder to assist with the analysis of the transcripts of the families and the focus group. The independent coder is an experienced researcher with a post-graduate degree and has in-depth knowledge in the field of qualitative research. The protocol used to conduct the present data-analysis was presented together with the transcripts (raw data) to the independent coder. This was to ensure that the independent coder applied the same process of data analysis as the researcher, with the aim of obtaining as reliable results as possible. When the independent coder completed the data analysis, the researcher and the independent coder held a meeting to discuss the results of the data that had been analysed. Themes and categories were compared and consensus was reached regarding the core themes in the data. An in-depth literature survey was then conducted for the literature control, whereby the data was related to the relevant theory.

Phase 7:   The findings of the study were written into a research report.

In sum, the multiple case studies found in the present study consisted of six expatriate families and the focus group. The different methods of data collection entailed interviews, children's drawings, observations and the data obtained from the focus group. Together with the literature survey, these different sources of evidence created an endeavour to obtain as much in-depth data as possible.   To ensure that the research results would be authentic, the following section addresses the measures undertaken to address this factor.

5.7   MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Flick (2009:384) emphasises that qualitative research should have criteria with which the integrity and quality can be assessed.   It is further stated that *reliability* in qualitative research can be obtained by ensuring that the consistency of results are provided by using different data

collection methods, leading to the attaining of *triangulation*.   This approach was taken in the present study and is elaborated upon in the following section.

Triangulation and Reliability

Gillham (2000:29) and Silverman (2005:380) describe triangulation as the comparison of different kinds of data (for example, quantitative and qualitative data), and the use of different *methods* in qualitative research, namely the interviews or observations to ascertain whether the results corroborate one another. Flick (2009:447-452) asserts that the use of triangulation may be very valuable or 'fruitful' regarding the inclusion of different methodology approaches in the use of a case studies. Flick (2009:444) further supports that triangulation is a process used to describe the *combination of different research methods* which in turn, is used to attain greater credibility or validity of the results.   Triangulation reveals that researchers take different perspectives on a subject under study and that triangulation should produce a 'surplus' of knowledge due to the variety of approaches used to understand a phenomena (Flick, 2009:445). It is further posited, that triangulation would thus contribute to better quality in research. The 'surplus of knowledge' regarding a phenomena would also indicate that the researcher has endeavoured to explore all avenues in order to obtain as much information as possible about the subject that is studied. Barbour (2008:216) refers to this as *saturation,* stating that it is achieved when researchers reach a stage in the data analysis whereby it is thought that they have exhausted the content of the data and nothing 'new' can be added in analysis of the data.

In sum, Flick (2009:452) provides the following evaluation of triangulation:

- Triangulation may enhance theoretical and methodological access to the field under study.
- The use of triangulation entails greater effort and resources, and it needs to be carefully planned and considered *before* the research activity takes place. Cost and time factors ought to be taken into consideration.
- Triangulation should be applied if and where it enables the gaining of additional insights and information. The results may reveal contradictory or complementary factors when the different methods of data collection are used.
- The integration of different qualitative approaches is an advantage of triangulation.

With the aforementioned views in mind, the researcher endeavoured to attain triangulation of the data, by facilitating a focus group after interviewing the six families. Silverman (2007:291) contends that triangulation refers to the combination of multiple methods, theories, observers

and empirical tools or materials to gain more comprehensive and accurate data. Barbour (2008:151-156) posits that a mix of methods in research is often used to enhance the coverage of the area of study, as well as the combination of interviews, and that focus groups can provide valuable opportunities for comparing private and public experiences of phenomena. An opportunity to conduct a focus group was presented to the researcher, affording her the opportunity to gain the perspectives of South African wives and mothers living in Dubai. It also provided a method in which the researcher could compare the data of the focus group with that of the family case studies. Silverman (2005:214) supports that the repeated comparison of data from different sources, results in a comprehensive data analysis which assists in creating greater validity for the results of the study. The drawings of the children during the family interviews, were further support regarding the use of different sources in the present study. Group interviews or focus groups are used for *triangulation purposes* or used in conjunction with other data gathering methods (Fontana & Frey, 2003:71-72). The use of literature control (as provided in Chapter Six) to verify aspects of the data was also aimed at ensuring dependability of the findings from all the case study interviews.

Procedural Validity

Flick (2009:390) advocates that *procedural validity* may be achieved in qualitative research by seeking feedback from colleagues regarding the research findings. Lincoln and Guba (in Flick, 2009:392) suggest the following strategies for increasing the credibility of qualitative research:

- Peer debriefing, namely, regular meetings with individuals who are not involved in the research, thereby assisting the researcher to disclose 'blind spots' and evaluate results.
- 'member checks' regarding communicative validation of data and interpretations with other individuals who are familiar with the type of research being undertaken – this was addressed in the present study, by involving an academic colleague in conducting the same data analysis procedure as the researcher, in order to establish an authentic corroboration of results and interpretations. The academic colleague has two post-graduate degrees in qualitative research and frequently conducts research studies for theological purposes. He is also well trained in qualitative analysis. The researcher was thus satisfied that the academic colleague had the appropriate knowledge and experience to assist her with the data analysis.

In the present study, the researcher addressed the aspect of procedural validity, by consulting colleagues in the Gestalt therapy discipline, as well as partaking in a peer review session

specifically aimed at discussing the present study. Not only was the methodology of the study examined, but the findings and the nature of the research were also explored. Consultations with specialists and colleagues in the academic field also assisted the researcher in the quest for validity in the study. Field specialists included; Mrs J. Ramsden, Head of family and couple counselling at Family Life Centre in Parkwood, Johannesburg, a consultation with Professor M. Poggenpoel and her colleague, Professor C.P.H Myburgh, Faculty of Psychiatric Nursing, from the University of Johannesburg concerning methodology in qualitative research, and a consultation with Professor M. Marchetti-Mercer of the University of Pretoria, regarding family migration.

Gillham (2000:33) contends that peer support of fellow students may be very valuable in that the feedback and shared understanding and may assist in insuring that the researcher produces a better quality of data or evidence. The researcher made use of peer consultation with a fellow doctoral student and a recent doctoral graduate of Gestalt play therapy. Whilst in Dubai, a colleague who had conducted post-graduate research on refugees and migrants in New Zealand was also consulted. The exchange of ideas, sources of literature and appraisal of each other's methods of data collection also assisted the researcher in experiencing a richer and more enjoyable learning process.

The ethical conduct of the researcher is also an important component regarding the credibility of a study and this is discussed in the next section.

5.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations of the current study were defined and described in Chapter One and will be revisited in this section. Bryman (2008:118) contends that ethical principles in social research concern whether there is harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, or whether deception was involved. The researcher has used these four main principles as part of a measurement process regarding ethics in the present study.   It is also the researcher's view that ethical considerations need to be included throughout the entire research and reporting process. The following discussion integrates the abovementioned ethical principles.

Harm to Participants

It is crucial that researchers aim at avoiding any harm to participants by not inducing emotional pain or conflict when collecting data (Flick, 2009:41). During the interview process with families, the researcher was mindful of their needs and endeavoured to ensure that they were treated with courtesy and dignity at all times.   The researcher explained at the outset that if any of the participants required emotional support or counselling regarding their adjustment difficulties,

that this would be provided by a trained volunteer counsellor who would assist the participant in addressing these difficulties. This free service was offered in possible anticipation of any emotions being unleashed during the interview process. Before each interview with the participants, the researcher systematically explained the procedure of the interview and included an explanation as to how the information would assist the research.

Informed Consent

Flick (2009:37-44) highlights the importance of ethics in qualitative research by emphasising that the welfare and dignity of participants are crucial. It is noted that the essential criteria include informed consent of all participants including the following:

- The consent should be given by a competent individual
- The participant should be fully informed
- Consent should be provided voluntarily

Before commencing with the interviews, the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the research, verbally and in writing. Informed written consent was obtained from the parents and written assent was obtained from the children. Consent to tape record the interviews were obtained at all times. The examples of the consent and assent forms are attached (Refer to Annexure A).

Invasion of Privacy

This includes confidentiality of participants whereby readers of the research should not be able to identify the identities of the participants. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis, while the identities of the participants were protected by not disclosing details in the data like addresses, names and so forth. Where the names of individuals were used in transcripts they were altered to protect the identity of the participant. The researcher ensured that the data was kept in a confidential and secure place accessed only by herself. Five of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants. Care was taken to ensure that participants were comfortable with the researcher conducting the interview in the privacy of their homes. Alternative interview venues were always offered by the researcher.

Avoidance of Deception

The researcher informed the participants that no deception would be used in the interview process, and that they could ask the researcher questions at any stage of the interview process.

The research process was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any stage during the interview process.

In keeping with Gestalt professional practice, the researcher also included the principles of the Gestalt code of ethics as provided by the 2002 European Association for Gestalt Professional Practice. The four important criteria that the researcher was cognisant of during the entire research process were:

- The equality of worth among individuals.
- Respect and uniqueness, worth and dignity of the individual.
- Appreciation of the differences of race, extraction, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity of preference, handicap, age, religion, language, social and economic status and of need for spirituality.
- Recognition of the importance of autonomy and self-regulation of the individual in the context of contractual interpersonal relationships.

In sum, the researcher at all times endeavoured to adhere to the ethical codes provided by the professional counselling bodies, for example, the Professional Board of Psychology and the guidelines provided in the literature regarding ethics in research.

The following section is a summary of this chapter.

5.9   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was, firstly to outline qualitative and quantitative research methods, emphasising their differences, and to motivate the use of phenomenology (being part of the qualitative research approach) as a method of inquiry for the present research. The theoretical assumptions underpinning phenomenology as a research method were discussed. Thereafter, the research aims, objectives and research questions were presented. The research design and the research methods were then explicated, followed by the research procedure of the present study. The final section examined the ethical issues that the researcher had to be cognisant of while conducting the study.

The following chapter describes the analysis of the data, and includes a literature control so as to verify the theoretical findings of the study.

6.   INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five described the research methodology of the present study and presented the methods in which the researcher would analyse the data. The eight steps of Tesch (in Creswell, 1994:154-155) and the recommendations of Bryman (2008:550) were used as guidelines regarding a method of data analysis. This chapter discusses the results of the data analysis and relates it to the findings in the literature.

The first section of this chapter commences with a description of the six themes, and an in-depth discussion of the six family case studies. Each case study will be introduced according to its demographic and biographical nature. Thereafter, the excerpts from the case studies will be discussed according to the six themes identified. Integrated into the discussions concerning the excerpts, are the relevant theoretical findings obtained from the literature. The data yielded from the focus group will then be presented, once again relating the data to the findings in the literature.   Finally, a comparison of the findings, namely a cross-case analysis from the six case studies and the findings of the focus group will be examined, with the objective of exploring the characteristics that impact on expatriate adjustment.

6.1   THE ANALYSIS OF THE SIX FAMILY CASE STUDIES

The findings of the six family case studies are now reported, reflecting the families' experiences and viewpoints of their adjustment process as expatriates living in Dubai. Thereafter, the findings yielded from the focus group will be examined. Table 6.1 (Page 175) depicts the themes and sub-categories identified from the transcripts of the family case studies and the focus group. In the following section, the six themes are described to provide clarity regarding their meaning for the current study:

- **Theme 1: Social Support Structures**
  Social support structures entail the support from family and community members in the new environment. It may also include the friendship and support of family members and friends still residing in the country of origin.

- **Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members**
  Based on the theory of personality traits of Raymond Cattell as provided in (Möller, 1995:285-288) and Eysenck's concepts of introversion and extraversion as described in

(Mayer & Sutton, 1996:225-234), the personality traits of introversion and extraversion were identified from the excerpts of the data. These were viewed as important indicators relating to how participants react to the challenges in their new environment. Mayer and Sutton (1996:225-234) describe extraverts as individuals who "laugh easily, are optimistic, cheerful, less lonely, seem to genuinely like people, adventurous, sociability, carefree, and excitement seeking". Introverts are described as "formal and reserved, and to remain distant from others ... have a smaller social network than extraverts" (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:225-234). It was found that participants who exhibited introverted or extraverted personality characteristics, also displayed traits that could be related to extraversion and introversion. These traits were placed under the sub-categories relating to personality characteristics, for example, curiosity.

- **Theme 3: Environmental Conditions**

  The Collins Paperback Thesaurus (1990:208) describes environment as "atmosphere ... conditions, context, domain, element, habitat milieu, setting, surroundings, territory." These descriptions relate to the factors identified in the transcripts as impacting on the expatriate's well-being and adjustment process.

- **Theme 4: Acculturation**

  Rieger and Wong-Rieger (in Ali, 2003:29) describe the process whereby expatriates adapt to different cultures, as acculturation. This was identified in the analysis of the data as a significant theme, relating to how expatriate families perceived the different cultures in Dubai, and how this perception impacted on their adjustment process.

- **Theme 5: Grief or Feelings of Loss**

  McLeod (2006:30) states that multiple 'losses' and changes relating to foreign relocation, include friends and family, community groups, teachers, clubs, churches and pets. From the analysis of the transcripts, this theme was identified as significant for all family members. The Collins Paperback Thesaurus (1990:280) describes grief as "... agony, anguish, bereavement, dejection, distress, misery ... mourning ... sadness."

- **Theme 6: Disillusion**

  From the analysis of the data yielded from the case studies, it was found that disillusion regarding aspects of expatriate life in Dubai was a prominent factor contributing to less optimal adjustment, especially for the parents of the expatriate families. The Collins Paperback Thesaurus (1990:174) describes disillusion as "break the spell, bring down to earth...disenchanted, enlightened, indifferent, out of love, sadder and wiser, undeceived." De Vos (2005:340-344) as well as Ritchie and Lewis (2003:237-240) provide

the guidelines adhered to in this chapter regarding the classifying of themes and sub-categories. It is further provided, that the data should be broken down into parts, closely analysed, compared and examined with regard to the phenomena present in the data. These guidelines were adhered to during the data analysis.

Table 6.1: Themes and sub-categories identified from the six family case studies and the focus group

THEMES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Social support structures	- Family support (namely, communication and joint activities, companionship. - Social support groups (namely, church groups, South African expatriate clubs, friends from housing compounds, schools and work). - Electronic access to social contacts: (for example, internet) to family and friends in South Africa or globally. - Lack of deeper, meaningful relationships. - Isolation.
2. Personality characteristics of family Members	- Extravert or introvert personality - Attitude to expatriate life (for example, optimism). - Curiosity and sense of adventure. - Use of strategies to adapt or cope.
3. Environmental conditions	- Climate: Extreme heat, humidity, lack of rain and affect on well being. - Landscape: Construction, pollution, traffic and vegetation.
4. Acculturation	- Curiosity, interest and tolerance of other cultures (namely religious customs, laws and languages). - Bullying of expatriate children at school. - Xenophobic experiences in public venues or at work. - Adapting to cultural differences.
5. Grief or feelings of loss	- Grief for family and friends left in South Africa. - Grief for pets left behind. - Sense of loss for familiar environmental factors: languages, landmarks, food, previous homes in South Africa. - Grief for previous roles (example professional role). - Loss of new found friendships in Dubai.
6. Disillusion	- Unexpected changes in work contracts and financial arrangements. - Broken promises in respect of working conditions. - Anger and disillusion with general living conditions.

As it is the purpose of this study to understand the expatriate family's adjustment experiences and to identify Gestalt therapy techniques to assist expatriate families with adjustment difficulties, the excerpts taken from the case studies and their transcripts, will each be examined

according to the aspects that contribute to or inhibit expatriate adjustment. These aspects are to be found under the aforementioned six themes identified from the transcripts.

The discussion of the case studies will commence with demographic and biographical information on each case study. Thereafter, the themes and sub-categories will be discussed in relation to the excerpts and quotations taken directly from the transcripts of each case study. It will then be related to the findings in the literature. The findings from the literature will be included as part of the literature control as discussed in Chapter Five. Any names used in the following excerpts, have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

6.1.1   FAMILY A: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Mother (46)   Father (52)

Daughter (14)   Son (9)
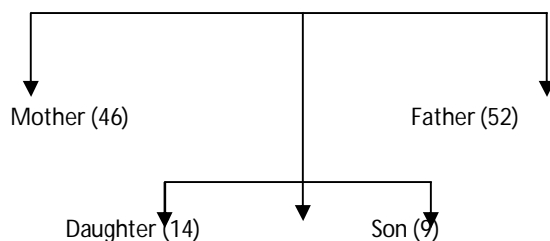
Family A lived in a compound on the outskirts of Dubai. Their home, classified as a 'villa', resembled a typical townhouse complex that may be found in the suburbs of South Africa. There was a swimming pool in the compound and a club house where expatriates could socialise. The villas were situated closely together and children could be seen playing in the narrow side streets. There were no trees or grassy verges, however flower pots abundant with greenery could be seen at the entrances of the villas. The compound was surrounded by a high fence and security guards manned the large gates at the entrance.

The mother informed the researcher that her husband had an extremely demanding job and would only be joining the interview later in the afternoon. She apologised for his absence, stating that he was rarely at home. The mother was described herself as a housewife and she enjoyed doing part-time assignments at the local university working as an examination invigilator. The husband was employed at a large construction company.

From the researcher's observations, the father appeared to be absent from the family in different ways, for example, there were no photographs of him in the living room. However, the shelves and side board displayed many pictures of the children and the mother. The home was well furnished, but there appeared to be a sense of 'transience', in that the living room did not

seem to be well used and some furnishings were covered in plastic. The living room was also darkened by heavy shades and decorative objects were sparse.   The walls were devoid of pictures, except for a very large oil painting of the daughter.   The mother explained that the family usually congregated in the dining room where the television was.   The interview occurred in the living room shortly after lunch, on a week-day afternoon.

6.1.1.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support

Under this theme, the sub-categories of friendship, social support groups and family support and communication were identified. Callan (in Long, 2001:46) supports that social support assists in buffering the psychological stresses that individuals experience in difficult situations or at times of crisis.   This factor was observed in Family A, whereby lack of support *within the family* was noticeable, but external support groups helped the mother to cope with daily challenges in Dubai. Social support groups have been identified as being separate from family support, in that they afford different forms of emotional assistance.   This is reflected in the sub-category below.

Sub-category: social support groups

The researcher observed that social support outside the family was perceived by the mother and father as important in assisting with their adjustment and 'settling in' process.   The mother revealed that making friends, at an early stage upon the family's arrival in Dubai, played an important role in her happiness and willingness to stay in Dubai.

- *" I felt ostracised, If it wasn't for my neighbours here across the road, also South African I would have gone back if it wasn't for them ... you see, I was so lonely."* Mother.

The husband did not indicate that friendship was that important to himself personally, however he revealed how a social support had helped the family as a whole.

- *"In your opinion, how have your wife and children adjusted to Dubai?"* Researcher.
- *"The friends and social groups have been a big help. My wife is working part time, a job she got through friends across the road and she is happier for this, I think."* Father.

Whilst the mother had no social support at the early stages of her arrival, she revealed that she used her available or immediate resources to find social support.

- *"I had to look around by myself, nobody from the company helped, we had no furniture, no telephone ... nobody made an effort to help us with anything ... at the company."* Mother.

However, it would seem that the friendships and support groups were more 'functional' in that they served to provide practical assistance, for example advice or companionship. The lack of deeper or more meaningful friendships may have served to enhance any feelings of loneliness and lack of emotional support.

- *"Well, I have friends here, but my best friends are still in South Africa."* Mother.

Frydenberg, (1999:12) explains that to cope with a challenging situation, the individual assesses whether there are sufficient inner and external resources to cope. To cope with her loneliness and lack of support, the mother took action and 'decided' that the people in her neighbourhood or environment could provide support for her and so lessen her feelings of being abandoned. The father of the family is occupied with the demands of his new job. He may not have experienced the intense loneliness and sense of abandonment that his wife experienced upon their arrival. During the discussion with the mother, it also became apparent that the communication between the spouses was not optimal. This may have added to her sense of isolation and the decision to take action by herself.

Hofstede (2003:2009) asserts that the early phase of adjustment, soon after phase one, (being the "honeymoon" phase) may be described as the crisis phase, whereby the reality of change in the new environment occurs. It is further stated that during this stage, it is not uncommon for the expatriate to have feelings of helplessness, isolation and anger. It is also essential that the individual moves out of this stage and into phase 3, whereby acculturation sets in and the individual begins to adjust optimally. By befriending people in her neighbourhood, and joining social groups, the mother is able to find social support for herself and thereby extend a measure of support to her family. The value of the support system is evidenced by the husband's relief at the friendships and work contacts that the mother had organised.

Although the family has been living in Dubai for approximately three years, the daughter has been unhappy since her arrival. The mother feels that this is mainly due to the daughter's lack of friends.

- *"My son is ok, he has made friends and adapted. My daughter ... no ... tolerates it here but in her heart is not happy, sad."* Mother.

The daughter, at the age of 14, may be placed at Erikson's Stage Five: (Age 12-19) Identity Versus Role Confusion in Erikson's Stages of Development. During this phase, the adolescent has the task of acquiring a feeling of identity regarding his or her abilities, values and ideals. By not forming friendships, the daughter was not able to experience the importance of role identity and obtaining the support that she needed from her peers. She seemed sad and angry during the interview, and revealed a reluctance to interact and communicate. Brown and Orthnor (in Mcleod, 2006:21) posit that adolescence and gender influence adjustment, with 12-14 year old girls presenting significantly lower regarding self-esteem, life satisfaction and depression. Although the daughter expressed that she hated Dubai, she demonstrated a great deal of resistance during the interview, using deflection when asked questions by the researcher. Her use of deflection was demonstrated by non-verbal responses such as silence, lack of eye contact and short clipped answers. Deflection is the turning away from a stimulus, either external or internal, in order to block or avoid awareness (Joyce & Sills, 2001:116-127). This is also revealed in the following excerpt, whereby the daughter does not wish to engage any further about her views on Dubai.

- "*I hate it here ... so there is not much else to say.*" Daughter.

Sub-Category: Family Support

Edstrom and Jervfors, (2007:14) assert that regardless of who works in the expatriate family, spousal support is vital for the adjustment and satisfaction of the whole family. The researcher observed that the spouses in Family A did not communicate in such a manner that showed a deeper understanding of each other.

- "*He (husband) is not a person who shows what he feels. He won't admit it, but I think he feels he made a mistake ... I think he is depressed most of the time ... could be guilt feelings.*" Mother.

The mother is unable to reach her husband emotionally and makes assumptions about his behaviour in a bid to understand him. Although the father is aware of his family's unhappiness in Dubai, he plans to stay for a longer period and fails to communicate to his family why he has this great need to stay. At the age of 52, the father may believe that he has not achieved what he had set out to do in Dubai, namely to succeed in his job and strengthen the family finances. Developmentally, he may be placed at Erikson's Stage Seven: (Age 25-65) Generativity Versus Self-absorption and Stagnation. Bee(1996:56) asserts that at this age, the adult must find ways in which to support the next generation. Hook (2001:287) supports that adults should have largely

resolved their earlier life stage conflicts and focus on assisting others, specifically their own children. Failure to provide this assistance and thus self-enrichment, may lead to stagnation and self-impoverishment (Erikson in Hook, 2001:287). It would seem that the father has not yet resolved or achieved his past goals and which have now become an overwhelming need, perhaps at the expense of his family's adjustment and well-being.

- *"I know my wife and kids want to go back to South Africa but I am about to change jobs and think we will stay here another two to three years."* Father.

The researcher observed that the children were extremely unhappy and longed to go back to South Africa. It seemed that the father was not aware of the depth of his family's unhappiness or chose to pursue his aim to stay on in Dubai regardless of his family's difficulties. The following excerpts reveal the children's unhappiness.

- *" If you said want to go back to South Africa in the next 10 minutes? ... I would say YES!"* Son.
- *"Me too! ... I hate it here."* Daughter.

The lack of communication between parents and children, especially concerning the preparation of coming to Dubai, is evidenced in the following excerpt:

- *"We did not know exactly where we were going in the beginning ... we went with my Mom to some other city ... first when we came here ... so we did not know what was going on at first ... even where we were going like out of space*!" Son.
- (The daughter nodded but remained silent).

Parental communication with the children before the relocation and thereafter may have served to prepare a negative and anxiety ridden condition regarding the initial adjustment for these children. The above excerpts clearly exemplify that the children feel they did not (and still do not) have a 'voice' regarding their life in Dubai. It would seem that the father struggles with emotional awareness regarding his family and himself. This has manifested in an unhealthy form of coping, namely, withdrawal from his family and imbibing a great deal of beer to 'escape' unwanted feelings or thoughts. The father's lack of communication and interaction with his family may serve to enhance their feelings of frustration and anger. The following excerpts reveal that the children also long for more communication and time with their parents, particularly with the father. The son expressed the wish to spend more time with his father. This was indicated in his drawing (Refer to Annexure D) which reveals a scene whereby the son is at the father's work. The

diagram also depicts the son's longing to return to South Africa. This is displayed by the drawing of a large aeroplane which the son described as 'going home to South Africa'. In his work on the analysis of projective drawings, Ogden (1984:74) states that where the shading in the drawing his heavy, there may be possible signs of aggression and anger. The son's drawing reveals heavy shading, particularly in the depiction of the aeroplane 'heading for South Africa'. It may be that this anger and frustration about not being 'heard' regarding his deep wish to return to South Africa is expressed here. This is supported by the excerpts provided regarding himself and his parents. The son's drawing also depicts himself and his father with large outstretched arms and hands. Ogden (1984:82) states that a drawing with outstretched arms and hands suggests a desire for environmental or interpersonal contact, with a possible yearning for affection or help. This is supported by the excerpt of the mother, where she confirms that the son longs to spend more time with his father. Blom (2006:72) supports that family drawings reveal significant factors about the relationships between family members. Furthermore, the drawings act as a valid projection technique to facilitate discussion about feelings and anxieties. When the researcher discussed the son's drawing with him, he expressed the desire to spend more time with his father and his frustration at wanting to be 'heard' was reflected in his diagram.

The mother acknowledges the family's need for more joint activities and communication:

- *"My husband is not always around, works long hours and comes home tired. Not much chance to chat but we do when we have to. He is always tired, stressed and the kids miss him. My daughter does not like him because she thinks that he has ruined her life and my son really wants to do things with his dad ... on week-ends by husband is tired ... seems depressed ... drinks beer."* Mother

In sum, the lack of support and quality of communication between the spouses and with the children is impacting on how the family is adjusting to living in Dubai. It would seem to the researcher, that the mother feels unsupported by her spouse, but continues to fulfil her role as nurturer for the family. The father's lack of communication and meaningful interaction with his children is reinforcing their unhappiness about living in Dubai. This may be a form of deflection, since he does not want to acknowledge either to himself or his family, that life in Dubai is not working out as he had planned. The social contacts and friends that the mother has formed, may assist in providing her with the support to cope with her own unhappiness and assist in her providing some support to her family, although she is unsure of how to help her husband and daughter. Lev-Wiesel and Shamai (1998:108-110) found that stress and uncertainty associated with relocation may impact on the way the family deals with normal daily stressors and can result

in dysfunctional behaviours, poor communication patterns and even greater levels of stress. This is evident in Family A's patterns of communication and difficulties. Caliguiri, Bross and Joshi (1998:598) studied the relationship between family adjustment and expatriate work adjustment. It was found that positive communication patterns, family support and family adaptability were strongly related to expatriate adjustment.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members

Under this theme the sub-categories of introversion and extroversion were identified. Mayer and Sutton (1996:225) posit that Carl Jung, Freud's contemporary, provided the earliest descriptions of the personality characteristics of introversion and extroversion. Jung believed that the psychic energy of extraverts is focused on the outer or external world, and for introverts it is directed inwards towards the self (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:225).

On the basis of factor analysis, the psychologist, Raymond Cattell differentiated four personality types, namely; introversion - extraversion, neuroticism - stability, psychoticism – stability, and intelligence (Möller, 1995:285-287). Downes, Varner and Musinki (2007:2) analysed studies focusing on these personality traits as predictors of expatriate adjustment and found that personality characteristics for example, extraversion and the desire to communicate with people were important factors in positive adjustment. From the excerpts provided, both the mother and the son reveal that they have extravert personalities, and have formed friendships. They also appear to be happier than the daughter and her father. This would suggest that extraversion and the ability to obtain social support is a positive factor in adapting to a new environment or culture. In a study on expatriate adjustment, Caliguiri (2000:68) found that the ability to make friends by expatriates was found to be positively related to the reduction of stress and integration with the host culture. The following excerpt reveals the initial sense of isolation in the mother:

- *"I had to look around by myself, nobody from the company helped, we had no furniture, no telephone ... nobody made an effort to help us with anything." Mother.*

Although revealing the sense of abandonment, the mother still displays the ability to seek help and form social contacts. The researcher also observed during the interview, that both the mother and the son spoke about *their* friends. The father and the daughter seemed more introverted and resisted engaging with the researcher about their feelings. They also omitted to mention any close friends. Both the father and the daughter did not reveal that they had used optimal strategies to adjust. This is displayed in the previous excerpts whereby the father is described by the mother as "*not a person who shows what he feels, seems depressed and drinks*

beer". The daughter's diagram (Refer to Annexure D) reveals that she focuses on many difficult aspects of her life in Dubai, for example the pollution. The drawing also reflects her feelings of isolation and helplessness. This is confirmed in the following excerpts, whereby the mother states that her daughter has not made friends like her son has.

- *"My son is ok, he has made friends and adapted. My daughter ... tolerates it here but in her heart is not happy, sad. "* Mother.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-category of climate is identified and how the climatic conditions impact on the well-being of family members.

Sub-category: climate

- Researcher to the mother and children: *"What experiences are hard for you?"*
- *"The heat and wish we could go back to South Africa ... miss my dogs ... and if we were back in South Africa not so much heat."* Son.
- *"I miss fresh air ... always air conditioning and pollution."* Daughter.
- *"Well, at first the heat was a major problem, but now I am acclimatised. Ja, we all have."* Mother.

The father experienced the climate in a different way:

- *"The heat is bad for business. The summer months like June, July and August are the hottest and it's frustrating because the workers can't give their best on the construction sites ... it's the heat."* Father.

Lazarus and Folkman (in Frydenberg, 1999:12) indicate that stress resulting from exposure to the environment is as a result of the type of relationship that the individual has with the environment. With extreme temperatures, the expatriate has to formulate new coping resources and ways to deal with the environmental stressors. The environment or field of the family may be perceived as 'hostile' or unfriendly due to the heat and pollution. The daughter's drawing (Refer to Annexure C) supports that the pollution, traffic and construction are important factors in her perception of Dubai. The people in the drawing are small in comparison to the depiction of construction, pollution and traffic which are drawn in large bold strokes. Parts of her drawing are heavily shaded in black ink. In consulting the literature regarding projective drawings, Ogden (1984:74) states that where the shading in a drawing is heavy, there may be signs of anger and

aggressive tendencies. In the classic work of Rhyne (1973:5) regarding Gestalt art therapy, it is supported that art and drawings are useful ways to express feelings that are not acceptable to other individuals in the immediate environment. Drawings allow for open and honest expression of deeper emotions. The choice of objects in the daughter's drawing reveals her perception of Dubai, namely; traffic, money, pollution and construction. These perceptions were described in the interview with her. The daughter's choice of darker colours and strong shading portrays her deep inner frustration and anger at her current experiences in Dubai. This observation is consistent with the excerpts, the researcher's observations and the mother's concerns regarding her daughter's anger towards her father.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Included in this theme, the sub-categories of curiosity, interest and tolerance of other cultures, xenophobic experiences and bullying at school were identified.

Sub-category: curiosity, interest and tolerance of other cultures

- *"What helped you to adapt to the new culture?"* Researcher.
- *"We just accepted things. But you have to be careful … like the clothes , what you say and what you do … that's all ."* Mother.

According to the four phases of expatriate adjustment provided in Hofstede (2003:209) and Winkleman (2002:2-3), Phase 4 in acculturation occurs when the individual has *chosen* to make an acceptable adaptation to the new cultural environment. Where this does not occur, the expatriate may fail to adjust optimally or experience culture shock. The above excerpt indicates that although the mother in Family A is not completely comfortable with the new culture, she has 'decided' to adhere to the cultural norms and accept things. She may have recognised this as being the less 'difficult' choice, and has chosen acceptance as a form of coping with the cultural challenges. However, the mother expressed that she had experienced unpleasant behaviour towards herself from the local people. This is reflected in the following sub-category.

Sub-category of xenophobic experiences

- *"It's challenging … they … the locals here all want to be first all the time, everywhere … on the roads and at the schools. You know, they will push you out of the way to get to the door first … these people ignore that and just push you aside … parents and kids!"* Mother.

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The father struggled to adapt to the difficulties that the mix of cultures presented at his work place.

- *"Culture is another thing ... like language is a problem ... So you see, lack of communication in the business side of things is a massive problem. We use translators on the site but they know less than the workers! Then again, the culture ... the locals, they are evil and wicked ... mercenary and even westerners become like them in business."* Father.

Winkelman (2002:2) contends that lack of cultural adaptation may result in feelings of anxiety and confusion. Furthermore, the responses may cause physiological and psychological reactions wherein the psychological reactions consist of heightened emotions, fatigue, identity loss and cognitive fatigue. The mother described her husband as tired, stressed and depressed most of the time. It would therefore seem that although the father has been living in Dubai for some three years, he has not adjusted optimally to the demands of the environment and externalised his anger by projecting his feelings of frustration towards the local people and fellow employees. Joyce and Sills (2001:124) describe projection as revealed in this context, as the transference of inappropriate material. Ronen (in Chew, 2004:3) identified five important attributes of successful expatriate managers, namely good interpersonal skills, willingness to adapt, tolerance for ambiguity, competence and a stable marriage. The researcher observed that the father in Family A showed difficulty with interpersonal relationships, willingness to adapt and a lack tolerance for ambiguity and different cultural groups.

Expatriate studies conducted by Halsberger and Brewster (2005) as well as McGinley (2008), found that when expatriates could not fully meet with the demands of the environment, they would frequently succumb to stress and negative emotions. Failed adjustment or adaptation may be the result of unsuccessful attempts to change the frame of reference and behaviour in the face of intercultural demands (McGinley, 2008:3). The son also experienced difficulties with the local culture at school. This is reflected in the following sub-category.

Sub-category of bullying

The following excerpt reveals that the son had been exposed to bullying at his school.

- *"When we got here ... it was horrible ... like at the schools the local guys ... like to fight."* Son.
- *"They fight you?"* Researcher.

- *"Yes, like ... they trip you and pick fights."* Son.

- *" Do the boys that pick fights frighten you?"* Researcher.

- *"No ... me and my friends just laugh at them and play tricks back on them ... it's really cool!"* Son.

Chambers (1999:131) contends that children's coping and adjustment, like adult coping includes the *perception* of an event as positive or negative thereby influencing the type of reaction towards the event. From the excerpt, it would seem that the son's perception of the bullying experiences was tempered by the support he felt from his friends including the perception that he was not 'powerless' namely that he could retaliate 'with tricks' and humour. Developmentally, the son is found at Erikson's Stage Four: (Age 6-12) Age of Industry Versus Inferiority, the stage whereby the child enhances his or her psychosocial and social roles. The peer group becomes an added source of identification thereby influencing personality and development of the child (Hook, 2002:277).

From the interview, the researcher learned that Family A had only made friends with South African expatriates in Dubai. It was also observed that none of the family members expressed an interest or curiosity regarding the local customs or mix of cultures. According to Hofstede (2003:209), acculturation should set in at stage three in the adjustment phase of expatriates. Family A have been living in Dubai for some three years, whereby acculturation should have been accomplished, although Hofstede (2003:210) states that there cannot be a fixed time period for the adjustment phases to occur. Hofstede (2003:209) contends that when expatriates have not succeeded with cultural adaptation, feelings of alienation may occur. Feelings of alienation towards the different cultures in Dubai are particularly evident in the excerpts of the father and the daughter of Family A.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-categories of grief for family, friends, pets and previous professional roles were identified.

Sub-category: Grief for family and pets

 McLeod (2006:30) contends that the cumulative result of multiple losses and changes include family, community groups and pets.

- *"Leaving our dog ... for my children. For me, my parents because they are so old ... I used to visit them every day ... feel guilty and when she spoke ... my mom ... she said that we so very far away from them ... and they are at the end of their lives."* Mother.

- *"Miss my dogs, we had three ... I wish to go back to the same class I was in before we came here ... same people in my class."* Son.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001:176) provide the stages of grief that the expatriate experiences, showing that they are not dissimilar to the stages of 'acceptance' provided by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross regarding the dying patient. The responses may include denial, anger, depression, withdrawal and rebellion. However, consideration needs to be given as to how family members, particularly elderly parents may feel at the loss of having their children around at a time in their lives when they may be feeling vulnerable and lonely. Although the mother in Family A expresses sadness at missing her parents, she indicates that she also felt guilt and helplessness at not being there for her elderly parents. However, it would seem to the researcher, that the closeness or quality of the relationship with the parents or family members, would also determine the intensity of the emotions regarding the sense of loss experienced. The excerpt above also characterises the grief the mother experiences regarding the *role* she had in South Africa as a caring and attentive daughter, visiting her parents daily and attending to their needs. The elderly mother in South Africa, is also experiencing a sense of loss for her daughter in Dubai. Marchetti-Mercer (in Twiggs, 2009:81) states that emigration can have a serious impact on the fabric of family life, in that the family members left behind, may feel resentment and grief. Furthermore, little attention is given to the feelings of loss experienced by the family members who remain in the country of origin.

Mohr and Klein (2003:5) refer to role clarity as role adjustment of the expatriate spouse and highlight this as a relevant determinant for positive adjustment. The non-working spouse would of necessity, have to redefine his or her new 'role' especially if he or she enjoyed an active professional role. The following excerpt reveals that the mother had a sense of loss regarding her previous role as a working spouse.

Sub-category: grief for loss of professional role

- *"What was difficult for you?"* Researcher to mother.

- *"In South Africa, I ran a play group, had my business ... having my own income every month ... even if it was not much, but it's the principle you see ... to give all that up to come here to nothing ... was very, very hard."* Mother.

The mother grieves for the loss of her role as 'business owner' with the financial autonomy that this role gave her in South Africa. Although she has secured occasional employment as a part-time exam invigilator in Dubai, she still mourns for her previous professional identity and struggles to fully accept her role as a full time mother in Dubai. The survey conducted by the Prudential Relocation International Services (2008) during the period 1995-2001, found that in expatriate women's adjustment, the *sense of identity*, bicultural connection, *employment potential* and the ability to do daily tasks were highly indicated in positive adaptation. Tung (in Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2001:3) contends that spouses have a more difficult experience than their working partners, since they are not considered during the selection phase, and do not obtain counselling for career interruptions. The mother in Family A feels disempowered and somewhat helpless regarding the lack of occupational opportunities for her in Dubai. It is evident, that the loss of her professional status and related income has not only influenced her self-perception, but also her perception of her external world, namely, that it cannot meet her needs and there is nothing she can do to change this.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-categories of changes in work contracts, financial arrangements, accommodation and broken promises were identified. Responses characterising disillusion in these areas were made by both spouses.

Sub-category: change in work contracts, financial arrangements and accommodation

- "*I hoped to earn more money for the family and future in Dubai, but there have been pitfalls in coming to Dubai ... like when we came the company provided us with sub-standard accommodation which I had to change with a fight ... the landlords are unscrupulous ... here, they promise you the world and when you come here everything is different ... my biggest difficulty in coming to Dubai has been the lack of fulfilled promises at work and the long hours, financial set-backs.*" Father.

The very 'reason' for relocating to Dubai, namely; an exciting career opportunity, generous remuneration and promises of a better life-style have not been realised for the father and his family. This has manifested in disillusion and negative thinking about his work and the different cultures in Dubai. Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) concluded that job satisfaction was a significant predictor of adjustment, including spousal adjustment and the motivation to continue working on the expatriate assignment. The feelings of disillusion are also reflected in the following excerpt of the mother.

- "*People here, the companies paint this fantastic picture and in South Africa people think Dubai is the best place on earth ... but when they come here ... and a lot of people do not come and see for themselves first.*" Mother.

The researcher identified that the disillusioned feelings that both spouses show towards their life in Dubai, seemed to make a significant impact on the children's adjustment process. This is revealed in their excerpts throughout the transcript. The children's unhappiness may have been amplified by the discontent and conflict between the parents, including the perception that the father was not emotionally available as a means of support and reassurance.

6.1.1.2 Conclusion and Evaluation of family A's adjustment process

Evidenced in the analysis of the transcript, Family A have difficulty fully adjusting to the life in Dubai. From the researcher's experience when interviewing them, there was an indication that the family seldom enjoyed activities together, or communicated well enough to assuage the feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety or doubt in the minds of the spouses and the children. McCraig (1994:3) indicates that the strength of a family bond is successful when communication is good, but devastating if it is not and the expatriate child is reliant on the family for affirmation, behaviour modelling and a place of support.

 Although the son made friends at his school, according to his mother, he struggled academically and longed to have more interaction with his father. As evidenced in the excerpts, the daughter also revealed strong feelings of anger and depression, projecting her anger at her father. Middleton *et al.* (in McLeod, 2006:19) found that due to relocation, social fragmentation was most strongly associated with suicide risk in girls as young at 15.

Both the mother and the son were enthusiastic and keen to interact with the researcher. They presented lively, extraverted personalities, eager to share information. The daughter was reserved and reluctant to share her views, although she seemed comfortable with drawing a picture of her version of Dubai. Ali (2003:164) found that the personality trait of 'social initiative' was a significant determinant for adjustment in children, since their social lives and school interactions depend on this task despite cultural differences. From the excerpts it is evidenced that the son has used social initiative to adjust to the bullying and cultural differences at his school. The daughter has not revealed this characteristic, as evidenced in the excerpts and the observations of the researcher.

The father deflects his answers largely to his work environment and seemed stressed and frustrated during the interview. The mother describes her husband as having depressive and withdrawn characteristics. From the excerpts, there are indications that this has negatively impacted on the whole family. Salonia (2009:41) explains that every personality-function disorder in the parents may result in persistent unfinished *gestalten* in all family members and when a new stage in the family life cycle commences, this problem will inhibit the family from dealing with new situations in an optimal way. The excerpts reveal that Family A is struggling to adapt to the constant difficulties in their lives, namely the uncertainty of the father's continued employment, their future stay in Dubai and the persistent lack of communication from the father to address the family's feelings of uncertainty.

It would seem that the extravert nature of the mother played an important role in her finding a social support system *outside the family,* including her part time employment which may have ameliorated the other difficulties she experienced. Positive spousal and family adjustment is strongly linked to expatriates remaining in the new country, with spousal dissatisfaction being strongly linked to repatriation (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998:95). Caliguiri *et al.* (1998:601) identified three essential factors of the expatriate family's adjustment process namely, family adaptability, good communication within the family and the family perceptions of stressors. From the analysis of Family A's transcript, the children's drawings and the observations of the researcher, it would seem that the family struggled with the aforementioned important three factors, and for these reasons, found it difficult to adjust to their life in Dubai.

6.1.2   FAMILY B: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Mother (28)   Father (32)

Daughter (5)
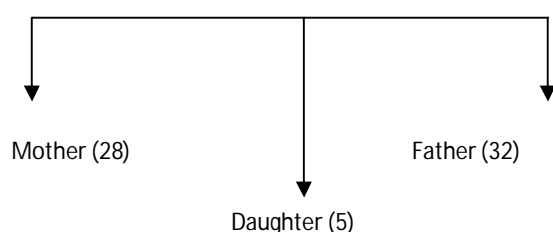
Family B did not wish to meet the interviewer at their home. To the researcher this was significant, because it provided an indication that the family would be reluctant to share a great deal of information since they were reluctant to reveal their home environment.   They elected to meet the researcher in a hotel atrium adjacent to a large well known shopping centre.   The researcher arranged for seating where the interview could not be overheard by other individuals in the area. They were accompanied by their five year old daughter. The mother explained that she was a Zulu, born in South Africa, but had spent most of her childhood living in Paris, France.

As an adult, she had returned to South Africa with her parents where she eventually settled, after having worked a few months in Zambia. Her husband was born in Zambia, but had lived most of his life in South Africa and considered himself South African. Their daughter was born in Johannesburg. The family communicated with each other in Zulu and English.

Although conversant in English, the daughter did not wish to interact with the researcher but chose to draw a picture of her impressions of Dubai. After completing her drawing, she played at a water fountain nearby and frolicked amongst the chairs. The drawing in the researcher's view was not suitable for analysis and was therefore excluded as part of the evidence for this case study. From the researcher's observations, the couple seemed somewhat unsure and uncomfortable with the research process. The researcher explained what the research entailed and presented the letter of introduction and consent forms. To create a more relaxed atmosphere, coffee and light refreshments were ordered from a coffee stand. This seemed to relax the couple. The wife smiled shyly and sat next to the researcher. She mentioned that they had domestic commitments to attend to that morning (as it was a Saturday) and could only stay for approximately an hour. Her husband explained that he had come to Dubai a few months prior to his wife and daughter's arrival. He stated that the intention was to secure an apartment and organise the schooling for his daughter. He seemed eager to commence with the interview.

6.1.2.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Under this theme, the sub-categories of feelings of isolation, electronic access to family in South Africa and support between spouses were identified.

<u>Sub-category of isolation</u>

- *"How would you describe the experience of coming to Dubai?"* Researcher to the parents.
- *"I felt like I was thrown in the deep end ... and the company did not offer support. Gets very lonely ... no friends or family ... isolated ... cut off ... very difficult for me ... I feel like an outcast, not used to this isolation ... also I am not working yet like my husband ... it's harder."* Mother.
- *"Have you made some contact with other expatriates or locals?"* Researcher.
- *"No ... nobody since I came. Very lonely."* (looks sad). Mother

The mother has not established any contact with other people in her housing environment and has not yet secured employment, which she feels may alleviate her loneliness and feelings of

isolation. Her husband's organisation did not provide any support upon her arrival. Ali (2003:41) found that the spouses benefited from organisational support for the whole family, like cross-cultural training, interest in family welfare, and pre-departure guidance as a favourable contribution to adjustment. To overcome her sense of isolation, she needs to explore different ways to obtain social support. Downes *et al.* (2007:2) conducted a meta-study on personality predictors of expatriate adjustment, and found that the drive to communicate, cultural flexibility, a cosmopolitan orientation and a collaborative way of negotiating were favourably linked to positive adjustment. At this stage, the mother's main social support is her husband.

Sub-category of support between spouses and family

- *"What has helped you during this difficult time*?" Researcher to the mother.
- "*We (husband) talk … we just really have each other, so share everything in the day … I talk to my sisters in South Africa most days when I can … my family back in Jo'burg … that's helped me carry on here."* Mother.

From the excerpts, the mother feels that the contact with her family via telephone or the internet was essential in alleviating her loneliness. Marchetti-Mercer (in Twiggs, 2009:83) posits that whilst expatriates maintain contact through technology, it creates the illusion of closeness. Although the mother may be in daily contact with her sisters in South Africa, she still feels lonely and relies strongly on her husband's support. Edstrom and Jervfors (2007:14) indicate that spousal support is vital for the adjustment and satisfaction of the expatriate family, it provides affirmation and comfort especially during the most challenging period of the adjustment process.

The father does not experience the same loneliness as his wife:

- "*Exciting because of the work for me … and not so bad because of my work colleagues … I met lots of people at work and we socialise, go for drinks … made friends … all colleagues, ja … I would say so … My wife is my main support to carry on here, she helps me … you know … sees it as it is here."* Father.

The father's choice of social contact is that of his colleagues and his wife who provides the emotional support that he needs. The daughter spends most of the time with her mother and is not yet attending school. At her stage of development, Erikson's Stage Three: (Age 3-6) Age of Initiative Versus Guilt, one of the tasks is to acquire greater contact with people. Relocating may be more stressful for young children in this age group, in that they experience the loss of routine, familiar objects and people in their lives and provision of similar routines may assist in a better

adjustment process (Hess & Linderman, 2007:118). Most of the family's recreation and 'contact' with other people is at weekends. However, there is no personal contact or interaction with other cultures. The family stay together during their recreation time. The following excerpt indicates that the mother feels powerless to change her loneliness.

- *"I have not heard of clubs. I feel cut off … do things with my husband at weekends … like beaches, parks and malls."* Mother.

By stating that she feels 'cut off', it may indicate that the mother is experiencing her loneliness as a form of rejection from those around her. There is the sense that she is not considering what *she needs to do* in order to change her loneliness. There are indications that she has an introverted personality, however, she may be feeling uncertain as how to form new friendships in Dubai. This is further explored under the following theme.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members

Under this theme, the sub-category of introvert personality was identified.

Whilst the aforementioned excerpts of the father reveals that he finds his work exciting, the mother displays no interest or curiosity in the environment around her.

- *"I can be outgoing … but not much … mostly I enjoy a quiet place and reading."* Mother.

The above excerpt provides further indications that the mother has an introverted nature and may explain why she finds it difficult to establish new friendships. She longs for companionship, but also enjoys being alone without people around her. The idea of actively seeking out new friends and contacts may be daunting for her, with the possibility of rejection being a deterrent in seeking out new social contacts. Hess and Linderman (2007:6-7) assert that the ability to tolerate frustration, failure and ambiguity, a strong sense of self, and a sense of humour are important characteristics for cross-cultural adjustment.

During the interview, the researcher observed that the mother seemed less engaging than her spouse. Her mannerisms suggested that she does not favour new social situations and did not seem to enjoy the interview experience. The study conducted by Kumar *et al.* (2008:320) revealed that personality characteristics play a significant role in cross-cultural adjustment, and that extraverted personality traits were favourably linked with positive adjustment in a new country. This would suggest that individuals with introverted personalities, may struggle to find the social support that could assist them with their adjustment process.

The father finds his support in his wife and the colleagues at work. Although not overly extraverted, the father has recognised that he can obtain the support he needs from his colleagues, as well as the comfort he finds in his wife's company.

- *"My wife is my main support to carry on here, she helps me ... we talk well."* Father.
- *"I met lots of people at work and we socialise, go for drinks ... made friends."* Father.

A study conducted by Ali (2003) examined the determinants of adjustment in spouses and children of expatriate families. It was found that one of the main determinants for the family to adjust, was the *personality* of the spouse and family members. The mother's difficulty in finding the companionship she desires and the sadness that she feels due to her isolation, may eventually impact on the rest of the family's happiness and the husband's commitment to complete the work assignment in Dubai.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

The sub-category of landscape was identified here. Upon arrival in Dubai, both the husband and wife experienced the landscape in different ways.

Sub-category: landscape

- *"I saw a lot of construction and it was also overwhelming for me ... it is also very dry and different what we are used to."* Father.
- *"No greenery ... and overwhelmed by the heat ... we have to go to the park, have to drive there."* Mother.

Due to the lack of greenery and vegetation in Dubai, the family needs to drive to special parks to enjoy the outdoors. In South Africa, the "greenery" may have been enjoyed through the existence of trees and gardens in close proximity. From the excerpts, it is evidenced that both spouses need to adjust to the new landscape, the wife, regarding her need to see green vegetation, and her husband in accepting the dry conditions and overwhelming construction activity. A part of the adjustment process here, has practical implications, namely to fulfil the need to experience the greenery or vegetation that enhances their lifestyle, they have to change their ways of accessing it. In this instance, it would mean seeking out the facilities in their new environment that fulfils their needs, for example, parks and natural recreation centres.

Theme 4: Acculturation

The sub-category of adapting to cultural differences was identified.

<u>Sub-category: adapting to cultural differences</u>

- *"Not easy to interact with people ... it's so culturally different here ... my African culture is so different ... we always have people close ... to adjust here is very difficult and the biggest problem is isolation."*   Mother

The mother finds it difficult to relate to the different cultures in Dubai. Her introverted nature my also influence her lack of motivation *to try* and interact with the new cultures, thereby enhancing her sense of isolation.   The father interacts with different cultures at his workplace and seems to enjoy interacting with different people. From a Gestalt perspective, self-regulation is not accomplished by the individual when he or she is not using his or her own resources. This is referred to as *impasse* whereby the individual believes external support is not forthcoming and the individual believes he or she cannot support themselves (Yontef &Simkin, 1989:14). It is further stated, that an organismically self-regulating individual takes responsibility for what is done for the self. The mother is not actively seeking a way to address her feelings of isolation, resulting in this difficulty in her adjustment process.

- *"Exciting ... because of my work colleagues ... I met lots of people at work".* Father.

The father is excited about his work and the different people he interacts with at his workplace. For this reason, he does not experience the same feelings of isolation as his wife. In applying the four phases of expatriate adjustment according to Hofstede (2003:209), the mother may be placed at Phase 2. During this phase, the differences recognised in the new country can result in feelings of helplessness and isolation. The cultural differences, lack of social support and contrast in living conditions often result in culture shock (Hofstede, 2003:209; Winkelman, 2002:3). The acculturation process has not yet been realised for the mother, and she may need more time to familiarise herself with the local environment. She may also need to make 'choices' regarding ways in which she can forge new friendships in Dubai.   Acculturation also occurs when the expatriate has *chosen* to make the change and to adapt to the new culture (Hofstede, 2003:209; Winkelman, 2002:3).

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-categories of grief for previous roles, including loss of family and friends has been identified.

<u>Sub-category: grief for previous professional role</u>

- "*Still struggling to find my feet ... need to find work ... went for an interview ... nice job and now I am more dependent for money ... also spend more time with the child and in the home, you know, the men don't feel this ... they have the work and us women, we must know what to do with all the hours in the day.*" Mother.

The mother recognises that finding work would assist her in meeting people and providing her with a similar role that she occupied in South Africa, namely that of a working mother. The excerpt also reveals that the mother feels that she lacks autonomy with regards to her finances and that a job would assist her to adjust or "find my feet". The longing return to work and be meaningfully employed is also evident. These factors may serve to heighten her sense of loss regarding her previous role as a working wife and mother. Tung (in Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2001:3) states that non-working spouses are often isolated and have to cope without any form of social or emotional support. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:170) assert that grief for expatriates may include the loss lifestyle, familiar places and loss of relationships. This is evidenced in the following excerpt.

Sub-category: grief for family and friends in South Africa

- "*For me it is hard. I call home, all the time, my sisters and I am homesick, missing my family, just going for lunch ... going out ... people in my area ... around ... I guess I grieve also, but try to keep going with reading and I bake, see movies.*" Mother.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001:172) posit that there is no rite of passage for this kind of grief and no recognised way to mourn for these perceived losses. It is further stated that unresolved grief may be an obstacle of healthy adjustment.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-category of anger and disillusion with working conditions was identified.

Sub-category: anger and disillusion with working conditions

- "*Well, I was not so impressed ... the company ... I was just given a book when I first came.*" Father.

The father feels disappointed that the company did not provide greater social support for himself and his family when they first arrived. A book about Dubai was given to him, rather than

individual support or guidance. His spouse feels equally disappointed that nobody from the company afforded support when she arrived some months later.

- *"Felt like I was thrown into the deep end. Also the company did not offer support."* Mother.

Whitman (1980:152) posits that it is the manner in which individuals cope with new and stressful situations that would provide the evidence as to whether or not their coping skills are successful. The initial perceived lack of social support for Family B meant that they needed to find their own means of support with which to cope. The above excerpts and discussions indicate that the father has managed to secure social support from his wife and work colleagues. Although the mother is still struggling to overcome her feelings of "being in the deep end", she does show signs of *willingness* to cope, despite her initial feelings of abandonment and isolation. This is evidenced in her seeking employment, contacting relatives in South Africa and communicating her difficulties to her husband.

6.1.2.2 Conclusion and Evaluation of family B's adjustment process

From the interview, it was evident that the mother in Family B was struggling to adapt. Her husband had found friends and was stimulated and interested in his new job. Black and Gregersen (in Selmer, 2008:10) found that the standard of living has a positive relationship with the general adjustment of the expatriate spouse. Family B live in small apartment on the outskirts of Dubai where the landscape does not have the usual greenery they are accustomed to. The harsh surroundings, isolation and change of lifestyle mean that the mother and daughter have to cope with their new life with only the father as a means of social support. Before the interview, the father explained that they could not afford to live in the centre of the city, where expatriate clubs, parks and shopping malls were to be found. This may have served to isolate the mother even further, in that she needs to hire a taxi to access these venues. Her somewhat introverted personality may further serve to enhance her feelings of loneliness and frustration.

Their 5 year old daughter did not interact with the researcher but was described by the mother as 'happy and playful'. Van Swol-Ulbrick (2004:1) asserts that children may reveal the way that they adjust in expressing unresolved anger, resentment and a sense of helplessness. Furthermore, the personality and developmental stages of children impact on how they adapt. Gaylord (in Ali, 2003:41) found that children aged 3-5 experience relocation to be most stressful. However, it is the *perception* of the event for adults and children alike, that reveals *how* the individual will eventually cope with the challenges that the event presents (Chambers, 1999:131).

In sum, the father and daughter seemed to have adjusted more optimally than the mother. However, at the time of the interview, she had only been in Dubai for some six months and may have needed more time to find work and in doing so, establish a social support network for herself and her family.

The discussion and analysis of Family C follows.

6.1.3   FAMILY C: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

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        ┌───────────────────────┬───────────────────────┐
        ↓                       ↓                       ↓
   Mother (43)                            Father (41)
                    ┌───────────┴───────────┐
                    ↓                       ↓
             Daughter (14)              Son (10)
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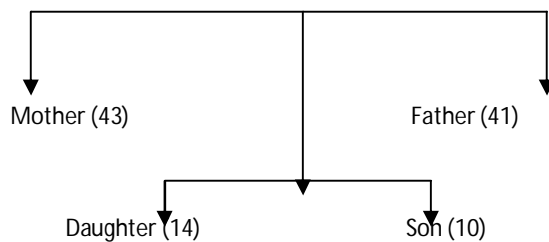
Family C lived in a secure tree lined housing complex.   The family invited the researcher and her assistant to their home on a Saturday afternoon when the family was usually at home. The house was neat and orderly. The parents and the children were all welcoming and warm towards the researcher and her assistant. The family members were keen to do the interview together and to converse.   The children were enthusiastic about sharing their ideas verbally and elected to describe their experiences rather than to draw them.   The family referred to themselves as the "the Sharks" because they all enjoy water sports. Although there was a sense of transience in the home, it felt homely and "happy", with photos of the family displayed on shelves, tables and walls. The father sat directly opposite the researcher, making immediate eye contact and seemed to dominate the room with his open and chatty manner. The mother sat next to the father and seemed curious and interested in the process. There was a friendly feeling in the room. The family were open and spontaneous. Two fluffy white cats joined the family. One was introduced as "Shockran", the Arab word for "thank-you" and the other cat was introduced as "Inchallah" the Arab word for "as God wills it". The use of Arab names for the cats suggested that the family were interested and curious about other cultures in Dubai.

6.1.3.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Under this theme, the sub-categories of social support groups and family support were identified.

<u>Sub-category: Social Support Groups</u>

- *"What has helped you to adjust to the changes in coming here?".* Researcher.
- *"People, friendships and the entertainment ... like Wadi, Atlantis and the sevens rugby! we have plenty of South African friends here and we even have Austrian friends and very good friends of ours are British, Scottish and American ... lots of New Zealanders."* Father.
- *"They (the children) have plenty friends and we get to know the parents through them. You see, the compound is a real family unit and the pool is where we meet".* Father.
- *"We all meet and have socials like a fish barbeque evening, can't be lonely here, you go to the pool on the week-end and the whole compound is there ... it's so nice, if you had your own pool here you would not have this."* Son.
- *"You have friends on hand ... like it's easier living in this place, lift clubs happen from here, walk outside and chat to somebody, there is a gym."* Mother.

Evidenced from the above excerpts, all members in the family have established friendships which play a vital role in them feeling supported and content in their new environment. The type of housing compound and the families living there, seems to play a significant role in assisting with the forming of friendships. Family C also seem interested in meeting people from different cultures.

<u>Sub-category: Family support</u>

 Family C's willingness to communicate and do things together assists in providing a support system from within the family.

- *"We are always looking for things to do together ... we like to do things together and if one of us does not feel like it, we just don't do it."* Mother.

The study conducted by Ali (2003) confirms that for the adjustment of the children and the family, communication and family cohesion appeared to be the main predictors of expatriate adjustment. In a similar study, Caliguiri et al. (1998:601) identified family communication as the ability to exchange opinions, discuss decision making rules and the respecting of different ideas.

The support that the family received upon arrival in Dubai may have played a role in assisting them to adjust more optimally. Both spouses had jobs, with the mother also emphasising how important this was upon her arrival.

- *"Very good friends ... this friend I'm talking about got me my first job and first boss has been a friend of mine for so many years. Got us here ... my job."* Father.
- *"And I had a job also upon coming here, mornings only ... and that was an incentive too ... a big plus, I made contact with many people."* Mother.

Evidenced from the above excerpt, the mother welcomes the opportunity to work and to meet people. This suggests that she is content and that her work has positively assisted her in her adjustment process. Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) investigated the impact of family influences on expatriates' psychological withdrawal from assignments, and found that job satisfaction, spousal adjustment and satisfaction with living conditions were positive indications for expatriate adjustment and commitment to continue in the new country. In Family C, both spouses are content with their work arrangements and enjoy their living conditions, thereby supporting this finding.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members

Included in this theme, the sub-categories of extravert personality, the use of cognitive strategies and curiosity and sense of adventure were identified.

Sub-category: extravert and introvert personality

- *"I'm a bubbly energetic sporty person ... I love my sports and love being with my friends and family...like that keeps me going and giving speeches."* Daughter.
- *"I ... am self-driven and self motivated and ... bring the best out in people."* Father.
- *"I'm in the middle ... I have grown to be more outgoing ... we are all extraverts you see."* Mother.

As evidenced from the excerpts the family members show extravert traits, with the mother having 'learned' to adapt and become more extraverted. She may have recognised that this was necessary in order to gain a social support group in Dubai, and therefore used this as a strategy to cope or adjust. Caliguiri (2000:68) asserts that the expatriate's ability to communicate and make friends was found to be positively related with access to support networks and the reduction of stress. An extravert nature seems to be related to an interest and curiosity in the environment, as the following excerpts indicate.

Sub-category: curiosity and sense of adventure

- *"We find this (Dubai) exciting and I know a lot of people who found it negative here but it's exciting ... like the development called Atlantis. We draw energy from these things. Ja, that's the type of thing our family enjoys."* Mother.
- *"I ... ummm Adventurous ... I am a scientist and friendly."* Son.

Hess and Linderman (2007:6-7) posit that an ability to tolerate frustration, show curiosity and a sense of humour are essential personality characteristics for cross-cultural adjustment.   The following excerpts evidence that the family enjoy banter, while using humour to cope with some of the daily stressors in Dubai.

- *"We all talk about traffic in Dubai ... like from Ibn Battuta Mall which is 5 minutes away, it took an hour and a half to get home! So ... I just sat and did my nails ... what can you do?"*(shrugs). Mother.
- *"Pick your nose!"* (The family laughs) Father.
- *"Ja ... be prepared for anything that can come your way and ... like ... adapt and jus' enjoy it!"* Son.

The children reflect the positive attitude of the parents and the excerpts indicate that they are enjoying their new lifestyle, despite the challenges.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-categories of landscape and climate were identified.

Sub-category: landscape

- *"Here, if the kids want to go outside and ride a bike or see friends its safe ... that was important for us, lack of crime ... I love this compound life."* Mother.   *(*The family members nod their heads in agreement*).*
- *"We cope ... we do not make it a hassle. It's like a lot of hassles, like the traffic on Sheik Zayed Road, we just compromise ... we are just that kind of family ... like the rude taxi driver... we just say, what is new?"* Mother.

The researcher observed that there was only one negative comment regarding traffic, however, nothing was referred to with regard to the excessive construction or lack of green vegetation. It would seem that the compound life and the safety factor, the friendships and the social support experienced by the family, override their perceptions of the environment making it seem less hostile.

<u>Sub-category: climate</u>

- "*I am ok with the heat.*" Daughter.
- "*Get to swim a lot .... ja, when it's hot you can do something about it, but very cold, nothing you can do.*" Son.
- "*And yes ... it was very difficult in the beginning but the air con helps ... we are not cold people like in Canada.*" Mother.

The above excerpts indicate a positive adaptation to the heat whereby the family show a *willingness* to adapt by recognising the positive aspects of the climate. Frydenberg (1999:23) asserts that in learning to cope, the individual brings unique personal history and external and internal resources. Furthermore, coping is connected to learning whereby the individual has to find new ways to deal with stressors. The excerpts indicate that the family have learned to cope by perceiving the stressors differently and by viewing them as less threatening. In one of his earlier works, Whitman (1980:138) states that learning is the essence of adjustment and that the individual adapts to his or her environment by a change of behaviour. Mayer and Sutton (1996:119) assert that individuals create new 'environments' due to their ability to imagine outcomes, foresee future possibilities and use their skills in formulating strategies which enable them to cope. The excerpts of the mother and children reveal that they have 'chosen' to accept the climate and adapt, despite any discomfort they may experience. Furthermore, they demonstrate the ability to perceive the positive aspects, despite the difficulties that the extreme climatic conditions of Dubai present.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Under this theme, the sub-category of interest and tolerance of other cultures was identified.

<u>Sub-category: interest and tolerance of other cultures</u>

- "*I have so many cultures in my class ... and I am the only South African there. I mean, we have British, New Zealanders, Indians, African ... like Kenyans, Arabs. You learn about them and it's nice to hear their accents and everything else ... in Jebal Ali School they have almost over 70 nationalities ... and you learn about other religions, a lot about Muslim stuff and Ramadan.*" Daughter.
- "*All the interesting things like ... funny how the Arabs write, the kids have learned to read backwards ... you know ... not like us. *" Father.
- "*Well, we do not mind Ramadan for example.*" Mother.

From the family's curiosity and acceptance of the different cultures, it would seem that they have adapted to the cultural diversity of Dubai. Searle and Ward (in Selmer, 2008:3) describe psychological adjustment as the individual's subjective well-being and level of acceptance of the new environment. The parents and the daughter seem excited about the diversity of cultures and express an interest to know more about them. Acculturation sets in whereby the individual is more familiar with the local conditions and values and is more self-confident in becoming involved in the local social network (Hofstede, 2003:209; Winkelman, 2002:2-3). Furthermore, acculturation occurs when the individual has c*hosen* to make the adaptation. These factors are evident in the excerpts above.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-category of grief for family and friends in South Africa was indentified.

Sub-category: grief for family and friends in South Africa

- "*I have a mom and dad, but Al lost his parents years ago ... my parents come here for extended times. They are very close to us and independent.*" Mother
- "*I miss South Africa every day of my life here ... I would go back tomorrow if any of these three family members gave me an indication ... I would go straight back ... but they do not want to so I am stuck here.*" Father.
- "*and they played the song "Africa" you know ... I was sad ... and the other times was when I was on the internet and I saw our old house on the web, the furniture and said ... look our old house ... so lovely.*" Mother.

From the excerpts, the father misses his home country the most. The mother seems to miss aspects of her old life, for example, her old home and what that represents to her. The mother's parents visit the family in Dubai for extended periods and this may help to lessen feelings of separation and grief.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-category of anger and disillusion with general conditions was identified.

Sub-category: anger and disillusion with general conditions

- "*Like Ramadan ... many complain ... but we don't mind ... but legal problems ... ja, this last episode of the British couple having sex on the beach disturbed me ... I think that it's*

wrong ... they used them as a scapegoat and make a mockery of it ... You see crime filtering in here, poverty and people going back home for the wrong reasons ... Ja, even our South African girl that has gone missing, is just lost in life now and they focus on the endangered shark at Atlantis ... for that reason, I have issues here and rules are very much influenced by what the people say, not common ground law ... the laws are made according to what the people want ... and if it is a local Emirate person ... different laws apply." Father.

The father is disillusioned with the local laws and may be feeling unsettled or less safe because of this. For the family, one of the reasons for coming to Dubai was to escape the crime in South Africa.

- *"Here, if the kids want to go outside and ride a bike or see friends its safe ... that was important for us."* Mother.

The father may be concerned at the increase of crime in Dubai, compounded by the uncertain legal system, and this has made him feel less positive about the family's future in Dubai. The disillusion that he experiences, is related to his reason for originally relocating to Dubai, namely to escape the crime in South Africa. The mother may be afraid to acknowledge the changes relating to crime in Dubai, and emphasises the safety that her children experience in the compound. This serves to reassure her that living in Dubai is still beneficial, and so overrides any feelings of uncertainty that she experiences.

6.1.3.2 Conclusion and Evaluation of family C's adjustment process

The excerpts indicate that Family C has adjusted positively to their life in Dubai. Being extraverted and curious about other cultures, they have established a strong social support system, both at work and in the compound where they live. Upon arrival in Dubai, the family received support from the father's place of employment. The mother was also offered a job soon after arrival in Dubai. The company support upon their arrival, seemed to play a significant role in their initial perceptions of Dubai.

It would seem that the housing environment where they live, has played a significant role in assisting to build friendships. The family members all exhibit friendly, outgoing personalities and the mother has learned to become more outgoing to acquire the social support that she perceives is necessary. The family also participate in joint activities and communicate openly and freely with each other. This was observed by the researcher during the interview process. The

researcher also experienced the family as open and curious regarding her research, reinforcing their display of interest in people and the world around them.

6.1.4 FAMILY D: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

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Mother (47)                    Father (55)


        Daughter (14)          Daughter (18)
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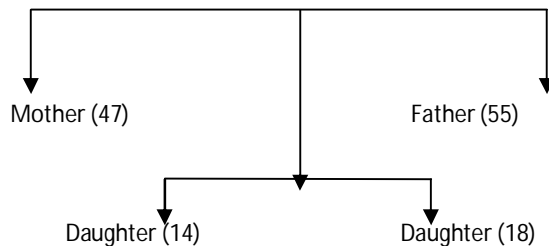
Family D agreed to be interviewed in their home. There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the home with an invitation to have refreshments with the family. This afforded the researcher several hours to spend with the family in their home environment, and a special time was provided for the research interview. The home was situated in a large well-established housing compound. Small trees lined the entrance to the compound and the houses or 'villas' were painted in bright pastel shades. Residents could be seen talking to each other in the streets and children were playing football in the road.

Inside the family's home, the street could be seen but there was a feeling of seclusion and privacy. The mother of the house had decorated her sitting room in an Arabic theme and she showed us her 'African' lounge where zebra skins and African masks decorated the walls. The mother proudly explained that she loved the Arabic decorations, while her husband enjoyed collecting statues of camels. The family home was cosy and provided a feeling of permanency. The researcher and her assistant were shown a small garden which was described as 'our pride and joy' and in the years that they had lived in the villa, the mother had lovingly planted many flowers, a lawn and various shrubs. Some plants were in pots - 'to make them portable', she explained. The family told the researcher, that they had to move to another villa, since the landlord wanted to increase the rent the following year. They were concerned about this, and emphasised that rental in Dubai was an increasing source of distress amongst expatriates. The researcher and her assistant were introduced to the two daughters. The researcher felt welcomed into the home and was invited to commence the interview in the sitting room. The smell of fresh coffee wafted in from the kitchen and the dining room table displayed a large platter of sandwiches and cutlery.

6.1.4.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Included in this theme, the sub-categories of family support, social support groups and lack of deeper, meaningful relationships were identified.

<u>Sub-category: family support</u>

Evidenced in the following excerpts, the family do not always communicate openly with each other, but the mother acknowledged the need to do so. The family are aware that they need to communicate more. The youngest daughter expressed the wish for the people around her to show more interest in her well-being, a possible indication that she feels lonely at times. It was also observed that she did not discuss her friends as much as her older sister.

- *"Ja ... we do check in with each other and the kids."* Mother.

The mother is trying to reveal that as parents, she and her husband do communicate with the children and ask how they are coping. However, from the daughter's response, the communication between her and the parents is not always open or honest.

- *"Weeel ... not really, honestly? Not really ... for me, if someone asks ... it is important it's like someone is actually caring and wants to know."* Youngest daughter.
- *"Well, I often ask him (points to father) ... but are you happy? ... because he is working and if the father is not happy, nobody is going to be happy in the house and always communicate or talk to your family, if they are old enough, don't ... not tell them everything. At the beginning, we made a mistake and did not tell them everything and they were worried."* Mother.
- *"Ja, I was ... I did not know what was happening and why we were getting our passport."* Youngest daughter.
- *"You have to keep them informed all the time."* Mother.
- *"Because it can be scary not knowing."* Researcher.
- *"It is!!! It is!! And you get a shock.   And when we came again after the first time, you never told us we could come back for good and we lost a bit of trust ... and we thought we could see if we like it here first ... we lost a bit of trust."* Youngest daughter.

These excerpts reveal how important it is for parents to communicate to their children the actual reason for the emigration or relocation. Family D have been living in Dubai for some five years, yet the youngest daughter still remembers the uncertainty and anxiety that she experienced upon their arrival in Dubai. Gaylord (in Ali, 2003:41) found that children aged 14-16 years

experience relocation as very stressful. Although the youngest daughter in Family A was not a teenager at the time of the relocation, she experienced the process as frightening, since she did not receive the reassurance from her parents that she needed at the time. She 'needed' to feel safe and protected in the new environment, and initially 'trusted' her parents to provide her with the assurance that she would be safe. It therefore seems that she needed to have the *necessary information about the relocation* to alleviate feelings of uncertainty. When this need was not forthcoming, she may have experienced increased feelings of anxiety and distrust concerning the new environment, her parent's intentions and the future. The excerpt indicates that she still reveals some distrust towards her parents. Parenting teenagers may at times, be challenging and test family relationship skills. Families that cope best during these years, communicate openly with each other, show mutual caring, trust and support (Barnhill & Longo in Barker, 1992:27).

Sub-category: social support groups

The family received support from some of the social support groups in Dubai, particularly the church. What is evidenced from the excerpts is that they not only knew where to go, but took action upon arrival in Dubai in order to seek out what social support groups were available.

- *"But when we arrived here, we found a church immediately and that's where we found all our support ... and I still say that at the church ... that is where we found our immediate friends ... yes, the church has been our main support in meeting other people, but groups like SAWA to me have not been helpful tool in making friends. It's due to the people that go.   Like some phone their friends before a meeting and stick with those friends and do not mingle. And we think it is very difficult for a new person to actually make a friend at SAWA. And the new committee never asks at the meetings – is there anybody new here? But then even when we go to church ... we had to make the effort. Although an American couple did come up to us in the church. But in the end, you as the new person have to make the effort."*   Mother.

Evidenced in the above excerpt, is the recognition that as a new expatriate, there is the need to be pro-active and 'find' a support system. This implies, that the individual has to take responsibility for his/her own adjustment process and actively seek solutions when faced with challenges. The eldest daughter has a large circle of friends but found it hard initially to form stronger or more meaningful friendships. However, she now enjoys the interaction that she obtains from her school friends.

- *"Making friends and keeping friends is hard ... at first people accept you ... then because of the different backgrounds and cultures, there's a lot of fallouts and then there is the thing ... that people leave all the time. Like, they might be here for a few months and like their dad gets fired and they have to leave. That is a big, thing ... people leave ... but I like that you can go out at say 10 at night and come back at about 2 in the morning ... I like that lifestyle ... there is a more relaxed lifestyle here for me and people don't plan ... my mates could phone me and ask to meet me in 5 minutes ... at the movies ... and you can eat from so many places. You know, I have many friends ... about 30 and we may get together and go our own ways during the evening. "* Older daughter.

Developmentally, both daughters are at Erikson's Stage Five: (Age 12-19) Identity Versus Role Confusion. The adolescent at this stage, has the task of gaining a feeling of identity concerning his or her values and ideals. The main cause for crisis in this phase is the drive for sexual and personal identity, thus requiring a number of roles, for example student, friend and sibling (Hook, 2002:280). Whilst the older daughter seems more confident and shares positive views of her friends and environment, the younger daughter is still struggling to adapt to her life in Dubai. This is evidenced in the following excerpt.

- *"But she (youngest daughter), wishes she could take that diploma and put it in South Africa –where her heart is. So sweet, she said I wish 'I could speak Afrikaans with an Afrikaans accent'. She has a great attachment to South Africa, her granny and the dogs there."* Mother.

The older daughter revealed that when she was 14 years of age, she found it difficult to adjust. She subsequently found that the boys at her school provided her with the friendship and support that she needed. This suggests that from a developmental perspective, she was able to assert what she needed rather than what might be expected of her, fulfilling the task of self identity.

- *"I came to Dubai at about 14 and had to go back a year at school ... older and more mature ... and I find it harder to get on with people that are younger than me because they laugh at things I do not think are funny and I think – can you grow up! And it took me a long time to adjust to it and not get angry and my message is to look around... and find the best way for you to adjust ... I don't think there is one preconceived way to adjust, like ... look around and see where you fit in and find a way where you can feel comfortable. Like when I came here, I hated the school I was in and after a year, I was happy that the school closed and I even moved after that ... so it took me a long time to*

find out where I fitted in and finally in Grade 13,(final school year) I found out where I belonged and I started to hang out with a lot of guys because I can't deal with girls and their drama and make-up." Older daughter.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members

Under this theme, the sub-category of extraversion and introversion was identified.

Sub-category: extraversion and introversion

The older daughter was observed during the interview to be more extroverted than her sister. The father was reserved and withdrawn, whilst the mother was outgoing and volunteered information more readily. It would seem from the above excerpt, that the older daughter recognised that to cope with the challenges of life in Dubai, she would have to be more extroverted.

- *"You have to learn to cope with change here in Dubai ... can I just say one thing about Kerry ... Dubai allowed her to re-invent herself. She was a shy girl in South Africa and she never pushed herself forward and she came to Dubai and changed overnight."* Mother.
- *It was the opposite with me ... in South Africa. I was popular one and now ... I used to be the spotlight ... then I got here and was not anymore. And the school systems are different ... well, I am a bit of an extravert at times but mostly introvert."* Younger daughter.
- *"Well, I am a bit of an extravert at times but mostly introvert. "* Father.
- *"He (father) has changed twice in his life ... his family told me after we got married that he came out of his shell and said that before that he was totally miserable! (All laugh) and Dubai has made him more of an extravert since he has come here ... I am definitely as you can see an extravert ... love talking to people." Mother.*

Mayer and Sutton (1996:242-250) state that extraverts are stimulus 'hungry' and therefore seek out interactions that satisfy this need more than introverted individuals.   This may explain why the mother enjoys meeting new people and experiencing new things as is evidenced in the ensuing themes and excerpts. It may also explain the mother's strong interest in the environment around her and the evidence that she enjoys living in Dubai, having adapted well to the lifestyle. The excerpt also indicates that she was excited and willing to experience the cultural diversity of Dubai. This reveals an optimistic attitude regarding the life she experiences as an expatriate. It

also indicates a cognitive strategy in devising ways to make the experience meaningful and interesting.

- *"But why come to Dubai, if you not going to mingle ... I mean when we first came here, I said we should try and not make any South African friends but more local or foreign friends. We know so many people who are in South African cliques. And ... we have this Atlas where all our friends and people who come to us, sign our Atlas. And it was my idea, I bought it as a birthday present and so people have to pinpoint from somewhere in the world where they come from ... so exciting."* Mother.

The research strongly indicates that extraverts prefer engaging in social interactions more than introverts (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:242). It is further stated, that extraverts value new experiences and are more adventurous in seeking the company of others. The excerpts above reveal that both the mother and the oldest daughter are enjoying social contact with the different cultures in Dubai, more than the youngest daughter, who reveals a more introverted nature. This suggests that the mother and the oldest daughter may have more extraverted personality traits. In a study conducted by Downes *et al.* (2007:1), it was found that international recruitment companies prefer candidates with extraverted personality traits, reflecting the perception that extraverted expatriates adjust more optimally than introverted expatriates.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-category of climate was identified.

The family members experienced the climate differently, as the following excerpts reveal.

- *"What things have been hard or difficult for you here?"* Researcher.
- *"The weather! It's a big thing, like at break, we have to go into the heat ... we do PT in the heat! I am irritated with the heat now and want the cold."* Youngest daughter.
- *"I love the heat ... love the swimming pool, but then I am never really here in the very hot months ... Kerry and I feel the cold but Bev (youngest daughter) and her Dad are hot people ... you know, feel the heat more my husband looks outside and says it every day – today it is going to rain, today it will rain ... we are like the locals ... go with the heat."* Mother.

For the youngest daughter, the climate has provided one more challenge regarding her adjustment process. Her words " I am irritated with the heat now" may also be an indication that she is irritated generally with her life in Dubai. Takeuchi, Lepak, Marinova and Yun (2007:929)

support that general adjustment refers to how the individual experiences psychological comfort and environmental features, namely, food, climate and living conditions. The youngest daughter appears to struggle with many aspects in her environment, for example, the climate and the different cultural groups. From a Gestalt perspective, the I–boundary is the boundary of the chosen contact for the individual and the willingness to engage with or accept environmental features, for example geographical location, communities or climatic conditions. Dubai was not a 'choice' of contact for the youngest daughter, who was about ten years of age when the relocation occurred. The excerpts under the aforementioned themes and sub-categories, indicate that she has not adjusted well to the life in Dubai. Her older sister, however has 'chosen' to have contact with the different cultures of the region and has shown a willingness to accept the environmental and cultural conditions.

Polster and Polster (1974:99-101) state that contact is the core of growth, the very method of changing the individual's *self* and the experience he or she has of the world. This means that the boundary between the self and the world or external field must be flexible to allow adjustments and equally allow for autonomy. Where the boundary between the self and the outside world becomes blurred, and the distinction between the self and the other is lost, there is a disturbance of contact (Brownell, 2003:2). The youngest daughter finds it difficult to embrace the conditions of her life-style in Dubai. This is evidenced in the excerpts expressing her longing to return to South Africa and her dissatisfaction with the general conditions in Dubai. Joyce and Sills (2001:120) state that the individual who exhibits a modification of contact through confluence, may psychologically withdraw from a situation fearing loss, abandonment or hurt. The youngest daughter seems to have 'withdrawn' from her environment, struggling to change any negative perceptions she has of her life in Dubai. Her dissatisfaction is also revealed in the following excerpts under the acculturation theme.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Under this theme, the sub-categories of interest and tolerance of other cultures and bullying at schools have been identified. The following excerpts indicate that the mother, oldest daughter and the father are accepting and curious about different cultures. The youngest daughter is more wary and distrustful of other cultures.

Sub-category: interest and tolerance of other cultures

- *"We are open to all different cultures and people and you have to come with an open mind ... we were all willing to come, we all like Arab things, the food the culture and we like being here."* Father.

- *"My Emirate friends are boys and I do not get invited to their homes because I am a western female ... but they come here often ... and we learn about their culture and some Arabic words. We go to a school that is considered more Arab like – rather than international or British. Its run by Al Habtoor, so there are a lot of Gulf region students."* Older daughter.

- *"I love it here ... my favourite place is on a Friday afternoon at the Creek when there are millions of Pakistanis and Indians around, I love the atmosphere and I love those people and being amongst them."* Mother.

- *"But Mom, that is more scary there than in the middle of Jo'burg!"* Younger daughter.

- *"We are open-minded South Africans, so ... having the different cultures back home was also easier for us. Because the South Africans that come here and are racially inclined, find the same thing, I mean there are Indians and Pakistanis on a large scale and ... like the concert in the park where you can be the only white people, you just get used to being the focus of attention ... we have even gone to the camel races where we are the only whites again ... we have gone right into the culture."* Mother.

- *"Yes, because you are always exposed to it ... but for me being the only white person in a situation has a big impact on living here, I mean like ... I hate it when you get stared at all the time because you are different, it kind of creeps me out."* Younger daughter.

The youngest daughter does not share the rest of the family's interest and curiosity in other cultures. She experiences being amongst the different cultural groups as threatening and unpleasant. In contrast, the mother actively seeks out experiences that lead her into the heart of new cultural experiences. Her interest and acceptance of the local culture are also evidenced by the 'special lounge' in her home which she has decorated with Arabian ornaments and carpets. Takeuchi *et al.* (2005:124) support that when expatriates have adjusted well to their new environment, their overall evaluation of the culture in this environment will be positive. The mother's acceptance and positive attitude reflects this statement.

When discussing the schools that the daughter attended, the following excerpts indicate that bullying of foreign students is prevalent. The excerpt evidences that the bullying experienced in the schools has created the need to employ 'proctors' or invigilators to control the problem.

- *" There is a reason also for us choosing this school, because we don't want the kids just to go to all western schools or British schools. We say why come to this region if you are not going to mix with everybody?"* Mother.

<u>Sub-category: bullying</u>

- *"And we found that there is less bullying here, we have these proctors that walk around the school and when they see trouble, they are in your face ... they are like invisible security guards ... they are extra eyes in the school and there are cameras all around the school. "* Older daughter.
- *"And they are not like in other schools, they treat the Arabs exactly like all the other kids."* Mother.
- *"Even the local 'royals', they are always in fights and stuff and because they are sort of 'head' of the bullying and stuff, because they think that they won't get into trouble there if you lift a hand you are suspended."* Older daughter.

The excerpts of the mother and the two daughters reflect the problem of bullying in schools that are attended by international learners. Jones (2008:1) reports that expatriate children are often the target of bullying in schools and states that, it is common in European countries where these children become the victims of physical violence, verbal abuse and social isolation due to their different culture.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-categories of loss of new found friendships in Dubai and grief for family, friends and pets in South Africa were identified.

<u>Sub-category: loss of new found friendships in Dubai</u>

- *"Making friends and keeping friends is hard ... at first people accept you ... then because of the different backgrounds and cultures, there's a lot of fallouts and then there is the thing ... that people leave all the time. Like, they might be here for a few months and like their dad gets fired and they have to leave. That is a big, thing ... people leave. One of my classmates died this year and that affected the whole school. And that is with us every single day. He had an asthma attack. And a South African teacher died in January."* Older Daughter.

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The older daughter reveals how difficult it is when friends leave due to other relocation opportunities, or because of death as evidenced above. The loss of friendships may affect the motivation to invest in making new ones, particularly when there is a perception that friendships in Dubai do not last long or are transient.

<u>Sub-category: grief for family, pets and friends in South Africa</u>

- *"Being away from family, school is getting harder, more people are leaving ... like friends and we have no pets here ... my Gran adopted my dogs and I see them when we visit ... ja, that is the hardest thing about living here ... they are poodles ... and we have pictures of them ... helps."* Younger daughter*.*

Although the family has been living in Dubai for some 5 years and acculturation, Stage 4 of the adjustment process has occurred for the parents and the older daughter, there are still times when they all grieve for their relatives in South Africa, albeit at different times. The younger daughter, reveals that she still misses her earlier life in South Africa, and does not indicate that she has the same wide friendship group that her older sister enjoys.

- *"But our emotions always happen at different times of the month in our life, so we always have one female who was depressed and poor Andy (the father) has to cope with these rollercoaster emotions and he was home every single night ... that's difficult. And you don't all feel sad at the same time or miss family in SA at the same time."* Mother.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-category of anger and disillusion with general living conditions have been identified.

<u>Sub-category: anger and disillusion with general living conditions</u>

- *"Dubai has also lost its glitz and glamour ... it's slowly starting to tarnish like South Africa with crime, taxes and inflation, its slowly creeping into the situation. I mean, there is so much corruption here, traffic and tollgates, the SALIK, which is the tax on the road, 500DH extra each month. Dubai's bubble has gone down and ... become tarnished. Another thing is drugs ... I mean it's all over the papers, murders, ATM crimes, heists, slowly creeping in ... and like the Egyptian and Indians etc, who have built Dubai are being thrown out, because they have no place to stay, I mean this is unfair ... Dubai was built on their backs ... and the misperception that when in Dubai you make a lot of*

money, it is rubbish! A lot of misperceptions of Dubai...there is no financial gain ... maybe 10 years ago ... your company has to pay for all these things." Father.

- *"My advice is to not trust the HR companies that recruit you for the jobs - they will tell you any story and carefully look at the reasons why you are leaving your country because your reasons for leaving South Africa ... most probably you will find the same problems here. The reasons might be the right reasons. So if you have problems in South Africa – deal with them there because it won't change – you will bring them here."* Mother.

- *"And like in a few years time here ... like every other country ... crime ... all the bad stuff."* Younger daughter.

Although the parents are feeling disillusioned with certain aspects of their life in Dubai, the aforementioned excerpts (or example, under acculturation and social support) attest to an acceptance of and a positive attitude towards a continued future in the Arabian city.

6.1.4.2   Conclusion and Evaluation of family D's adjustment process

From the excerpts, Family D has experienced Stage 4 in the adjustment process whereby acculturation has occurred. However, evidenced from the excerpts, the younger daughter was not informed initially of the relocation process to Dubai, and has shown indications that she has not fully embraced the expatriate lifestyle. Perhaps she is also grieving for the sense of trust that was lost, when her parents did not fully inform her about the relocation process five years earlier. After five years, she is still yearning for her old life in South Africa, including her relatives and pets. She reveals an introverted nature and unlike her sister, has not learned to adapt by becoming more outgoing or interested in other cultures. This has reinforced her feelings of alienation from the diverse cultural groups in Dubai, viewing them as 'scary' or threatening. As her mother stated, the younger daughter's heart is 'still in South Africa'. This case study reveals that although a family may be living in a foreign country for several years and appear to be fully adjusted and content with their new environment, there may be one or more family members that continue to struggle with life in a new country.

6.1.5   FAMILY E: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Mother (42)   Father (55)

Daughter (13)

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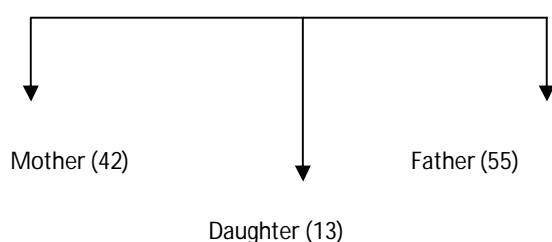
The researcher was invited to the family's home in a small expatriate compound called the "Springs". Like many of the expat living areas, there was a feeling of community about the compound, even though the family's apartment faced construction sites and sand dunes. There was very little greenery in the area and for the greater part, the area was rather grey and dusty.

The researcher was welcomed at the door by the mother of the home. Her head was covered with a floral shawl as is the custom of many Muslim women. Muslim women from the Gulf and Emirates region usually wear a black 'Abaya' which covers the entire head and body. The mother explained that she was born in Cape Town and described herself as "from Cape Malay" descent, drawing attention to her strong Cape Town accent. In contrast, her husband had a strong Mediterranean accent. The couple had been married for some fifteen years and had recently relocated to Dubai with their thirteen year old daughter. The mother explained that they came to Dubai mainly for financial reasons and to escape the crime in South Africa. She explained that her husband had come to South Africa some twenty years ago and was a South African citizen. The family have been living in Dubai for about approximately four months.

The home was furnished with large, dark "Baroque" style furniture. Baroque paintings with ornate golden frames hung from the walls. The shelves were adorned with gold coloured, flamboyant ornaments and the dining room table displayed a round ruby coloured vase containing plastic flowers. The mother explained that the furniture was not theirs and belonged to the Arab landlord. After introducing the researcher to her husband, she called her daughter. The young girl seemed a little withdrawn at first and shyly introduced herself. She elected to draw a picture of her impressions of Dubai rather than participate in the interview process but she agreed to answer questions where she could. The daughter then proceeded to kneel at the coffee table and began to draw.

6.1.5.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Included in this theme, the sub-categories of family support, electronic and telephonic access to social contracts and isolation were identified.

<u>Sub-category of family support</u>

The mother obtains her main support from her husband but gains some feelings of support by telephonically contacting her family in South Africa.

- *"When you go (points to her husband) to work, I sit and cry and cry ... I am a bit better now but SMS the family and sisters and so on."*   Mother.
- *"And what about new friends here?"* Researcher.
- *"It's very difficult ... I went for self-esteem classes in Jo'burg and it was all Indian ladies ... very busybody ... want to know everything in your house ... so when I came here, I met one Indian lady and made up my mind ... Oh ... I won't see you ... typical Indian."* Mother.
- *" We do not have a big circle of friends anyway, usually only us."* Father.
- *"With the three of us ... we are fine ... we have each other ... when we eat dinner, I ask about the day and we talk ... and in bed we talk a lot. We talk a lot."* Mother.

Edstrom and Jervfors (2007:14) assert that spousal support is vital for the adjustment and satisfaction of the expatriate family, providing valuable affirmation and comfort during the stressful periods of adjustment. The mother reveals that the family obtains comfort and support from each other. Her negative experiences in South Africa seem to be impacting on her willingness to interact with similar cultures in Dubai. Family E may be placed at Phase 2 of the acculturation stages as described by Hofstede (2003: 209) and Winkleman (2002: 2-3) in Chapter Two.   During this 'crisis phase', the reality of change and the challenge of fitting into the new environment occurs. The difference of the climate in the new country, transport difficulties, meeting different cultures and minor irritations begin to escalate. This is also evident for the other family members in the ensuing excerpts.

Sub-category: social support groups

The parents in Family E thus obtain their main social support from each other and choose to have it this way. However, the mother is concerned about her daughter as the next excerpt reveals.

- *"Ja ... but she can't make friends in the complex."*   Mother.
- *"They don't talk to me ... so no friends here ... they are like ... discreet ... or distant ... that makes me feel lonely ... jeah."* Daughter.
- *"And her little Portuguese friend (in South Africa) sends her SMS's all the time, even to me! Look at the phone by her side! "* (The mother points to a bright red phone). Mother.

It is evidenced that the daughter feels isolated, but finds some comfort in texting her friend in South Africa. Ali (2003:164) found that the personality factor of 'social initiative' was a significant determinant for adjustment in children since their social lives and school interactions depended on this task despite cultural differences. The researcher noticed that the daughter was shy and somewhat reluctant to interact with her. It may be that she finds it too difficult to approach the

other children at the compound and finds it more comforting to describe *them* as 'distant'. From a Gestalt theoretical perspective, this could be viewed as a projection, whereby she is identifying the 'distance and discretion' as belonging to others and thereby disowning this quality within herself. Joyce and Sills (2001:112) states that how the individual makes contact will need to be modified according to the field conditions that the individual is confronted with.

Developmentally, the daughter is placed at Erikson's Stage Five: (Age 12-19) Identity Versus Role Confusion. The search for identity during this phase includes the task of learning a number of roles namely, student, friend, sibling or boy/girlfriend roles (Hook, 2002:280). Without the opportunity to make new friends, the daughter only has her parents and friends in South Africa to interact meaningfully with. The excerpt above evidenced that the daughter feels isolated and unable to interact with the other children in the complex.

In her classic work on Gestalt art therapy, Rhyne (1973:7) contends that the inclusion of art and drawing are used in many schools of psychotherapy as a way to diagnose unconscious psychological material and inner emotions. In her drawing (Refer to Annexure E), the daughter has depicted an Arab woman fully clad in an Abaya. The eyes are large and piercing in the drawing. Ogden (1984:75) supports that large piercing eyes in a projective drawing, may suggest anxiety and hypersensitivity to social opinion. The daughter's drawing also suggests that she may be feeling overwhelmed by the new environmental factors in Dubai. A large building is depicted and a figure of an Arab woman clad in traditional dress. The Arabian woman is not standing firmly on the ground, and seems to be 'suspended' in the air. This may be a projection regarding the daughter's feelings of uncertainty and insecurity concerning her future in the new environment, and that she has not yet 'found her feet' or 'sense of connectedness' with Dubai. Her yearning to be part of the new social network and to be accepted could be expressed in the use of Arab phrasing used in the drawing, an attempt to reveal that she is interested and accepting of the Arabian culture. Human figure drawings are recognised to represent the drawer's perception of her or himself and the body image, including the drawer's self-concept, contextual changes, attitude and mood (Ogden, 1984:66).

Ogden (1984:69) indicates that where large figures are used in drawings, it may suggest difficulty in adjusting emotionally. The Arab woman depicted in the drawing, is the same size as the large building. Large drawings may indicate feelings of inadequacy (Ogden, 1984:69). These feelings may be attributed to the lack of friends the daughter has at school and at the housing compound where she lives. Brown and Orthner (in McLeod, 2006:21) provide that adolescence and gender make a difference to adjustment, with 12-14 year old girls presenting significantly lower on the

scores representing life satisfaction variables, for example, self-esteem, alienation and depression. The support evidenced between the family members may serve to make the daughter feel less isolated, but to adjust optimally and to fulfil her developmental tasks, she needs to gain the friendship and support of her peers.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics of Family Members

Under this theme, the sub-categories of attitude to expatriate life and introvert personality were identified.

Sub-category: attitude to expatriate life

Both parents do not express curiosity or an interest to find out more about the cultures in the region. Clarkson (1989:35) asserts that it is the basic need of all individuals to be in contact with others, the contact often consisting of great joy or pain. Furthermore, the I-Boundary is the boundary that consists of the *chosen contact* for the individual. The perception that the individual has of him or herself in the world is understood by the I-boundary which is comprised of a broad range of contact boundaries which give definition to the ideas, values and behaviours relating to how people are willing and able to engage with others. Since the choices of contact are determined by the I-boundary, these choices affect the type of life-style, friends, geographical location, professional choice and experiences that are important to the individual's existence. This is evident in the choices that the mother and the father make in remaining 'distanced' from the cultures around them.

- *"This is a cold place, here. It can be 50 degrees heat out … but it's cold. In the streets there is a lot of people but you walk alone."* Father.
- *"I would tell people from South Africa to 'O please … stay where you are' … One lady at Carrefour supermarket said, life here is eat, sleep and work."* Mother.

Ward and Kennedy (in Selmer, 2008:4) assert that psychological adjustment has been associated with the individual's cognitive perceptions, personality traits and emotional state. As evidenced from the above excerpts, the parents and the daughter of Family E are not adjusting optimally to their life in Dubai. Their perceptions of the environment, the different cultures, and the life-style support this view. The following section examines how the role of introversion contributes to their adjustment difficulties.

Sub-category: introverted personality

Both parents reveal that they are suspicious and wary of the different cultural groups in Dubai, influencing their willingness to interact and make new friends. Feelings of distrust towards other cultures may have existed *before* arriving in Dubai. This is reflected in the following excerpts.

- *"There we were standing with a trolley and there I saw "Black Label" drinks and I thought oh, Soweto is also here ... and I am not a fan of the South African black because they hijacked me twice!"* Mother.

- *"Maybe the local Emirates are nice people, but the people that comes here, they have one thing in mind ... material things ... it is like the army when you go to war ... everybody has a camouflage to survive."* Father.

- *"You know when we came here ... I saw people was very unfriendly and it freaks me out ... when you go through at the Dubai Airport they check you like you are a criminal! They took us aside, checked my husband ... you know, he is white and me coloured and ... they looked at our child ... and really, I felt like a criminal."* Mother.

In a study on expatriate adjustment, Ali (2003:163) found that open-mindedness was an essential determinant for expatriate adjustment in spouses. The mother may perceive her family as 'very different' to others around her, amplifying her feelings of alienation from the field or environment that she finds herself in. It may be that the initial experiences upon arriving in Dubai , served to cloud the family's perception of the local people. Being introverted and wary of other cultures could further enhance feelings of alienation and rejection. Caliguiri (2000:61) and Downes *et al.* (2007:2) support that personality characteristics for example, extraversion and emotional stability result in the willingness to continue with the expatriate experience and more optimal adjustment. The excerpts reveal that the members of Family E have introverted personality traits and although they are at the 'crisis' stage of the adjustment process, it may be that they will experience difficulty in reaching full acculturation and acceptance of their new environment.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-categories of climate and landscape were identified.

Sub-category: climate

- *"With the air conditioner, I jus' stay the whole day in the house ... I love Jo'burg because of the weather ... and I miss the rain! I phoned my friend in South Africa and she said we can't talk ... storm (gestures to the skies, sniffs and closes her eyes) ... ah, the smell of the*

rain ... like when the black clouds come from Vereeniging and you know a storm will start ... Cape also lots of rain." Mother.

The mother's lifestyle is different to conditions that she has been used to in South Africa. Due to the extreme heat she feels compelled to stay indoors. The consistent dry climate evokes in her a longing for rain and clouds. There is a strong sense of loss, in that the climatic condition of Dubai has 'robbed' her of the enjoyment of being outdoors and the freedom she associates with being able to leave the house and do the activities she has previously enjoyed.

Sub-category: landscape

- *"The false, the ... environment is not natural ... all this false, if you stop air conditioning and the people that broom the streets every day ... all will stop. Like this town will close here ... sweep sand everyday ... otherwise all buildings full of sand."* Father.

From the father's description of the environment, there is sense of disappointment and disgust regarding the 'false' or unnatural conditions. Shaffer and Harrison (in Takeuchi, Marinova, Lepak and Liu, 2005:121) support that general adjustment refers to how the individual experiences familiarity, psychological comfort and environmental features, for example climate, food, weather and living conditions. Searle and Ward (in Selmer, 2008:3) describe psychological adjustment as the person's subjective well being and level of acceptance regarding the new environment. The above excerpts indicate that the couple in Family E are struggling to accept the environmental and living conditions in Dubai. There is a sense of helplessness, which may be impacting on the lack motivation to *choose* ways in which to *perceive* the environmental conditions as more manageable.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Under this theme, the sub-categories of xenophobic experiences and adaptation to cultural differences were identified.

Sub-category: xenophobic experiences

The mother experienced xenophobic incidents in various contexts.

- *"When I was here two days, I took taxi to Spinney's groceries in the area. That taxi driver started to shout at me. Why do you make me come here just to go to Spinney's? It is close, you walk! He said. And I said ... well I am 2 days here and do not know the place. I was cross ... so rude ... wanted to swear him. So far, only 2 Egyptian taxi drivers have*

been nice to me. The Pakistanis and the Indians ... no man ... I can't stand them. Like the other day, I take a taxi to Emirates Mall and the driver say to me, "heela, heela", it means get out ... go ... he was effing rude to tell me to get out of his taxi ... and they will bump you out of the way ... I used to say sorry if I bump someone. Now I jus' don't say sorry anymore. Like these Filipino people pushed in front ... and I said no, there is no pushing in ... now I don't keep quiet anymore." Mother.

These negatively perceived experiences appear to reinforce the mother's reluctance to trust and interact with other cultures further impacting on her adjustment. Her distrust of different cultures is also evidenced in the aforementioned excerpts. Andreason (2008:1) conducted a study on the expatriate adjustment of spouses and expatriate managers. It was found that the cultural adjustment challenges of the spouses are different and greater than that of the expatriate managers. The spouses are also less sheltered from the difficulties experiences in the foreign environment (Andreason, 2008:1).

It seems that the mother's immediate family as a support system is the only 'safe' social interaction that she experiences. Phase 2 of the acculturation stages as described by Hofstede (2003:209) and Winkleman (2002:2-3) in Chapter Two is evident here. The expatriate may experience frustrations, disappointment, impatience and tension during this phase. Life does not make sense and feelings of helplessness, isolation, hostility and anger arise as a sense of 'lack of control' occurs. Depression and psychosomatic illness is not uncommon at this stage. The new culture is viewed with suspicion and dislike and there may be increased attempts to insulate one's self from the foreign culture. Culture shock may be experienced at this phase.

Sub-category: adapting to cultural differences

As stated, the family may be placed at Phase 2 of the adjustment process. The mother's confirmation that the family 'only need each other' supports the aforementioned discussion under xenophobic experiences.

- *"With the three of us ... we are fine we have each other."* Mother.

Evidenced from the following excerpts is the struggle to adapt to the materialistic ethos of Dubai.

- *"But the people that comes here have one thing on their mind, material things ... money... money ... make a better life."* Father.
- *"They make you pay for things ... even to see show house in Abu Dhabi! Even to see a school for your child and you must pay! Just to make money ... that is all."* Mother.

These excerpts further reinforce the dissatisfaction that the mother and father experience with their new environment and the general living conditions. There is a sense that they feel victimised by the conditions in Dubai. Flytzani and Nijkamp (2008:146) studied the relationship between locus of control and cross-cultural adjustment of 43 expatriate managers. It was concluded that managers with an internal locus of control are more successful in coping with the problems inherent in adjusting to a foreign environment and culture. The locus of control theory was developed by Julian Rotter in the 1960's and made a distinction between external and internal response mechanisms of individuals exposed to new situations or challenges (Flytzani & Nijkamp, 2008:151). Mayer and Sutton (1996:141) state that individuals with a high score in internal locus of control believe that what happens to them is due to their own actions or abilities, and that they take responsibility for the events in their lives. Individuals with a high score in external locus of control, believe that what happens to them is due to fate or luck, namely, forces that are not within their control (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:141). From the excerpts, the mother and father in Family E, seem to perceive their difficulties as being beyond their control. Whilst it is acceptable that the environmental conditions cannot be changed, the *choice to perceive* them more positively, in the researcher's opinion, is mostly within the individual's control and influences the way that stressors are dealt with.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-category of grief for family and pets were identified.

Sub-category: grief for family, friends and pets in South Africa

- *"Leaving my family behind ... my father is sick ... what if something happens and how will I get there in time?"* Mother.
- *"A spaniel (dog)... I miss him a lot ... no pet here."* Daughter.

From the previous excerpts, it is evidenced that the family does not have a large circle of friends in South Africa, suggesting that they are accustomed to relying on each other and extended family members for companionship and support. The mother is concerned that she will not be able to see her father before he dies. The excerpt also evidences her sense of helplessness in this regard. This emphasizes the added stress that expatriates face, not only are there the challenges of adapting to a new environment, but the loss of physical contact with loved ones left behind in the country of origin. The above excerpt reveals that there is also a 'loss' regarding events that the expatriate may not be able to attend, for example, weddings, birthdays, funerals and other significant family occasions.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-category of anger and disillusion with general living conditions was identified.

Sub-category: anger and disillusion with general living conditions

- "*My expectation did not happen and we have to see what happens ... My company said wonderful things about the job and Dubai ... but it is not like that. But things did not go like in the agreement. They always kept things behind ... the house ... the conditions of working ... I have to work everyday ... and one day, I just say what comes to me ... I so angry ... and everything start to come from my mouth and I told the director to bugger off... and I was ready to pack up...I was ready to get out of here.*" Father

A study by Ali (2003) found that support from the expatriate's work environment and expatriate work satisfaction related significantly to spousal cross-cultural adjustment. The mother and the daughter's unhappiness may increase the feelings of frustration for the father. The studies by Ali (2003) as well as Shaffer and Harrison (1998:87) confirm that family adaptability and the working spouse's job satisfaction have a strong impact on the adjustment of the whole family. The father's dissatisfaction at work and with his feelings of disillusion, may also impact on his motivation to try and find ways to adapt to his new environment. His anger and disappointment revealed in the above excerpt, also indicates a lack of hope for his work situation to change, further depleting his sense of commitment regarding a future in Dubai.

6.1.5.2 Conclusion and Evaluation of family E's adjustment process

From the excerpts extracted from the transcripts, Family E may be suffering from culture shock. With only four months in Dubai, the excerpts reveal that they are struggling to adapt to their new environment and view the various cultures with distrust and suspicion. Winkelman (2002:5) reinforces that the expatriate should ideally have an awareness of what culture shock entails, thus enabling the management of its symptoms. At this phase of Family E's adjustment, they do not reveal signs of actively addressing their adjustment difficulties. It is supported in Stahl and Caliguiri, (2005:605) that problem focused strategies, for example asking for help and becoming socially integrated were positively related to expatriate adjustment. The excerpts also evidenced that all family members displayed introverted characteristics. Introverts tend to experience more loneliness, receive less social support and are less positive than extraverts (Mayer & Sutton, 1996:243).

A positive coping resource for Family E, is their closeness and style of communication with each other. However, to optimally adapt to their environment, they may need to integrate with the different cultures and obtain a less negative perception of their expatriate experience. Both parents seem to have 'unfinished business' with regard to their negative experiences with different cultures in South Africa. The parents' unresolved feelings regarding these experiences, are reflected by their negative perceptions and suspicions of the similar cultures living in Dubai. Furthermore, without the financial and lifestyle rewards that they envisaged for themselves in Dubai, the family seem unable to adjust fully and in the researcher' view, they may eventually decide to return to South Africa.

The analysis of Family F follows.

6.1.6   FAMILY F: DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC DATA

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        ▼                  │                  ▼
   Mother (48)             │             Father (46)
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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    ▼              ▼
              Daughter (12)   Daughter (15)
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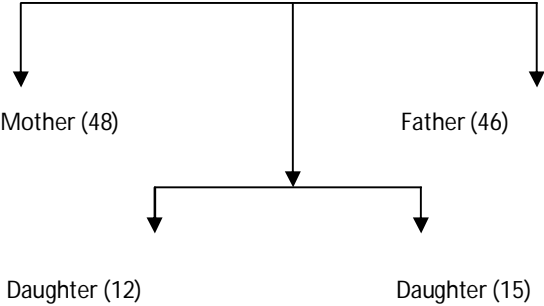
The family lived in a house 'villa' that was located in a typical expatriate compound.   It included a club house, swimming pool and tennis courts.   Each villa had its own small garden and a space to park two cars. The family invited the researcher and her assistant to their home on a Saturday afternoon.   The father worked for a large construction company. The mother did voluntary work in the community, occasionally visiting the Dubai prison to assist women prisoners.

The home was lovingly decorated. Well maintained and neat, the cream and brown lounge area was inviting and cosy. Many photographs decorated the shelves and walls . There was a smell of coffee which filled the living area and a large strawberry cake was displayed on the coffee table. The researcher and her assistant were introduced to the husband and the daughter.   The daughter was a tall fifteen year old, and displayed a lively interest in the researcher's project. The mother explained that the younger daughter was at a birthday celebration and therefore, would not be attending the interview. The husband seemed hesitant to engage with the researcher at first, being somewhat withdrawn and reserved.   In contrast, his wife was enthusiastic and

energetic. She eagerly asked when the questions could begin and began pouring brown liquid into blue coffee cups.

6.1.6.1 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Under this theme, the sub-categories of social support groups, lack of meaningful deeper friendships and family support were identified.

Sub-category: social support groups

- *"We meet people at church, pool at work."* Father.
- *"I was part of the original SAWA committee and I got to know a large South African community here."* Mother.
- *"For me ... I meet people at school ... just at school."* Older Daughter.
- *"People come here a couple of years or less and go and you can't really let that strong friendship start because you know they are just going to leave and then you have to go through the whole process of saying goodbye and the sadness again ... so in Dubai there is no point in ... well making best friends."* Older Daughter.
- *"Ja, here it's a very different level of friendship ... the friendships are very sincere but yet more shallow ... you have the determination second to none ... to return to South Africa to maintain those sincere and deep friendships and family ... like a dose of medicine ... feeling that closeness of (South African) friends, catch up and come back and continue with a different system of friendships here ... my advice is do not get too attached because if you are not a strong person, you will not handle all the goodbyes ."* Mother.
- *"I think the lifestyle affects the friendships and are ... transient, shallow ... you are scared to get in too deep ... we have longstanding friends in South Africa ... but here it does not happen there is a different system or dynamic that happens here ... I feel that we have not had the kind of friends that are interested in us and what is going on in our family in the sense that they acted as support for us ... nobody ever asks how my parent are or the family."* Father.
- *"In South Africa, I had those really deep friendships and saying goodbye to them was really really, hard."* Older Daughter.

The family has experienced the sadness of saying goodbye to new found friendships in Dubai and may be afraid to establish new and close friendships in case they relive the separation experience

again. They also perceive that friendships in Dubai are more 'shallow' due to their transience. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:139) contend that many expatriate children are reluctant to establish new friendships. This is attributed to the frequent and painful good-byes when new friends relocate or leave, making expatriate children unwilling to risk emotional attachment again.

It would seem that Family F have 'learned' to socialise in a different manner in Dubai, this being in order to protect themselves from the grief following the departure of new found friendships. Whitman (1980:138) asserts that learning is the essence of adjustment, and that man adapts to his environment by changing his behaviour. The change of approach towards friendship indicates an adaptation or adjustment to the social conditions in Dubai, the family still obtaining social support and companionship, albeit less deep or meaningful.

Sub-category: family support

The following excerpts evidence the close relationship within the family.

- *"I call this the closed circuit environment ... every family is like this because you don't really know your neighbours and make a point of making an effort ... you can make friends here ... but I find it isolated ... an isolated existence ... that was difficult for me and I really believe in the extended family policy where aunties and uncles providing help and praise. "* Mother.
- *"Well for her ... it was not having her Mom around ... the family support."* Father.

The parents value family support and feel that their immediate family circle and relatives in South Africa afford the most genuine and nurturing support. From the aforementioned excerpts, it is also evident that they cannot establish deep and meaningful relationships with friends in Dubai, therefore further reinforcing their views that they only find close support within the family circle.

Theme 2: Personality Traits of Family Members

Under this theme, the sub-categories of extravert and introvert personality and using cognitive strategies to adapt were identified.

Sub-category: extravert and introvert personality

- *"I'm extraverted ... the outside world stimulates me."* Mother.
- *"I am shy."* Older Daughter.
- *"She is introverted ... a friendly introvert and her Dad is also one."* Mother.

- *"for me, I have laughed less ... and so serious here ... it has been such a significant change to me ... my mom had a fantastic sense of humour ... miss that and you (points to husband) don't laugh as much ... comes from German Stock ... a cultural thing."* Mother.

Both the father and the older daughter displayed introverted characteristics. They also seem to have a smaller social network than the mother. Mayer and Sutton (1996:243) assert that introverts tend to be more lonely and isolated than extraverts. The mother seemed delighted to share information with the researcher and clearly demonstrates an extravert personality. The mother reveals that she enjoys using humour and laughter to cope with challenges, but admits that she does not laugh as much as she used to. The mother's outgoing nature and sense of humour may make it easier for individuals to interact with her, including people of different cultures. Mayer and Sutton (1996:245) report that extraverts are also happier than introverts, because they cope better with the challenges of everyday life. Furthermore, they tend to display more positive emotions than introverts.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-category of climate has been identified.

Sub-category: climate

The excerpts reveal the impact that the severe heat in Dubai has had on the family, particularly the youngest daughter.

- *"Heat ... affects your lifestyle ... you stay indoors and not exercising enough like the sports I don't cycle anymore and the heat affects you all year round but you just don't adjust ... I say arrive here in summer then you know what you are in for ... at 7am you step outside and its 38 degrees!"* Older Daughter.
- *"The climate has really affected my younger daughter ... she used to be tiny ... a slim thing and when we arrived in June she got a shock ... it was like 50 degrees ... humid and about three days later we walked to Spinney's and by the time she got back she was blood red and dripping and said ... you will never do that to me again Mommy, I will not go out into the heat again. From that day on ... about six years on, that child sat inside and never moved ... you see she cannot stand sweating ... In South Africa she would cycle and do outdoor things, here she will not walk far ... and so she is very overweight and this has affected her lifestyle a great deal and here we watch very good TV ... the climate has changed her life completely."* Mother.

- *"I try and make her aware, she will be teased ... she is 12 ... she is in high school and it's about image...and I don't want her to be teased about her weight."* Older Daughter.

Not only has the climate changed the lifestyle of the family, but has created a loss for the younger daughter, who previously enjoyed outdoor sports. The younger daughter falls into Erikson's Stage Five: (Age 12-19) Identity Versus Role Confusion and faces the task of fulfilling the social roles of student, friend, girlfriend and sibling (Hook, 2002:280). The younger daughter's perception of the heat may not be the only reason that she stays indoors. The perception that her weight may be negatively viewed by her peers may further serve to maintain her indoor lifestyle. Developmentally, this may impact on her feelings of self worth and confidence in establishing new relationships in the future. A study conducted by Brown and Orthner (in McLeod, 2006:21) supports that adolescent girls showed a greater inclination towards depression and emotional difficulties following a local or international relocation.

Takeuchi *et al.* (2005:124) found that where expatriates used coping strategies to *reformulate their negative views* with regards to aspects in the foreign environment, their change of attitude was positively associated with a more optimal adjustment. Searle and Ward (in Selmer, 2008:3) describe psychological adjustment as the person's subjective well being and level of acceptance regarding the new environment. The above excerpts evidence that the younger daughter has not adjusted optimally to the environmental conditions in Dubai. She has formed negative perceptions of the climate which have remained with her for over six years, affecting her ability to adjust fully. What is significant here, is *how* this has changed her 'life' and how it has affected the rest of the family. This highlights the influence that environmental conditions may have on the expatriate's well-being and adjustment process.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Under this theme, the sub-categories of interest and tolerance for other cultures were identified.

Sub-category: interest and tolerance for other cultures

The family share an interest in different cultures. They become excited and animated when discussing their experiences and views.

- *"Well, it is very diverse here, ... I have always been open to cultures ... the local Arabs or Emirates have been ok, I have had conversations with them ... like there was this girl from Abu Dhabi who invited us to her wedding ... I have spoken to Emirate men even Saudis and we had the most amazing conversations ... I have worked in the hospitals, worked at*

the prison as a volunteer and got to know the prison wardens ... and what fascinates me there are 12 women in my Bible study group ... there is a French, a Swiss, A Nigerian, Kenyan, Mexican ... American, Canadian and South Africans. I have never been in an environment where so many cultures have been drawn together ... amazing about this expat environment ... and they all have the same goals ... happy family." Mother.

- *"My Indian colleagues are interesting and we talk sport ... like they love cricket."* Father.
- *"It's nice to know these different cultures, but I am shy and do not really make the first step to say hi and I find it a challenge."* Older Daughter.
- *"We all said when we come here we will try different things and we have done that ... like trying camel's milk its really good! And tried different food ... at work they will bring in food like Iranian, Iraqi or Thai ... Chinese or India. Since I came here, I enjoy spicy food ... so for me it's about a sense of adventure and have that chance in a lifetime to do something big and adventurous."* Father.

Foldes, Ones and Sinangil (2006:357-368) studied whether social desirability is predictive of expatriate adjustment and job performance, and found that the ability to adjust to the host culture is a key factor related to productive and successful global work projects. The father shows interest in the different foods and cultural groups at his workplace. Before the interview with the researcher, he mentioned that he had enjoyed a senior management position at a large company in Dubai for over five years. His interest and willingness to engage with the different cultural groups at his organisation, may have contributed to his adjustment process in the workplace.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that the family enjoys interacting with different cultural groups and they reveal an ongoing interest in knowing more about the people in their environment. Takeurchi, Lepak, Marinova and Yun (2007:929) posit that general adjustment refers to how the individual experiences familiarity, psychological comfort and the environmental features, for example, climate, food, weather, housing and living conditions.

- *"Come here (to Dubai) and let them teach you ... it changes your period of adjustment ... it is easier if you see it like this ... like the girls said Arab men are rude ... I tested it ... one needs to understand their customs. Like that you don't take offence when you think they are rude ... we must smile first ... it's not about you ... society must teach you first ... you are a guest."* Mother.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that the mother has reached Phase 4 of the adjustment phases described in Hofstede (2003:209) and Winklelman (2002:2-3). The mother has also

displayed the courage to engage with the local people and this served to change her perception of them, thereby facilitating her acculturation process.

Although the family is familiar with the local conditions and customs, the mother and older daughter do not seem to accept the materialistic ethos of Dubai, as exhibited in the following excerpts.

- *"Here ... very materialistic".* Mother
- *"Materialistic things ... all new cars like Porsches and Ferraris ... different to Rondebosch where I come from."* Daughter.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-categories of grief for family, friends and pets in South Africa have been identified.

Sub-category: grief for family, friends and pets in South Africa

- *"The grief and loss of feeling does not subside ... not even over the year."* Mother.
- *"But I think for men it is different ... not the same."* Father
- *"But us women do have stronger attachments."* Mother.
- *"I missed my best friends and my one friend from next door ... we knew each other since I was small and even now I really miss them."* Daughter.
- *"You are always saying goodbye. People come for a couple of years and go ... and the sadness again."* Daughter.

The excerpts reveal that the family has experienced feelings of grief since leaving South Africa. Pascoe (2008:1) contends that the grief faced by the separation from family, friends and pets is not acknowledged enough. The question arises, how does this affect the expatriate's adjustment? With feelings of sadness and reluctance to establish new and deep relationships in Dubai, the family remains 'stuck' in their grief and longing for people left in South Africa. McLeod (2006:30) states that the cumulative result of multiple losses and changes include friends, family, community groups, clubs, churches and pets. Added to their feelings of loss for friends in South Africa, are the loss of newly established friendships. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:176) indicate that the stages of grief that the expatriate child or adult experiences, are not dissimilar to those provided by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the dying patient. From the excerpts, it would seem that the family revisit their grief each time a newly found friend in Dubai leaves, affecting their decision to commit to new relationships.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-categories of anger and disillusion with general living conditions were identified.

Sub-category: anger and disillusion with general living conditions

- *"Here ... the boundaries seem to shift depending on which law officer or local is in charge ... now that I can't accept."* Mother.
- *"Especially rules on immigration and that sort of thing ... they add new things all the time ... you find out only what you are doing wrong when they fine punish you and throw you into prison ... You must get the truth of living in Dubai ... stuff up front ... at the end of the day you are only a guest in this country ... no rights ... and you are at their mercy ... nerve wracking ... things can go from being alright ... to downright horrible very quickly ... I was not properly informed and still carry a grudge as to how things started here."* Father.

The father's excerpt also indicates a sense of helplessness, whereby he feels defenceless against the inconsistent and perceived 'unfair' legal system. It would seem that he became disillusioned upon his arrival in Dubai, when he was disappointed with a contractual arrangement and the manner in which it was handled. His perception of the laws and rules may therefore have been adversely influenced after this perception of a future in Dubai. Selmer (in Stahl & Caliguiri, 2005:605) report that expatriate managers who engage in problem-focused strategies for example, tolerance, are better adjusted to expatriate life. It would appear that the father in Family F did not investigate ways to overcome his initial legal difficulties but 'held onto' the feelings of distrust and disappointment for the entire six years that he lived in Dubai. However, as the previous excerpts reveal, he 'chose' to perceive the interaction with different cultures and the experiences in Dubai as an 'adventure'. This may have assisted him to feel more positive about living in Dubai, thereby enabling him to adjust despite his feelings of disappointment and anger regarding the local legal system.

6.1.6.2 Conclusion and Evaluation of family F's adjustment process

Although Family F have lived in Dubai for six years, the excerpts suggest that the mother has enjoyed her time in Dubai the most. This may be due to her acceptance of 'the way things are' and her ongoing evaluation of her own perceptions when they appear to thwart her coping process. She seems to seek the positive aspects from her environment and displays a keen interest in her local community. From the observations of the researcher and the excerpts of the

mother, it would seem that she has extraverted personality characteristics which have assisted her in adjusting optimally. Both the father and the older daughter display introverted personalities and seemed less happy with their life in Dubai, but did indicate an interest in different cultures and their traditions. The mother however, relished the interaction with various cultures, mingling with many different nationalities and befriending the local Arab people. The researcher gained a strong sense of the mother's curiosity, love of adventure and her thirst for new experiences. The literature on Gestalt theory, (for example Clarkson, 1989:34; Mackewn, 1997:27) assert that at the core of understanding the individual and his or her relationship with the environment, is the style of *contact* that the individual has with his or her world. Contact is described by Yontef and Jacobs (2000:305) as being in touch with what is occurring here and now, from moment to moment. Healthy contact may be described as the ability of the individual to establish contact with the environment by using awareness, the senses and the ability to express feelings in a healthy way (Oaklander in Blom, 2006:29). It would seem that the mother displays a 'healthy' contact with her environment.

Although the father also displays an interest in foreign cultures, he is less inclined to approach them and form new friendships. The younger daughter has not adjusted optimally to Dubai and similar to her father, has remained 'stuck' due to adverse climatic conditions that she experienced upon her arrival in Dubai. Lazarus and Folkman (in Frydenberg, 1999:12) posit that stress resulting from the environment is as a result of the *type* of relationship that the individual has with the environment. Both the father and the younger daughter formed less positive 'relationships' with their new environment when arriving in Dubai, the father with the legalities, and the younger daughter with the extreme climatic conditions. The excerpts indicate that they never overcame these challenges which 'remained' with them the entire six years. Coping is connected to learning, whereby the individual finds new ways of doing or perceiving things thereby, managing stressors more positively (Frydenberg, 1999:24).

The data analysis on the six family case studies has now been completed. Each family case study was evaluated and findings compared with the literature on expatriate adjustment. The following section reveals the findings related to the focus group. Once again, the findings will be related to the six themes presented in Table 6.1. (Page 175).

6.2   THE FOCUS GROUP

As mentioned in Chapter Five, the focus group was conducted as a means to *enhance and support* the data yielded in the six family case studies. A full description of the focus group was provided

in Chapter Five. The focus group is examined as a single and separate case study and a discussion of the results are now presented. The views of the members of the group were electronically recorded and written up in transcript form. Excerpts from the transcript will appear under the six identified themes. A comparison of findings between the focus group and with those of the six family case studies will be presented at the end of this section. Literature findings will also be integrated into this section.

6.2.1 THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

The group consisted of fifteen South African women living in Dubai. The average age of the women was between thirty-five to forty-five. All women participants were married with children, although some women had adult children living in other countries. The focus group was held at a club house in one of the housing compounds in Dubai. The mood and atmosphere was cheerful, relaxed and friendly. There was lots of laughter and banter with people interacting well with the 'regulars' who often came to breakfast talks. Coffee and refreshments was served before the discussion commenced, further creating an open and communicative forum.

6.2.2 ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Theme 1: Social Support Structures

Under this theme, the sub-categories of family support and social support groups were identified.

Sub-category: family support

- "*When I first came here, I was disorientated, wrong hemisphere, wrong side of the road and I needed every ounce of energy to survive, I had to clutch onto my family because they had the same feelings that me the mom had.*"
- "*What is difficult for me as a mom is that your child may take longer to adapt than you and they react in ways, they say they cannot do things they did in South Africa.*"
- "*Every family member needs to understand the difficulty for everyone in adjusting to the new surroundings ... so everyone needs to play their part in understanding and supporting ... as difficult times are guaranteed.*"
- "*We miss friends and family but with the new technology and webcams we get to see them.*"
- "*It's important to adjust to be together as a family ... finding common ground also with other expats.*"

- *"The whole family needs to be in agreement to adjust ... being able to contact loved ones at home ... technologies ... help."*
- *"To adjust ... ja ... need family ties must be strong and loving and ... communication in the family."*
- *"Communication within the family is important and my adjustment was helped by modern technology ... like skype ... texting... oh and support networks."*

Evidenced from the excerpts, cohesion and communication within the family were viewed as positive factors in coping with expatriate life. The excerpts also reveal that parents need to recognise that the adjustment process is different for all family members and that children may need extra support to overcome difficulties. Ali (2003:2) reveals that family cohesion, adaptation and communication appear to be important predictors of expatriate children's intercultural adaptation.

It is also evident how important electronic access, for example the internet's face book and skype are regarding a continued relationship with family and friends in South Africa. Marchetti-Mercer (in Twiggs, 2009:83) believes that although expatriates maintain contact with friends and loved ones through the use of technology, it creates the illusion of closeness.   However, the above excerpts reveal that the technological means by which to contact loved ones, may provide a measure of support and comfort regardless of the lack of physical contact.

Sub-category: social support groups

- *"South African friends in Dubai makes you feel less homesick".*
- *"To adjust ... get a support network...and be aware of your reasons for being here."*
- *"Social support is important."*
- *"You can't read people that easily like your old friends- here many do not invest the time and effort into long-term friendships because things are so transient."*
- *"When ladies do not work it is easier to get together and network."*
- *"Going to church and meeting fellow Christians also made a positive experience".*

Evidenced from the excerpts, is the strong need for these participants to connect and obtain support from other South Africans. The church also plays an important role due to the desire to connect with people who share the same values, language and spirituality. There may also be a feeling of safety amongst those who share the same religious values in a country that is strongly dominated by Muslim customs and rituals. The lack of deeper and more meaningful relationships with other expatriates is also evident, another factor in creating feelings of loss or grief for

relationships left behind.   This aspect was also evident from the excerpts in the family case studies and may serve to reinforce the perception that the only 'real friends' are those left in South Africa. However, one of the participants reveals that this may not be the case for all expatriates.

- *"Sometimes the friends in South Africa are no longer your friends because you have grown apart ... my home is Dubai and my friends are here."*

Marchetti-Mercer (2009:129) posits that many individuals who return to South Africa after years abroad, find that conditions and people in their home country have changed. This would suggest the returnees face new adjustment challenges, namely, adapting to a country that may have changed politically, economically and socially. Twiggs (2009:80) indicates that for the families and friends left behind, the feelings of abandonment may lead to resentment, creating a rift in the relationship with the individuals who emigrated. The returnee may therefore find that previous relationships with family and friends have changed.

Theme 2: Personality Characteristics

Under this theme, the sub-categories of extravert and introvert personality were identified, interest and tolerance of other cultures was identified.

<u>Sub-category: extravert and introvert personality</u>

- "*People take their personality problems with them, like if someone is depressed in South Africa, they will be even more depressed when challenged with the stress of living in Dubai the new stress amplifies people's problems."*
- *"How do you get some people out of themselves ... like if she is an introvert ... depressed and my friends sleeps all the time."*
- *"We overcame our frustrations with a sense of humour."*
- *"Being culture sensitive ... and a sense of humour helps."*
- *"Even extraverts find it hard ... it took me five years to get there ... and get self-confidence. one has to think differently like you did in South Africa ... the common thread here ... or ... maybe it's just worth throwing the common thread away."*

The above excerpts support that the personality characteristics of introversion and extraversion play a role in how expatriates adjust. Although the literature (for example, Downes *et al.* 2007:1) indicate that extraversion is associated with positive expatriate adjustment, the above excerpts suggest that attitude and a choice to accept the differences in the new environment make a

difference in how the individual adjusts. Mayer and Sutton (1996:571) explain that the individual engaged in problem focused coping works hard at ways to reduce the threat. Humour may be a 'choice' to view the stressor as being less threatening and thereby help to alleviate the anxiety associated with the stressor. It is evidenced in the above excerpts, how humour assists some of the participants in overcoming the frustrations of expatriate life.

Sub-category: interest and tolerance of other cultures

- *"Being adventurous and interested ... gave immense personal growth."*
- *"There must be willingness to adapt ... openness and adventure"*
- *"To cope ... it's all... attitude, attitude ... attitude."*

The above excerpts reveal that a sense of adventure, together with a positive attitude may assist in the adjustment process. Frydenberg (1999:23) supports that when learning to cope, it is the context and the culture within which the situation occurs, that is significant and each individual brings unique biological dispositions, personal history, inner and external resources. The above excerpts suggest that the expatriate who views the new environment as a context in which to grow, learn and experience new adventures, may have learned or realised, that in order to cope optimally, he or she needs to find a way of *perceiving their experience as meaningful*. This could be considered as an internal resource. This perception of the experience is driven by the individual's attitude and willingness to experience the positive aspects in the situation rather than focus on the negative.

Theme 3: Environmental Conditions

Under this theme, the sub-category of landscape was identified.

Sub-category: landscape

- *"Dubai resembles a kind of utopia in a way .... you don't get subjected to the sad parts of life ... like ... beggars on the street....money fixes everything in Dubai and it's not a reality."*
- *"So different to South Africa .... apartment was noisy ... missed a garden ... and birds and pets."*
- *"Hard ... no greenery. "*

From the excerpts there is a sense that the environment or landscape in Dubai is perceived as 'false'. The excerpts evidence a longing for natural vegetation and the comfort that greenery

natural surroundings provide.   The excerpts support that the landscape plays an important role in the well-being of the individual.

Theme 4: Acculturation

Under this theme, the sub-categories of adaptation to cultural differences and bullying were identified.

Sub-category: adaptation to cultural differences

- *"It's hard to get used to a lot of people's inconsideration and impatience ... locals."*
- *"My kids mix with South African children ... it's one less stressful thing for them ... they feel understood and not ostracised."*
- *"Culture difference was the big thing for my kids."*
- *"Try and understand the culture from an eastern perspective".*

The difficulty of adjusting to the different cultural norms is revealed here.   One participant preferred to 'protect' her children from mingling with other cultures by placing them in a school that consisted of other South African children. Hofstede (2003: 209) and Winkleman (2002: 2-3) suggest that in Phase 3 of the adjustment process, successful acculturation entails the development of problem solving skills as well as a mind-shift in attitude towards the new lifestyle. Without the exposure to the challenges of acculturation, it may be questioned as to how expatriate children can experience a mind-shift if they are surrounded by individuals from their own culture. Acculturation occurs when the individual has *chosen* to make an acceptable adaptation to the new cultural environment and not shy away from it. This is supported by Hofstede (2003:209) who states that during Phase 2 of the expatriate adjustment phases, the expatriate may experience increased attempts to insulate him or herself from the foreign culture. It is further cautioned, that to move out of Phase 2, the expatriate needs to become more comfortable and familiar with the new cultural conditions, thereby allowing adjustment and acculturation to occur. The expatriate also needs to 'choose' to make the acceptable adaptation to the new cultural environment.

Sub-category: bullying

- *"My child had difficult time in school ... crying, unhappy ... bullying experienced ... daughter now in new school ... still bullying in new school but has made friends."*

The excerpt reveals that the mother removed her child from the school where her daughter was being bullied. Resilience is described in McLeod (2006:41) as promoting a stage of development to exist which would not have been attained without the challenging life event. The challenging or adverse life event fosters resilience or strengthening factors. Resilient families have several characteristics in common and parents that build protective family factors aid children in developing competencies that enable them to address life challenges (McLeod, 2003:45). By removing the daughter from the school, it may be that the daughter was not afforded the opportunity to confront the difficulty and thereby develop her own measure of resilience regarding the adversity.

Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss

Under this theme, the sub-category of grief for family and friends in South Africa, and grief for previous professional roles were identified.

<u>Sub-category: grief for family and friends in South Africa</u>

- **"***My middle daughter feels she has lost a lot in terms of family and friends.***"**
- *"I have managed my adjustment challenges myself ... I have used my time to read around issues like grief and loss."*

The above excerpts reveal that feelings of loss and grief may be prevalent in most expatriate families. The first excerpt above, reinforces that one family member may struggle more with grief than other individuals in the family.

<u>Sub-category: grief for previous roles</u>

- **"***I found giving up my role at work very difficult ... role and status and my identity. I also miss my children and I find Dubai very artificial.***"*

Tung (in Hechanova-Alampay *et al.,* 2001:3) explain that it is not surprising that non-working spouses experience more difficulty as expatriates, since they may be confronted with career interruptions and are often isolated, having to cope without any form of social or emotional support. Evidenced from the above excerpt, is the loss of status and sense of identity that this expatriate woman experienced. Mohr and Klein (2003:5) refer to role clarity as role adjustment of the expatriate spouse and highlight this as a relevant determinant for positive adjustment.

Theme 6: Disillusion

Under this theme, the sub-category of disillusion related to general living conditions was identified.

<u>Sub-category: disillusion with general living conditions</u>

- **"***A lot of changes in Dubai since six years ago ... traffic, housing lots is more expensive... ja ... not like before.***"**
- **"***Discovering the grass is not greener on the other side ... only more manure.***"**

Evidenced from the above excerpts is the sense that the general conditions in Dubai were not as expected, including feelings of disappointment indicating that things have changed over the years. There is a sense of sadness at the loss of the 'dream' or fantasy of what they initially expected from life in Dubai. From a Gestalt theoretical perspective, Mackewn (1997:22) contends that individuals are continuously making creative adjustments between themselves and the world around them in order to ultimately meet their own unique needs. To deal with the disappointment related to the changes in the foreign environment, the expatriate may need to create new ways of perceiving and managing feelings of disillusion.

6.2.3   Conclusion and Evaluation of the Focus Group

The themes of social support, personality characteristics, acculturation, grief and feelings of loss and disillusion were evident in the excerpts of the focus group transcript and were consistent with the six family case studies. Therefore, although the focus group did not consist of expatriate families, the fifteen expatriate women revealed that their *own families* experienced very similar adjustment challenges to those experienced by the participants in the six family case studies.

The following section evaluates the overall findings of the six case studies and the focus group. The section highlights the consistencies found amongst the themes identified and explores the factors that suggest positive or negative adjustment in expatriate families.

6.3   CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION OF FINDINGS: THE SIX FAMILY CASE STUDIES AND THE FOCUS GROUP

From the themes and the excerpts it is evidenced that certain characteristics in expatriate families could result in better adjustment and adaptation to expatriate life, whilst other characteristics contribute to stress, sadness and lack of adjustment. Table 6.2 (Page 241) reflects the six themes and provides the characteristics identified from the data that would suggest positive or negative adjustment skills within expatriate families.

Table 6.2: Summation of Findings of the six case studies and the focus group.

Themes Taken from the Data	Characteristics Supporting Positive Adjustment	Characteristics Supporting Negative Adjustment
Theme 1: Social Support Structures	1. Family support and communication 2. Social support networks, for example, the church, clubs or compound facilities. 3. Housing locality with facilities that encourage interaction with other residents.	1. Lack of initial social support upon arrival. 2. Isolation of non-working spouse 3. Lack of immediate spousal or family support. 4. Geographical location and housing conditions that do not foster interaction with neighbours or other expatriates. 5. Lack of access to social support structures and networks.
Theme 2: Personality Traits of family members	1. Extravert personality traits allowing for social and cultural interaction and curiosity in experiencing new things. 2. Positive approach and a sense of humour.	1. Introverted personality traits. 2. Anxiety and fearfulness of new experiences. 3. Suspicious and distrustful of other cultures. 4. Pessimistic approach towards adversity
Theme 3: Environmental conditions	1. The use of cognitive problems solving skills to change the perception of adverse environmental conditions. 2. Seeking alternative solutions to maintain a quality of life-style.	1. Allowing environmental factors to negatively influence the quality of life-style and wellbeing. 2. Not seeking out alternative solutions, for example, indoor sports and recreational facilities when the climate is harsh.
Theme 4: Acculturation	1. Tolerance and acceptance of diverse cultural groups. 2. Willingness to engage with other cultures and making a choice to learn about their values and traditions.	1. Allowing feelings of suspicion and fear of other cultural groups to create further isolation and feelings of alienation from the new cultural context. 2. Self awareness in reactions and behaviours that create feelings anxiety and prejudice, hindering acculturation.
Theme 5: Grief and Feelings of Loss	1. Acceptance of grief for loss of family and friends and uses resources (example, skype, internet) to maintain contact. 2. Avoids isolation by making the effort to connect with support groups and other expatriates. 3. Seeks support from the immediate family and outside the family.	1. Allowing grief and feelings of loss to dominate thinking and well-being. 2. Not seeking emotional and social support to overcome overwhelming feelings of loss and sadness.
Theme 6: Disillusion	1. Applying cognitive coping skills to review perceptions of adverse factors and thereby reframing negative perceptions into more acceptable ones.	1. Allowing feelings of disillusion and disappointment to override positive aspects so creating the lack of motivation to continue. 2. Not identifying the positive aspects of the new life-style and not using cognitive strategies to deal with difficulties.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the objective of combining different research methods to obtain data, was aimed to ensure that the findings from the family case studies and the focus group would correspond with each other or afford similar conclusions. Although the members of the focus group consisted of the spouses of expatriate families, the focus group, together with the six family case studies, presented similar findings regarding the characteristics supporting positive adjustment factors and negative adjustment factors.

Silverman (2007:291) asserts that the assumption underlying the use of different methods to gain data, namely triangulation, aim to ensure that the findings obtained from the different methods yield the same or similar conclusions thereby establishing the validity of those findings. It may be concluded, that the findings related to the six themes yielded from the focus group provided similar results to those of the family case studies and that saturation of data was accomplished.

A more in-depth discussion regarding the characteristics that support positive and negative adjustment, will now follow.

6.3.1   Characteristics Supporting Positive Adjustment

The families that indicated positive adjustment characteristics were Families C, D and F. The question arises, what characteristics served to assist in allowing these families to adjust positively to life in Dubai? Consistently, as is evidenced in Table 6.2 (Page 241), was the importance of social support, not only from within the family but from social support networks. A loving and supportive family with spouses and children communicating openly and consistently, showed to be a positive characteristic, in that it may have served to alleviate feelings of alienation and anxiety. The type of living location or housing compound, seemed to facilitate access to other expatriates, thereby alleviating isolation and loneliness. Evidenced from the excerpts of the abovementioned families, including the excerpts from focus group, was the willingness of the coping individuals to take action, and to change the perception of an adverse situation into a more positive one. This was exemplified in the action taken by the son in Family C to escape the heat, namely, he decided to become active in water sports. This may suggest that an internal locus of control is a factor in taking action where challenges or life adversities are concerned. Mayer and Sutton (1996:141) describe a high internal locus of control as the belief that what is happening to the individual is a result of his or her own efforts and that his or her own behaviour determines the end result.

As previously indicated, Flytzani and Nijamp (2008:146) examined the role of locus of control and cross-cultural adjustment in expatriate managers, and concluded that the managers with higher

internal locus of control coped better with the adjustment demands of the foreign culture. An internal locus of control, extravert nature and a positive attitude all seemed to contribute to positive adjustment skills. Individuals with a higher internal locus of control also tend to seek help and approach others to address any challenges that they experience. The children from these families all preferred to interact with the researcher rather than to express their views in a drawing. This may have indicated that they had learned positive social skills from their parents and shared their extraverted and curious natures regarding meeting new people and having new experiences. Like their parents, the children from these families on the whole, showed an interest in other cultures and had a circle of friends. They also shared positive views about Dubai, similar to their parents. Mayer and Sutton (1996:572) assert that individuals who hold positive expectancies persevere more than those with negative expectancies. This was evidenced in Families C, D and F where despite feelings of disillusion, the family members remained positive regarding their continued life in Dubai.

6.3.2   Characteristics Supporting Negative Adjustment

Evidenced from the excerpts taken from the transcripts of Families A, B and E including those of the focus group, was how the lack of support and communication from within the family, served to impact adversely on the whole family. This was particularly noticeable from the excerpts and children's drawings taken from Family A. The mother and the children in the family expressed a need to communicate with the father who was 'absent' in many ways. The lack of certainty, anger and negative feelings regarding their life in Dubai supported negative characteristics for adjustment, particularly since they had been living in Dubai for a period of three years. At this stage, acculturation and adjustment according to the Phases of Adjustment in Hofstede (2003:2009) should have been achieved. The children from these families seemed to struggle in making friends, and did not appear to be settled and secure in their new environment. Chambers (1999:131) asserts that children's coping and adjustment, like adult adjustment includes the perception of events as negative or positive generating a reaction to deal with the events. The daughter from Family E may have introjected her mother's negative views about other cultures reinforcing her feelings of loneliness and alienation, as evidenced in her drawing.

Both Families B and E had been in Dubai for approximately four to six months. The members of these families all exhibited introverted characteristics and found establishing support from social networks difficult. The researcher believes that although many introverted individuals would be less likely to seek out social support, there are those introverted individuals who may *recognise* that they need to become more outgoing in order to feel less unhappy or lonely within the new

environment. This was evidenced in the excerpts of the older daughter in Family D, and the mother in Family C, whereby both individuals recognised that they *needed* to become more sociable in order to feel happier in Dubai. In the researcher's view, consideration also needs to be given to those introverts who may *not require a social network* to assist them in adjusting to a new environment, meaning, that these individuals *do not perceive* that social support is pivotal to their well-being and adjustment process, and are therefore content to face challenges with limited social assistance.

The non-working spouses experienced loneliness and isolation but showed little evidence that they were actively searching for social contact. Interestingly, Families A and E experienced stronger family cohesion and support, but still struggled with feelings of isolation. The family members in Family E particularly exhibited signs of culture shock. Winkelman (2002:2) describes culture shock as feelings of anxiety, confusion, loss of impotence due to familiar social rules. This was indicated in the mothers of Families B and E, whereby they showed signs of confusion and anxiety with regards to the cultural aspects of Dubai. The negative views of the working spouses or the fathers in the families may have served reinforce feelings of pessimism and disillusion in these families. Mayer and Sutton (1996:568) assert that when individuals believe it is possible to attain the outcomes they seek, they are more likely to persevere and make an effort to achieve their goals. Evidenced in the excerpts taken from Families A, B and C, several of the family members do *not believe* that their life in Dubai will be positive in the future, and this may be affecting their desire to persevere and seek more optimal ways of coping.

Regarding gender and expatriate adjustment, the researcher found that the *roles* assigned to female spouses in the present case studies influenced their adjustment process.   For example, the mothers of the Families A and B struggled to adapt partly due to the loss of 'work or occupational roles' that they had previously enjoyed in South Africa.   The impact of role adjustment for both male and female spouses was explored in Chapter Three, with The Prudential Relocation International Services (2008) survey revealing that the loss of role identity and employment potential of women expatriates was associated with poor adjustment.   From the case studies, particularly Families A and E, the researcher found that for the male spouses, adjustment difficulties were related to their roles as 'breadwinners' for their families due to problematic employment contracts and future career prospects. The discontentment of their wives and children may have added to their adjustment difficulties and feelings of anxiety pertaining to a more certain future in Dubai.

In sum, the positive and negative personality characteristics extracted from the excerpts of the family case studies and the focus group, support that certain characteristics lead to better adjustment skills, whilst others may have negative ramifications for the families living in foreign countries. The chapter summary now follows.

6.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Six presented the data analysis of the six family case studies and the focus group. The focus group was presented as a separate case study, aimed at enriching the evidence of the six case studies including the drawings of the children. It was found that the data from the focus group supported the findings of the six case studies, with each of the six identified themes being addressed in the analysis.

The literature supported some of the findings in the present study, especially that extraversion may be associated with positive expatriate adjustment. Other positive characteristics pertaining to adjustment are cultural acceptance, interest and tolerance for other cultures, a positive attitude and the use of cognitive strategies to overcome difficulties.

Regarding negative adjustment characteristics, introversion, pessimism and a lack of proactive behaviour to overcome difficulties were indicated. Prejudice and suspicion of diverse cultural groups was also identified as a negative adjustment characteristic. Children that did not establish friendships or that were anxious regarding other cultural groups indicated signs of depression, anger and loneliness. The impact on their developmental process was explored.

The following chapter describes the five Gestalt family and child therapy techniques which have been formulated by consulting the data yielded in this chapter.

A GESTALT APPROACH FOR EXPATRIATE FAMILY AND CHILD THERAPY

7. INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter One and Chapter Five, the objective of the present study was firstly to qualitatively explore the adjustment experiences of South African expatriate families residing in Dubai and secondly to provide Gestalt therapeutic techniques aimed specifically at assisting the adjustment process of expatriate families. The first objective was addressed in Chapter Six, whereby the experiences of the expatriate families and focus group were explored and presented. Using the information yielded from the data in Chapter Six and Gestalt therapy theory, this chapter now addresses the second objective, namely to provide techniques for the Gestalt therapist to assist expatriate families. The techniques have therefore been formulated according to the needs of expatriate families struggling to adjust as revealed in Chapter Six. In formulating the techniques, Gestalt therapy methods and Gestalt play therapy methods were integrated. The literature regarding expatriate adjustment was also consulted, with the aim of ensuring that the techniques addressed as many aspects of expatriate adjustment as possible.

The following section now provides five techniques as part of the Gestalt approach to assist the expatriate family, including special consideration for young children within the family. The first section commences with a brief background pertaining to the concepts underpinning the techniques used. Thereafter, the five techniques are presented. Finally, an evaluation of a Gestalt approach for family play therapy is provided.

7.1 A GESTALT THERAPEUTIC APPROACH FOR EXPATRIATE FAMILIES

As noted in Chapter One, the definition of *techniques* was as follows; "a method or skill used for a particular task ... proficiency in a practical or mechanical skill" (Collins Paperback Dictionary, 1999:859). Collins Paperback Thesaurus in A–Z Form (1990:625) describes technique as "approach, fashion, manner, means, method ... modus operandi, art, craft, craftsmanship ... skill".

Regarding the present study, the word 'techniques' is aimed to describe practical and creative methods or tasks to address the adjustment difficulties of expatriate families. Gestalt therapists are encouraged to formulate appropriate creative experiments, aimed in assisting clients to have meaningful encounters with others and an optimal relationship with the environment (Clarkson, 1989:20-26; Zinker, 1977:48). Furthermore, Gestalt therapy focuses on the improvement of

relationships using creativity and spontaneity in the therapeutic context. The Gestalt approach focuses on the phenomenological observation of what occurs with the client in the here and now and aims to interpret the phenomena observed, as "functions of a shared field" rather than the client's characteristics (Roubal, 2009:265). Chapter Two provided a background for Gestalt therapy theory and Chapter Four discussed the value of play and creative methods within Gestalt family therapy. Taking these theoretical aspects into consideration, the researcher has formulated techniques with the objective of assisting Gestalt therapists to help expatriate families in their adjustment process.

7.1.1   THE FIVE GESTALT TECHNIQUES

The techniques that follow are primarily presented as methods for the Gestalt therapist to encourage dialogue, awareness and to encourage all family members to engage openly with each other. Lynch and Lynch (2005:206) support that the 'hallmark' of Gestalt systemic therapy are its interventions which should be aimed at enabling the family members to improve their relationship. The techniques may also be viewed as 'interventions', or ways in which to motivate change in behaviour regarding expatriate families that struggle to adjust. For consistency however, the term used to assist the expatriate families henceforth will be 'techniques'.

 In the following techniques, the use of play therapy methods have been integrated to allow younger children in the family the opportunity to reveal their feelings and difficulties as well as to create a basis for the family to take responsibility for their adjustment problems and find solutions to address them. Furthermore, the five techniques are also viewed as tools aimed at revealing *where* the adjustment difficulties exist and then to provide the family with the support to find solutions in enhancing their support structures. The question may be asked, *how* were these techniques formulated? The following section provides an overview of the steps that the researcher used to formulate the five techniques.

The steps taken in the formulation of the five techniques:

1. In keeping with the objective of the present study, the researcher used the qualitative findings regarding the six family case studies and the focus group as a main source of information in identifying methods that would be effective in assisting the expatriate family. From the current data, the researcher thus identified the characteristics that supported positive and negative adjustment resources which were presented in Table 6.2 (Page 241) of Chapter Six. The characteristics that supported negative adjustment resources, for example, lack of social support or not dealing with grief, provided the

researcher with core concepts around which the techniques could be adapted from traditional Gestalt techniques or formulated from the researcher's experiences with the expatriate participants, including her years in practice as a therapist dealing with families and children.

2. With the abovementioned core concepts in mind, the researcher referred to Gestalt therapy theory and the literature on family and child therapy. Gestalt therapy can facilitate playful experiences in the therapeutic relationship, motivating clients to engage creatively and playfully with one another, thereby providing the opportunity for impulses to unfold (Amendt-Lyon, 2001:225). Furthermore, the playful experiences in the therapeutic relationship enable authentic self-expression, revealing the life context of the client. To address the needs of expatriate families and/or specific needs of their children, the researcher identified creative techniques, for example, drawing and play, as appropriate in motivating dialogue and communication for the whole family within the therapy session. The sources of inspiration for the five techniques are presented before each technique is described. The five techniques now follow.

7.1.1.1.   The Home Environment Drawing

Key concepts: projection, creativity, family communication and dynamics, external field, social support.

Source of Inspiration: The Home Environment Drawing technique was based on the recommendations in the literature (for example, Gil, 1994; Kerr *et al.,* 2008), that art or drawing is a favourable method for family therapy. Furthermore, it is recommended that family members draw themselves and their family members participating in an activity. This idea originated from the Kinetic Family Drawing Technique which was developed by Burns and Kaufman in 1970 (Gil, 1994:100).   Adapted from the Kinetic Family Drawing Technique as presented in Gil (1994:100), the researcher used this concept as a *creative basis* formulating a drawing projection technique to facilitate the expatriate family's communication and thinking about their home environment within the expatriate context.

Motivation:

Various authors in the literature (for example, Blom, 2006; Oaklander, 1997) regarding Gestalt play therapy encourage art or drawing to facilitate discussion between the therapist and the child. The researcher observed that in the family case studies of the present research, children who found it difficult to verbalise their feelings preferred to draw and then enjoyed discussing

their drawings. Drawing soon after contact with the researcher seemed to relax the children and allowed them to perceive the forum as less threatening. The drawing exercises facilitated the researcher's understanding of their perceptions and experiences of Dubai. Furthermore, it *created interest in the parents*. A drawing exercise could thus be used in the therapeutic process to illicit discussion and interaction between both children and parents. The use of drawings that symbolise the relationship between family members is consistent with the systemic theoretical approach (Lynch & Lynch, 2008:156). The importance of the systemic approach within Gestalt family therapy was described in Chapter Four.

A further motive to use drawings within family therapy, is that they present a creative method of encouraging projections from the clients. Pifalo (2008:1) asserts that during art therapy sessions it was observed that group members were relieved to do a task rather than only discuss problems. In one of the earlier works on Gestalt art therapy, Rhyne (1973:7) states that art or drawing has been recognised by various schools of psychotherapy as a method of diagnosis and an expression of unconscious material. Furthermore, it provides a way for emotional release and a method to facilitate growth as well as a way to bridge inner and outer realities.

After the initial consultation with the expatriate family, the therapist could strive to explore how the family experience their environment within the home context and the geographical surroundings. The findings from the present case studies revealed that geographical location and the home environment play an important role in facilitating the building of social support structures which were identified as pivotal in positive adjustment for the expatriate families.

Purpose:

The purpose of using the home environment drawing would be to:

- Using a Gestalt theory perspective, discover the styles and divisions of boundary-making, the figural concerns of the individuals, or the family as a whole and existing 'gestalts'.
- Provide an opportunity for all family members to express themselves and be heard. The main objective would be to facilitate dialogue about the problems the family members have with their new environment, different cultures and what difficult experiences have been brought with from the country of origin.
- Consideration would have to be given as to the age of the children and their willingness to participate. Some children under the age of four may not be suited for this exercise, due to lack of sufficient verbal and drawing skills. The discretion of the therapist would therefore be required. An alternative task for the young child under four years may be

offered, for example clay modelling or puppet play. The techniques for using these methods were presented in Chapter Four.

- Provide a task that is perceived as non-threatening and fun but appropriate in revealing how all members of the family experience their new external field. The drawing would be a diagnostic tool regarding what aspects or needs are currently important to all members in the family. Examples of a need in the foreign environment would be the forging of new friendships to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation.

- The drawing allows adults and children to develop a greater self-understanding including a better understanding of other members in the family. Lynch and Lynch (2008:156-165) support that the use of diagrams in family therapy are valuable in identifying the difficulties, dynamics and relationship patterns amongst family members. This is accomplished by allowing the family members to draw and so represent themselves in a diagram of their immediate or extended family. Importantly, *where* the family members position themselves in the diagram allows the therapist to identify the behaviour patterns within the family. For example, a child may place a drawing of him/herself on a distant part of the page indicating the possibility of feelings of loneliness and lack of rapport with other family members. The objective of identifying how family members relate to and support each other is therefore included in the home environment drawing intervention.

- As discussed in Chapter Two of the present study, children may feel unheard and disempowered when removed from their usual surroundings. The drawing technique is aimed to allow these children to experience a sense of mastery and affirmation, in that they become free to express themselves without judgement or scrutiny from family members.

Method:

The family is asked to sit at a table comfortable enough to accommodate all members. The therapist observes how the family select their seating arrangements. Salonia (2009:44) supports that in Gestalt family therapy, the therapist should observe how the family chooses and occupies the chairs at the start and during the session, indicating that the choice of chair reveals the relationship between family members.

A large piece of white paper is placed in the centre of the table and coloured pencils or crayons are provided by the therapist. Each family member chooses a specific crayon colour to represent him or herself so that contributions are easily identified in the drawing. The family is then asked to put their names and surname at the top of the large white paper. The underlying message of

the intervention is to encourage a feeling of family togetherness and support. For this reason, the therapist should explain at the outset of the activity that it is not a 'test' where the drawings are criticized or judged, but that the intention is to encourage discussion and problem solving in a creative context.

The family members each take a turn in drawing what they feel represents an aspect of their new home environment. This may take the form of a room, a patio, a garden, a kitchen, the neighbouring homes or any other related environmental features. Following this, each member is asked to draw him/herself somewhere within the home environment. The therapist explores these drawings with the family members and identifies areas which could be problematic. The following are examples of case scenarios; a child may draw him/herself situated alone and outside the family home. Could this mean the child feels unheard and cut off from the family? A father draws himself not in the family home context but in the furthest corner of the paper. Is this father feeling alienated from his family and why? A mother may depict herself as a small figurine located in the kitchen. How does she perceive her role in her new environment? After drawing themselves in the home context, the family members are asked to draw each other and to describe what each family member is doing in the drawing. This request further reveals the perceptions that family members have of each other and where relationship or communication difficulties may exist. The first few drawings may afford the therapist several clues as to what problems may exist within the family. There is no prescribed way that the family 'must' draw themselves and their environment. The therapist is encouraged to explore the needs of the family as the intervention ensues, allowing the family to express their creativity where they can.

The family is encouraged to draw as many features from their home and the surrounding environment as they need to. Each new drawing regarding the home environment is discussed and explored, not only with the therapist but also amongst family members. Problem areas are carefully examined and identified by the therapist. Should the therapist identify marital difficulties amongst the spouses, a recommendation for couple counselling could be made after the session when the spouses are alone with the therapist. Similarly, the therapist may recognise that a child would benefit from play therapy outside the family context and may make this recommendation to the parents. The following questions are guidelines as to how the therapist can gain access to the expatriate adult and child's experiential world. The questions have been formulated by the researcher and are specifically aimed to assist the expatriate family.

- Can you tell us more about what you are doing here in this drawing?
- Tell us about the people living next to your home?

- What are your feelings about the people of different cultures living there?

- Who are your friends in this neighbourhood?

- Who are not your friends and why?

- What would help you to make friends in your area?

- What is difficult about living here?

- Are there things that you like about living in your new home?

- What is different to your home in South Africa (or country of origin) and how do you feel about these differences?

- What can you do to make these differences more bearable if they make you unhappy?

- How can your family help to make things less difficult for you?

- Is there someone whom you think could help you the most?

- Is this person in the drawing? If not, where are they and how would you contact them?

- What things in this drawing makes you angry or sad and why?

- What things in this drawing make you happy, and why?

- Which person from your country of origin would you want to include in this drawing and can you tell us about this person?

It is suggested that the therapist could electronically record the responses from the abovementioned questions in order to deliberate ways to optimally facilitate the therapy sessions that follow. However, in accordance with the ethical principles regarding psychotherapy, consent to record the responses should be obtained from the family members. An evaluation of the Home Environment Drawing Technique now follows.

Evaluation of the Home Environment Drawing Technique*:*

This approach allows the therapist to understand what meanings the clients assign to their environment and what type of behaviour is used to establish contact with the external field. Joyce and Sills (2001:26) posit that an exercise regarding the internal and external field is an important way to create awareness and understanding of how the client construes his or her world. Furthermore, it is a phenomenological method used in understanding the client and encourages discussion into the here and now. It allows the therapist to examine what factors exist outside the client's awareness and how she or he interprets her/his field, including how he or she perceives the 'self' within the field.   The drawing intervention provides an ideal 'ice-breaker' for the therapeutic setting and facilitates devising strategies for the family to address

difficulties. This is done by challenging the family as to how they can change negative perceptions so as to seek alternative ways to deal with aspects that thwart the adjustment process. The projections may also be used to identify where family members are struggling with a sense of loss or grief for loved ones left behind in the country of origin.

Parlett (1997:23) states that therapy includes the identifying of the original organisation of experiences, namely, examining the original field which has impacted on the current feelings and perceptions of the individual. This would imply examining how and why the family came to be living in a foreign country, what attracted them to the new environment and what was left behind. This approach may assist in identifying any unfinished business of members in the family, where the feelings of loss and grief exist and what is 'missing' or significantly different in the new environmental field. In sum, creative experimentation like the drawing intervention, is powerful in groups since no individual "is depleted and everyone is nourished" (Zinker, 1977:19).

The following intervention allows the child or children the opportunity to play in front of their parents enabling them to express their needs when verbalising them is difficult.

7.1.1.2 The Sand Play

Key concepts: Systemic approach, play, projection, family as a support team, empowering the child, developing parental understanding.

Source of Inspiration: The sand tray therapy approach was first introduced by Dora Kalff in 1980 (Gil, 1994:11). Oaklander (2007:18) contends that it is the task of the therapist to assist the child in regaining the 'missing parts' of him or herself by using different expressive and creative ways or techniques. Furthermore, projection techniques, like the sand tray, provide a gateway to the inner world of the child. As evidenced in the literature, (for example, Axline, 1989:50; Landreth, 1991:120) the sand play technique is highly recommended in helping children to manage difficult feelings. In the researcher's view, the sand tray and the objects that may be used in this technique are advantageous in an expatriate context, since the 'landscape' of the sand tray and the objects can be modified to suit the expatriate's new environment and thus create the basis for discussion.   The following technique is thus an adaptation from the recommendations regarding sand play found in Oaklander (1992) and Blom (2006).

Motivation:

The sand play activity is proposed as a method to enhance communication within the family. It also provides an alternative method to the drawing activity, since the family may feel more

comfortable using the sand tray as a method of expressing their experiential world. It is also an ideal opportunity for the child to reveal his or her experiences in a playful and non-threatening context.   Sluzki (1979:379-390) explains that therapy with migrant families 'evolves' and each phase of the intervention strategy impacts on how the next phase of the therapy will unfold. Therefore the therapist would need to use his or her discretion regarding the timing in the use of this technique.

In this exercise, the child or children commence to 'play' in the sand with selected objects that portray aspects of the external field or environment, such as the Middle Eastern region of Dubai for example.   Children under the age of twelve may enjoy this activity more than adolescents. It is the researcher's experience that adolescents prefer to discuss their difficulties, however, art or clay may also be used as projective tools for children and adolescents alike.

From the current data analysis, the researcher observed that some children in the family case studies experienced difficulty in adapting to conditions in the new environment, particularly the new school conditions.   Using the sand play technique, the therapist may detect whether a child is being bullied at school, feels ostracised or has negative experiences that cannot be verbalised. Importantly, the parents can witness when the children express emotions in the play that may indicate adjustment difficulties. These difficulties can then be explored by the therapist who may then together with the parents find ways to assist the child. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:193) contend that children especially feel vulnerable in new settings or environments and need a sense of safety before they can take risks required to adjust. The sand play intervention may therefore be an ideal way for the child to communicate his or her feelings of vulnerability in the new environment and with the guidance of the therapist, fears and anxieties about the relocation and its challenges can be addressed.

 This technique is essentially aimed to identify where the children in the family have adjustment difficulties. However, its added value lies in the participation of both parents whereby joint decision making aimed to help the child is facilitated by the therapist. Oaklander (1992:166) supports that sand is a wonderful medium for working with individuals of every age group. The therapist can also observe how the parents communicate with each other about the children and where any parenting difficulties may impede the adjustment process of the family on the whole.

Purpose:

- The objective of allowing the children to play in the sand *without* their parents first, is to observe how the parents react to their children's behaviour. Gil (1994:29) states that the children's behaviour is a barometer of family dynamics.

- By allowing the children to play in the sand with the objects that portray the environment, for example, landscape, the people, school and home environment, allows the parents to witness any difficulties that the child or children experience in their new environment.

- The dialogue that the therapist has with the child or children during this play stage of the process allows the therapist to determine the difficulties that the child may be experiencing and what method the child adapts at the I-boundary regarding the new environment, for example introjection.

- Young children do not have much control over their lives and the relocation to another country is one that is initiated by the parents. The children may not have been adequately informed about the relocation or may not have had the opportunity to voice their concerns about the move. This lack of knowledge may impact on their perception of safety or continuity in their life, creating anxiety, accompanied by a feeling of helplessness. Oaklander (2007:73) explains that the behaviours that bring children to therapy may be the ones that they use to establish a sense of self or gain a feeling of power in the world. Chapter Three explored how relocation may affect young children. Moving to a new country may therefore heighten the feeling of powerlessness and reinforce certain behaviours that display these feelings. These feelings may be revealed in the sand tray experiment and can be explored in front of the parents to encourage understanding and awareness in both child and parent. Russ (2005:231) posits that a number of studies found that play ability is related to adjustment and coping. Furthermore, the play reveals how the child is dealing with difficulties in his or her life. For this reason, the sand tray play technique will provide clues regarding the child's adjustment process. The way that the therapist gently questions the child about his or her difficulties may also serve as a role modelling process for the parents when dealing with other difficulties in the home environment.

- The sand tray activity also serves as a projection. The goal of projective work is to assist the child to eventually express ownership of the projection thereby allowing for awareness of the self (Oaklander, 2007:63,68). Furthermore, exercises that strengthen the sense of self in the child assist him or her to deal with emotions that are painful. An

example of a painful emotion in the expatriate child would be grief or sense of loss for family, pets and friends left behind in the country of origin.

- Where the child expresses an emotion like anger during the sand play, the therapist could explore how the whole family deals with angry emotions. Oaklander (2007:77) supports that this method should allow each family member to express his or her point of view, likes and dislikes.

Method:

The data analysis in Chapter Six revealed that climate, different cultures and the landscape may represent areas of adjustment difficulties for expatriate families. This sand tray activity would therefore need to include the landscape and environmental features of the new country. To exemplify this approach, the sand in the tray would be ideal to represent the arid, desert-like conditions of Dubai.

Oaklander (1992:166) provides useful guidelines in working with a sand tray. The researcher has integrated and adapted these guidelines into the following procedure. Several small objects or toys are placed in the sand tray. Depending on the needs of the child, the therapist either chooses the objects for the sand tray or allows the child to select them. The sand should be fine and easily moved or moulded to form hills or shapes. Water may be provided so that the child may create firmer shapes or water features. The sand tray would consist of a plastic container filled with dry sand. A pitcher of water may be made available. The base of the sand tray could be a blue colour, so that if the sand is moved aside, the illusion of water or 'sea' could be created. For the purpose of play in the expatriate family context the following toys and objects are suggested:

- If the locality is a dry arid region like the Middle East, the use of plastic palm trees, Arabian figures or dolls, figures of adults and children dressed in western attire could be introduced.
- Bridges, mosques, churches or other buildings reflecting the culture of the region.
- Means of transport could include small trucks, cars, aeroplanes, trains and boats.
- Animals of the region, for example, goats, camels, horses, birds of prey and aquatic creatures could be introduced since they reflect the animals of the Arabian Gulf.
- It is recommended that as many objects representing the new environment be introduced for use in the sand tray.

The therapist invites the child or children to select a toy that he or she would like to play with in the sand. The researcher suggests that where there is more than one child in the family, that each child should be afforded the chance to present his or her sand play alone. However, it may occur that the therapist wishes to explore the *relationship b*etween the siblings and this experiment may thus assist in identifying areas of concern.

The sand tray is placed in the centre of a large table so that the parents and the therapist can have access to the tray. Blom (2006:137) posits that the child could be encouraged to build a picture around a specific scene or theme. In this instance, the new environment for example, Dubai could be depicted by the child. Blom (2006:137) states that from a Gestalt theoretical perspective the sand play may be dealt with in a similar way to the drawing method. The child would then be asked to describe his or her 'scene' and to provide a story about the creation. The child should be encouraged to identify the objects and have a dialogue with the objects. The child may also change the objects around or change the scenes, for example creating an angry scene from a formerly peaceful one. The following recommendations taken from Oaklander (1992:166-167) have been adapted to suit the therapeutic context in the present study. It is emphasised that the therapist should take note of:

- The child's process:
  The therapist notices whether the child alters his or her decision often.
  Does he or she spend a great deal of time feeling the sand?
- The scene in the sand tray:
  Is it organised?
  Is it chaotic?
  Is the scene peaceful or showing signs of anger?
  What symbolism occurs?
- The field and the level of significance:
  From an expatriate context, what does the child say about his or her environment?
  What meaning does the child attach the aspects in the sand picture?
- Taking Possession:
  Does something in the tray remind the child of an important area in his or her life, for example asking: 'do the strange people make you feel like hiding?'
- Obtaining the existential message:
  What does the picture in the sand tell you about your life and yourself?

Once the child has completed his or her scene in the sand and the therapist is satisfied that the abovementioned aspects have been considered, the parents and/or other children are invited to interact with the child and to participate in the sand play. The 'invitation' to join the play in the sand is extended by the child or children partaking in the sand activity. The reason for allowing the child to have a choice here, is to create a feeling of autonomy within the child and to witness how the parents are approached. The therapist would look for hesitation, awkwardness or other indications that provide clues regarding their relationship. The family members would be informed that the therapist would ask questions during the play session. The subsequent participation of the whole family would enable the therapist to observe any communication difficulties and to further examine how the members relate to each other.

Gestalt practice takes place in the 'here and now', and where the opportunity arises in which a family member expresses a need or difficulty, it could be addressed immediately. In this manner, the therapist would continue to facilitate the process where necessary. The following description of a sand play session provides an example wherein the therapist could intervene using the 'here and now' approach:

Child playing with father in the 'sea area' of the sand tray:

Child: "This little fish is all alone and the big fish are fighting him!"

Therapist: "What do the big fish say to the little fish?"

Child: "You are not yellow like us and we hate you!"

Therapist: " And what does the little fish feel when this happens?"

Child: "He feels scared ..."

Therapist: "Do you sometimes feel like this little fish?"

Child: "Yes, at school ..."

The above dialogue may reveal that the child is being bullied or feels ostracised at school but is not sure how to express this. As revealed in Chapter Two and the case studies of Chapter Six, bullying of expatriate children is not uncommon. In the family therapy context, this problem can be examined and the parents could be encouraged to assist their child to feel more empowered and seek ways to remedy the bullying. The researcher recommends that the therapist could explore how the family interacts by examining the following areas:

- What is the existential message in the sand that the family reveals?
  Ask the family members: what does the picture in the sand tell you about your new life here, yourself and your family?
- How do the parents interact with each other?
- What kind of relationship do the parents have, it is loving and supportive?
- How do the parents play and communicate with their children?
- Do the parents "listen" to their children and how do they respond to their children's behaviour or needs?
- Is one family member withdrawn or more hesitant to join in?

The sand tray activity would hereby allow the therapist to understand where the difficulties exist within the family as its own 'field' or system and could be a way to invite the parents and children to find solutions for their adjustment difficulties. Should the therapist identify deeper psychological difficulties in the children or adults, individual therapy may be advised for the family.

Evaluation of the Sand Play Technique*:*

Blom (2006:139) contends that sand tray play is effective in addressing unfinished business. For example, the child may have feelings of anger about not being reassured that the relocation would be 'safe' or why it was taking place. Furthermore, the sand play assists the child in obtaining a stronger sense of self, in that he or she experiences autonomy or control regarding the movement of objects on the tray and by them being afforded the opportunity to invite the parents to join in. In the researcher's view this is significant in that the child may not have had a 'voice' pertaining to the relocation process and as a result may not feel confident enough to express any negatively perceived feelings. By encouraging the child to express his or her autonomy, the aim is to create confidence within the child so that he or she may reveal feelings of anxiety, grief or other emotions within the safe context of the therapy session.   Using play and dialogue in the *presence of all family members*, particularly the parents, allows the child to express his or her feelings in a contained or non-judgemental context and may encourage the family to communicate more openly or frequently in the future. The sand tray technique may be an opportunity to explore unfinished business within the family. The sand tray technique may also be tailored to assist the special needs of an expatriate child who requires individual therapy.

The sand tray play activity may need to be used several times, particularly where children find difficulty in owning their projections (Blom, 2006:139). Where the therapist identifies difficulties concerning the spouses, for example, conflict between the spouses, this may be explored in a separate session whereby only the parents are present. In the researcher's view, spousal support, role identity and communication between spouses should be continuously examined in the therapy process. The case studies in Chapter Six and the literature on adjustment presented in Chapter Three strongly support that spousal satisfaction and happiness was a significant factor in preventing repatriation or lack of family adjustment.

7.1.1.3   The Family Team and Empty Chair

Key concepts: projection, unfinished business, grief, family support.

Source of Inspiration: In his earlier work, Zinker (1977:147) states that the empty chair technique is a classical Gestalt experiment and allows the individual to address an unfinished life situation. Zinker (1977:147) emphasises that classical experiments, like the empty chair are beneficial when adjusted to suit specific situations with certain clients and do not yield optimal results if applied rigidly. This approach resonated with the researcher, whereby the empty chair technique was identified as a method that could be 'tailored' or adapted for the expatriate family context, specifically addressing unfinished business such as grief or feelings of loss.

 Motivation:

Hender (2001:10) asserts that the Gestalt method of empty chair dialogue is useful as an intervention to encourage dialogue with another imaginary individual. It is designed to access restricted emotions thereby allowing the facilitator to assist in managing the feelings in a more optimal manner. The empty chair technique brings unfinished business to the fore and assists in dealing with polarities within the self (Blom, 2006:145). If a need has been left unsatisfied, for example a child not being allowed to cry or grieve for the loss of his or her friends or pets, this child may eventually become an adult that withholds affection from new relationships because the original grief was not expressed in a healthy way (Clarkson, 1989:43). Expressing the grief and a sense of loss for loved ones left behind in the expatriate's country of origin was strongly indicated in the excerpts of the family case studies in Chapter Six. This was compounded by the loss of newly made friendships, especially other expatriates who left Dubai in order to relocate elsewhere. Where psychologically unfinished situations continue to press for closure, the individual cannot fully enjoy the fulfilment of new relationships available in the present moment (Clarkson, 1989:43). The reluctance to engage in new relationships, in case they are suddenly

ended due to relocation, was evident in several of the excerpts in the family case studies presented in Chapter Six. It may be that the expatriate who has not been able to express his or her grief at the 'loss' of loved ones, the loss of a previous home, pets, friends and so forth, cannot optimally adjust to the new environment and form satisfactory relationships with the people in the new field.

In Gestalt theory there are several psychological mechanisms (for example, confluence and projection) used by the individual to 'hold onto' the unfinished business so depriving him or herself of the chance to experience optimal contact with others in the environment (Clarkson, 1989:45). These boundary disturbances therefore need to be brought to the awareness of the expatriate experiencing unfinished business, since they prevent optimal contact with aspects in the new environment. The empty chair technique may well assist the expatriate to confront unfinished business and explore new ways to perceive the changes in his or her life.

Purpose:

- The purpose of the empty chair technique, with photograph or object is to create an opportunity for the family to project their unfinished business onto the chair which may represent family or friends living in the country of origin.
- The technique is intended to allow family members to learn how to best support each other, so that each individual feels heard and that the family as a 'team' establishes ways in which to manage feelings of grief or loss.

Method:

The therapist places an empty chair in the centre of the therapy room. Each family member is requested to bring a photograph or object representing the individual/s whom they miss from their home country. An example of an object could be a piece of jewellery given as a gift from a friend or relative. The reason for bringing the photograph or object is so that it may enhance the projection process, in that the photograph or object symbolises more readily the person that they wish to communicate with. Each family member is then provided with the opportunity to dialogue with or about the photograph or object placed on the empty chair. If no photograph or object is available, the intervention can still continue with the empty chair. The family members are encouraged to explain what they miss about the person represented in the empty chair, what contact they may or may not have with the 'missed' individual and so forth. It may be that the

unfinished business with the imagined individual relates to guilt about 'abandoning' them or things the client wishes he or she had said before leaving the country of origin.

As each family member takes a turns to dialogue with the imaginary individual in the empty chair, the other family members observe and wait until the dialoguing family member is finished. Thereafter, the rest of the family provide *support and solutions* for the family member who has just completed the empty chair dialogue. Not only does the intervention allow the family members to express their feelings, but the family as a whole is encouraged to provide comfort and support for each other. With the therapist's assistance, the family may be able to take what they have learned in the therapy session as a means of how to provide each other with similar support outside the therapy context. The researcher provides the following questions as a way to facilitate the process:

- What do you miss the most about the person in the chair?
- What would you say to them now?
- What would they say to you now?
- What thoughts and feelings do you experience as you do this activity?
- How can you think about this change in your life in a different way?
- Is there something that your family can do to help you?

The abovementioned questions only serve as a guideline and the therapist is encouraged to follow the individual's process during the activity. Family members should be encouraged to own their projections. Children may need more prompting or help from the therapist, especially at the beginning of the dialogue process. Blom (2006:147) asserts that the use of clay with younger children works well for the empty chair technique. It is hoped that the presence of other family members may encourage children to feel safe enough to express their feelings. However, the therapist should facilitate the process and ensure that the communication process is in the best interests of the whole family.

Evaluation of the Family Team and Empty Chair Technique:

Blom (2006:147) contends that the empty chair technique can work well with younger children, however, the therapist may need to use prompting and encouragement during the activity. This may encourage the family members to provide more emotional support for each other and a chance to express emotions that had not been expressed previously. From the case studies, the researcher observed that emotional support from family members was positively related to adjustment. The researcher also observed that the participants in the case studies enjoyed

discussing their photographs of friends, relatives and pets in South Africa. From these observations, the use of photographs may assist in arousing feelings in the client during the therapy process, thereby facilitating dialogue and awareness.

Polarities can be integrated into the process promoting the objective of integration used in Gestalt practice. This is done by encouraging the client to provide answers or other perspectives from the individual imagined to be sitting in the empty chair. Where the clients, particularly the children express aggressive energy or anger about their situation during the empty chair dialogue, other play methods could be later introduced whereby the children are able to express their feelings in a safe and playful manner. This would again be done in the family context, whereby the therapist 'role models' ways to deal with anger or extreme emotions in front of the parents. An example could be the use of clay throwing or beating cushions.

A limitation of this technique may be the reluctance of some family members to participate. Very young children, under the age of six, may need the guidance of the therapist or include the use of clay play or other methods to facilitate their participation. Being the focus of attention of the whole family may be uncomfortable for some family members. Should a family member decide not to participate, the therapist could apply the technique to those that do wish to do the exercise. Any reluctance to participate may be a symptom of family dynamics and may be worthwhile exploring further in the therapy sessions. The researcher is of the opinion that the technique may still be administered to those individuals who do wish to participate, in this way providing non-participating members the opportunity to offer support or gain insight into their own experiences by observing how other members work through the process with the therapist.

7.1.1.4 The Collage Bridge

Key concepts: Change of negative perceptions, the use of metaphors and images to create new meanings, stimulate a sense of adventure and curiosity for the new environment and different cultures.

Source of Inspiration: Using her counselling experience with families, the information from the participants and her own experiences in Dubai, the researcher was stimulated to formulate a technique that could address acculturation difficulties. The creative aspect of this technique was further motivated by Zinker (1977:170) where he advocates the use of metaphors in therapy.

Motivation:

The data from the family case studies presented in Chapter Six revealed that participants who succumbed to suspicion and negative perceptions of the cultures in their new environment, were less inclined to adjust optimally. The participants who showed willingness to interact and integrate with new cultures seemed happier and appeared to enjoy their new lifestyle.

The following technique is intended to stimulate self awareness, a greater curiosity regarding different cultures and challenging negative perceptions that may manifest in disillusion. Ideally, this technique is used after the home environment technique, or the identification of acculturation difficulties from previous family sessions. Adults, adolescents and young children under eight years of age can participate in this activity.

Downes, Varner and Musinki (2007:2) surveyed various studies focusing on personality traits as predictors of expatriate effectiveness, and found that expatriate adjustment also favoured a drive to communicate, *cultural flexibility*, a cosmopolitan orientation and a collaborative way of negotiating. Evident from these studies, is how beneficial it is for expatriates to have the desire to communicate and to socialise with people. This further emphasises the advantage of creating a technique that may assist adults and children to relate more optimally with the different cultures in their new environment, and help them to understand how it will benefit them in their adjustment process.

Caliguiri (2000:68) contends that the variable of s*ociability* or ability to communicate and make friends by expatriates was found to be positively related to integration with the host culture, access to support networks and the reduction of stress. These findings were also found to be closely related to successful cross-cultural adjustment. The themes of local social support networks and successful cross-cultural integration were also indicated in the findings of the current research, and to this end, provide a sound reason to formulate a technique to address these aspects.

Purpose:

- The purpose of this technique is to use a creative and pleasurable method to assist the family in working towards overcoming suspicion and fear of other cultural groups within their new environment.
- The activities that occur *before t*he technique is to take place, provide useful ways in which the family is 'nudged' into curiosity, and to find out about the cultures of their region. It also provides a basis in which the therapist can facilitate dialogue and encourage awareness with the family members.

- The technique encourages self-awareness in situations that may hinder the acculturation process.

- To stimulate curiosity and self-confidence in interacting with other cultures with the aim of reducing fear and suspicion.

- To broaden the social network structure by including other cultural groups who may serve to further dismantle feelings of suspicion and anxiety regarding different cultures.

Method:

The collage bridge technique should ideally occur *after a* few sessions with the expatriate family, and allows the therapist to identify the extent of the difficulties that the family may have regarding acculturation. It is envisaged that this technique would be more successful after the family has completed at least one of the aforementioned techniques, in that they hopefully would have learned how to accomplish a similar creative task by working together.

Before the collage adventure technique occurs, the therapist invites the family to bring objects, photographs, picture cuttings from newspapers or magazines pertaining to the following:

- Pictures that depict where the family lives and the general landscape depicting the buildings, mosques or churches, government buildings, hotels and so forth. Ideally photographs of the new family home and aspects of the external environment. (Upon travelling to Egypt and after living in Dubai, the researcher was made aware that certain cultures forbid the taking of photographs of the local people, official buildings, or military zones, therefore discretion and knowledge of the local laws and customs is advised).

- Pictures that depict where the children go to school or play. (Ideally photographs of the school or play environment).

- Pictures or objects that portray the laws and government of the region.

- Pictures that portray the different cultural groups of the region. Small objects that depict the cultural groups may also be brought, providing that they can be pasted onto the cardboard provided.

- Pictures or small samples of the foods of the region, for example, spices and curry from India or small grains of couscous from the Middle East could be brought to the session.

- Each family member brings a short story or 'finding' regarding the new culture of their environment. The short story may include the history of the region. This may entail visiting a library, speaking to people of the region, browsing in bookstores or accessing electronic information.

The therapist provides a large white sheet of cardboard or white paper pasted onto a hard background. The large sheet of cardboard in placed in the centre of a table which can comfortably accommodate all family members. Coloured pencils, two pairs of scissors and glue are provided by the therapist. The family is asked to negotiate amongst themselves where they would like to place their home environment on the white sheet. The therapist takes note of how the family do the task together and intervenes where necessary. Once the 'home of the family' is depicted on the page, the therapist draws a *large bridge* that spans from the family's home into the white space of the paper. The bridge symbolises the 'connection' that the family needs to make with the other cultures of the region. The therapist explains this to the family. Each family member then takes a turn to paste their collection of pictures or small objects onto the page thereby forming a collage of the whole family's cultural perceptions. The therapist then asks each family member to discuss their pictures or objects. The researcher proposes the following questions act as a guideline:

- The therapist points to the picture of the new family home and states: "let us take a walk from your front door, cross the bridge into your new environment and look at the different cultural experiences outside your home ..."
- Can you tell us about this picture of your school or work and the different cultures in the picture?
- What do you know about these people, their language, religion, customs, traditions, dress code and the foods that they eat? (each family member provides their 'story' of their discoveries).
- Are there any similarities with your own culture?
- What are the dissimilarities? And what do these differences mean to you?
- What were your experiences in finding this picture or object?
- In doing this, what was difficult for you?
- What was interesting for you?
- Can you tell us about the negative and positive experiences you have had with the local people in this country?
- Tell us about the picture that depicts the laws or rules of the country and what you think of them.
- How could you find out more about the local people of the region?
- Is there a person from this region that is present at your school or work to whom you could speak?

- How would you introduce yourself?

- What would you want to know about this person?

- What do you think this person may want to know about you?

- What is difficult for you in approaching the local people?

- What would help you to find out more about them?

The therapist encourages physical and inner awareness within the clients by asking:

- What are your thoughts about the foods of the region?

- The different smells, textures and tastes of the foods?

- What for you is unpleasant or pleasant about the food?

- What happens inside your body, for example the sensations, when you are in amongst a large group of the local people?

- If there are signs of anxiety, ask: What do you fear or feel anxious about in this situation?

- What would this group of local people say to you if they knew how you felt?

- What would you say to them?

Throughout the exercise, the therapist gently challenges and encourages dialogue around the client family's experiences. As with the aforementioned techniques, family communication and support is important in this task. The facilitator should ensure that each family member is heard with respect by other family members.   After the session, the family is encouraged to continue with the activities of meeting and talking to the local people.   Upon successful completion of the task, the family could be given the collage bridge board to be placed somewhere in their home, to which they can add more photographs or pictures of their future cultural experiences. The collage becomes a visual journal for the family and may also provide a 'picture story' of their adventures in the new country.

Evaluation of the Collage Bridge Technique

The literature (for example, Caliguiri, 2000; Hofstede, 2003) advocate that the acceptance and tolerance of different cultures are important in adapting to a new country.   The collage bridge technique has been formulated in order to dismantle fears or anxieties about interacting with the different cultural groups in the new environment. It was designed to create awareness in the client family regarding their reactions, feelings and behaviours towards the local cultures. The aim was also to encourage curiosity and greater knowledge about the local people, in turn generating more understanding and tolerance for the differences in cultural groups.   As

previously mentioned, the acceptance and tolerance for different cultures is both beneficial for school children and adults employed in a multicultural setting.

A limitation of this technique may be the reluctance of family members to participate in doing all the necessary tasks before assembling the collage. The skill lies with the therapist to encourage full participation and to use the technique in the most appropriate way to suit the process and needs of the family. Younger children may need to be assisted in selecting photographs or pictures for the task. However, there may be an advantage to this in that the parents would be motivated to work with their children to access the pictures so encouraging interaction and communication between them.

7.1.1.5 The Ship Journey

Key Concepts: systemic support, building hope and resilience, a sense of purpose and meaningfulness, unfinished business.

Source of Inspiration: For this technique, the researcher was inspired to formulate a method that would be appealing to all family members. From her experience in counselling families, couples and children, the researcher found that the use of metaphors and story-telling is generally well received and beneficial in reframing problems so that they are experienced in a more positive way by clients. Oaklander (1992:85) describes the benefits of storytelling and how the child's story is a projection that reflects aspects about the child's life. Zinker (1977:170) advocates the use of a metaphor in therapy, since it encourages individuals to explore new ways in which they can relate to each other without feeling uncomfortable or threatened. With these views in mind, the researcher created a metaphor technique that she identified as pertinent for the expatriate adjustment process and one that would allow each family member to tell their story of their 'unique' expatriate journey.

Motivation:

The data presented in Chapter Six indicated that where family members were suspicious of other cultures, they were also uncertain and resentful regarding the father's work hours, and the 'mysterious' organisation that required so much of his time. The data also revealed that where family members were not fully informed about the reasons for leaving their home country, their commitment to adjust to the new country was not optimal. Furthermore, there appeared to be a lack of resilience regarding the constant changes that the expatriate life in Dubai presented. McLeod (2006:38) contends that by studying resilience and the process of adjustment, the

potential for interventions may be developed, thus allowing for the strengthening of the 'coping assets' in the individual's life.

Regardless of who works in the family, spousal support is vital for the adjustment and satisfaction of the expatriate family, as it provides valuable affirmation and comfort during the stressful periods of adjustment (Edstrom & Jervfors, 2007: 14). It is further stated that job satisfaction for the working spouse is also important for overall adjustment and satisfaction for the family. By providing the working spouse with the opportunity to discuss his or her work with the family, and how important the relocation was for everyone, their hopes including the aspirations for the future, it is hoped the spouse and children may view the relocation experience from a different perspective and perceive the value of the current change in their lives.

The data of the present study also revealed that the non-working spouses struggled to define their new role as unemployed expatriate wives. Tung (in Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2001:3) asserts that it is not surprising that these spouses have a more difficult experience than their working partners, since they are not considered during the selection phase, do not obtain counselling for career interruptions and are often isolated, having to cope without any form of social or emotional support. The ship journey technique is formulated to encourage the non-working spouse to seek emotional support for any difficulties regarding work or role changes. The required support that may be identified in the ship technique may be in the form of spousal support or individual counselling for the non-working spouse.

The ship journey technique is also aimed to change negative perceptions, create a feeling of *purpose and meaning* regarding the relocation process and to encourage resilience within family members. The technique is also designed to identify what is 'figural' for the client, namely to gain insight into what the individual needs, or what is on his or her foreground.

It is hoped that the resilience in family members is achieved by fostering a more positive perception of the family's perceived difficulties. Pollock and Van Reken (2001:195) assert that children particularly need a reason be resilient in the face of challenges and that expatriate children have greater tolerance for adjustment difficulties if they perceive the *reason to be beneficial*. It is further argued, that expatriate parents should foster a feeling of pride and ownership in their children regarding the relocation for a new job, creating the feeling that 'the family has travelled the globe together to do the job' (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009:195). It is thus with the above motivations in mind, that the ship journey 'metaphor' technique was formulated.

Purpose:

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- To reinforce the 'positive' reasons as to why the relocation took place in the first instance – thereby addressing feelings of disillusion or helplessness.
- To encourage support and affirmation for the non-working and working spouse, creating the opportunity for either spouse to seek and devise strategies to address difficulties.
- To provide the children in the family, the feeling that they are part of the process and the opportunity to address areas of uncertainty concerning the relocation and their father's work.
- To affirm and recognise the mother's role or experiences of the relocation process.
- To create a systemic feeling of support for the working spouse.

Method:

The therapist places a large copy of a global map or atlas in the centre of a table that can accommodate all family members. All continents should be visible, including the country or city where the expatriate family now live as well as the country of origin. Alternatively, a copy or drawing of the 'world' may be used. Coloured pencils or crayons are provided by the therapist. A small object depicting a ship or boat is placed on the map. The family are informed that they are on 'this ship' which has set sail for the country where they now reside. They are asked to choose a name for the ship and to write it on the map. The captain of the ship may be the father or mother in the family, who is then encouraged to describe where the ship is going and what the purpose of the journey is. He or she is encouraged by the therapist to tell a 'story' about how the family came to be on the ship and why. Furthermore, the 'captain' is encouraged to reveal the purpose of the 'big trip', its importance and what the journey meant to him or her. The use of metaphors could facilitate the stories and projections of the children as well as the adults. For example, 'the ship faced many storms at sea ...', whereby the therapist asks the family member to complete the story.

The spouse or 'co-captain' then presents her/his story about the journey. She/he is also encouraged to describe how she/he experienced the new environment and the role that she/he has subsequently assumed in the process. The children are encouraged to ask questions about the journey while projections are explored by the therapist. Each family member is encouraged to tell their own unique story of the 'boat trip' and how they experienced the arrival upon foreign shores. They may wish to write messages on the map or draw their perceptions, which further stimulate dialogue. The younger children may find that drawing their experiences on the map is easier than discussing them. This would also provide the therapist with the opportunity to explore their drawings as projections.

In the event that some family members experience difficulty in expressing their thoughts during the session, or find storytelling difficult, the researcher has formulated the following questions as a guideline to facilitate dialogue:

For the parents:

- What difficulties did you experience before embarking on this journey?
- How did you manage those difficulties?
- What were your hopes for this new lifestyle?
- What happened when you arrived in the new country?
- What roles (if any) have changed for you since arriving here?
- Can you describe your current role (for example, work role) and what it means to you? (this question allows each spouse to disclose the positive or negative areas concerning their roles and creates an opportunity to investigate solutions for problem areas).
- What are your plans and dreams for the future?
- What makes this journey important with regards to these plans?

For the children:

- Did you know what was happening when you left your home country?
- Did you know the reason for your journey, and what did you think about this big move?
- Is there something that you still want to know?
- Where would you like to be on the ship? (This question may reveal feelings of anxiety or need for reassurance from the parents).
- What was scary for when you began the journey?
- What was special for you?
- What would you tell your friends and family about this journey?
- What do you wish to know from the 'captain' (the father) about the new country and his work?
- Was the new country like you imagined it to be? If not, in what way was it different and what are your thoughts about this place now?

The therapist explores the stories of each family member, including the sketches or diagrams of the children if they have been provided. Oaklander (1992:85) advocates the use of stories in play therapy as it facilitates the child in becoming aware of his or her own experiences. Oaklander (1992:85) describes a technique of mutual storytelling whereby the child first tells a story followed by the therapist telling a story using the same characters that the child used but

affording a more optimal solution. In this instance, the parents could be asked to retell the child's story and provide practical solutions. Similarly, the spouses may retell each other's stories and include solutions. The advantage of doing this positive *exercise in front of the children*, may be that they feel more confident that things will and can change for the better. The perception that their parents have solutions to problems may also serve to make the children feel less anxious about their new environment. Strategies to address difficulties should be included in the process and negative perceptions challenged by the therapist. It is hoped that by the therapist role-modelling this process, the family members may start to challenge each other's stories or their negative perceptions, in order to seek solutions as 'team'. Ultimately, the goal of this technique is also to *empower* the family members, thereby motivating them to find solutions for their difficulties.

Evaluation of the Ship's Journey Technique

The advantage of using the ship and world atlas as a projection technique, is that it provides a 'safe' and non-threatening context for the children to ask questions about their father's work. It also assists in addressing unfinished business that may derive from the early stages of the journey or before the relocation occurred. The underlying 'message' that this technique endeavours to convey, is that the family 'travelled the globe together in the same ship in order to reach the shores of a better life'. The technique also allows the spouses to discuss their roles in the new environment and to identify problem areas that they may wish to address in couple therapy.

As indicated in the aforementioned motivation of the technique, it is designed to revisit the initial feelings of hope and optimism that the family had before they relocated. The therapist could then challenge the family to identify where, or if those positive aspects still exist in the new environment. Where the family did not share the hopes and aspirations upon emigrating, this technique may allow for the family to address these uncertainties, but with the objective of creating new feelings of togetherness and resilience to continue with their new lifestyle. The family is also challenged into devising strategies to address difficulties. For example, the non-working spouse may explain that as 'co-captain' in the journey she is struggling to identify with her new role as 'co-captain' without being employed. Together with the other spouse and the children, the mother's role is reaffirmed or different ideas may be suggested to enrich her current lifestyle. The children may gain more insight into what father is trying to achieve at work and why he has to work the long hours. Strategies to allow for more family time can be explored.

A limitation of this technique is that it would require the therapist to find and finance the material for the activity. Storytelling may not be appealing to all family members and the therapist may need to ask questions during the process in order to facilitate dialogue. The non-working spouse may also reveal feelings and thoughts that may be upsetting for the children to hear. The therapist should carefully ensure that where these difficult feelings are unleashed, positive solutions are provided. Alternatively, individual counselling for the spouse may be arranged. Where unfinished business regarding the reason for the relocation exists between the spouses, the therapist would need to use his or her skill in assessing whether separate sessions of couple counselling may be beneficial.

7.1.1.6 Conclusion

The objectives of the techniques were to address adjustment problems, as well as to strategise ways to optimise the adjustment process for all family members and to provide children with the opportunity to express their difficulties by introducing play therapy methods into the sessions. Cognisance was given to situations whereby individual or couple counselling would need to be arranged outside the family therapy sessions.

In the formulation of the techniques, the researcher observed how the use of a Gestalt approach allowed for the flexibility required regarding the diverse needs of expatriate families. Caliguiri *et al.* (1998:601) identified several essential factors regarding the family adjustment process, namely; family adaptability, family communication and family perceptions of the stressors. Other factors included the ability of the family to exchange opinions, respect for different ideas, decision making rules and conflict resolution. Similar factors were also identified in the adjustment needs of the case studies in Chapter Six, including the findings in the literature. These factors all motivated the formulation of the five techniques with their specially tailored tasks for expatriate families. Each technique was carefully evaluated. It is acknowledged by the researcher, that some techniques list many questions as 'guidelines' for the therapist. In the researcher's view, each family is unique with a worldview that remains exclusive to that family, and for this reason, the Gestalt therapist may tailor his or her sessions to address the client family's specific needs. The questions as part of the methods in the techniques, are therefore mainly designed to act as *a guide for the therapist* in thinking about ways to access information from the client family, and are not aimed to be as an essential aspect of each technique. As part of the evaluation process regarding Gestalt techniques, the following section examines the use of a Gestalt therapeutic approach for family play therapy.

7.2   AN EVALUATION OF A GESTALT APPROACH FOR FAMILY PLAY THERAPY

Roubal (2009:263) supports that Gestalt therapy integrates a creative and empathic therapeutic approach using *a task-oriented method of clinical intervention.* This is of value to the therapist wishing to assist the expatriate family, since the use of traditional Gestalt techniques can be adapted to suit the needs of the clients. As discussed in Chapter Two, Gestalt therapy theory uses projective techniques to work with adults and children. It was also revealed that the literature (for example, Gil, 1994; Landreth, 1991) support that play or child therapy techniques are currently being recognised as a means to facilitate the expression and involvement of children in family therapy sessions. Landreth (1991:36); Lowe(2004:51) and Ms J. Ramsden of FAMSA (2009) indicate that family therapists are increasingly aware of the benefits related to the use of toys and art materials in family sessions when young children are present.   These techniques can be creatively integrated into styles or methods to challenge the client into awareness and dialogue.

The expatriate family struggling to adjust to a new environment, may require solutions that need to be beneficial as soon as possible. This makes Gestalt therapy appropriate, in that it addresses the 'here and now', which enables the therapist to encourage the client to seek solutions, or to take responsibility for him/herself within each session using specific tasks to accomplish this. Yontef and Simkin (1989:6) compare Gestalt therapy to other theoretical approaches and state that psychoanalysts only tend to apply interpretation and the therapists following the methods of Carl Rogers are passive and can only reflect and clarify. It is further stated that Gestalt therapists on the other hand, use methods to increase awareness, and perceive clients as being responsible for their own existence. This approach was kept in mind by the researcher during the formulation of the five techniques for the expatriate families, whereby the methods were aimed at creating awareness and the motivation for clients to identify and take responsibility for their difficulties. Yontef and Simkin (1989:7) posit that another difference from other therapeutic approaches, is that Gestalt has a genuine regard for holism and considers the bio-psychosocial field as important. This again, would make the use of a Gestalt approach appropriate for expatriate families, as every aspect in their new field or environment need to be recognised as playing a role in their adjustment process, and therefore should therefore be carefully considered within the therapeutic context.

It may be deduced that there is an educational or learning element in the use of Gestalt task based techniques or interventions. Woldt (2009:139) asserts that Gestalt pedagogy is based on the belief that individuals are capable of using self-direction and creatively adjusting to everyday challenges, making learning an organismic and self-regulating process in response to field

conditions. This belief that learning is strongly related to the adjustment process is supported in the task based techniques presented in the current study, whereby families are encouraged to use self-direction to facilitate their adjustment process.

The question arises, how effective are Gestalt play therapy techniques when used in family therapy? As mentioned in Chapter Four, the study conducted by Doorgapershad and Bauling (2003:73-81) examined the impact of Gestalt play therapy techniques within a group context which was tested on diabetic children aged between 8-12 years. Although the study did not involve the subjects' family members, the group context may serve as a comparison regarding a family therapy context whereby the children express themselves using Gestalt play therapy techniques in the presence of other individuals. Drawings were used and Oaklander's fourteen step model was administered to obtain insight into the feelings revealed in the drawings. The conclusions of the study were that Gestalt group work, combined with play therapy techniques served to assist the children in dealing more positively with their illness and emotional difficulties. Ariel (2005:6-7) contends that play in family therapy allows subconscious feelings and thoughts to surface, more so than family discussion. Furthermore, it allows the therapist and the family members to communicate in a metaphorical way. Family therapy with play has assisted many families of diverse cultures, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds, and this form of therapy proved to be highly effective in a brief period of intervention (Ariel, 2005:7).

Hender (2001:1-20) conducted a meta-analysis of various therapeutic approaches in a bid to establish whether Gestalt therapy techniques were generally effective. All the interventions were of Gestalt therapy methods, with some variations of Gestalt therapy. They consisted of group interventions, empty chair dialogue and Gestalt person centred group work. The Gestalt therapy was compared to cognitive therapy, no therapy, group activities, respiratory autogenic training and attention placebo techniques. Six of the seven studies reported that Gestalt therapy resulted in positive outcomes. For example, Hender (2001:3-20) surveyed empirical studies regarding the efficacy of different therapeutic approaches, and found that Gestalt therapy and awareness training do provide *significant positive change in group participants* regarding their attitude towards the self and the body. This would bode well for Gestalt therapy work with families, as they may be perceived as small groups.

Amendt-Lyon (2001:225-248) supports the flexibility of the Gestalt approach by acknowledging the wide range of artistic and creative activities that are incorporated in Gestalt therapeutic work. In analysing the assimilative power of Gestalt work with clients, Walter (1984:10) posits that Gestalt therapy is 'user friendly' due to its integrative and assimilative power. The five techniques

presented in the present study may be described as 'dynamic play therapy' activities. Harvey (1994:85) describes dynamic play therapy in family therapy as the use of metaphors, art, interactive play, dramatic imagery, a creative process that influences the quality of family interaction. This is precisely what the researcher endeavoured to address in the five techniques provided for expatriate families. Further with regards to the flexibility of a Gestalt approach, Bauer and Toman (2003:56-71) demonstrated how the use of Gestalt concepts may be used to explain the experiences of trauma victims and that there are parallels between Gestalt concepts and the crisis response process experienced by these victims. The recognition of Gestalt concepts for trauma debriefing further demonstrates the flexibility of Gestalt therapy theory.

In the assessment of Gestalt methods, Roubal (2009:265) argues that according to various psychotherapeutic approaches, Gestalt therapy maintains the reputation of being largely based on the use of techniques. It is further argued, that these techniques are erroneously perceived as 'rigid'. In the researcher's view, Gestalt therapy theory and the techniques allow for flexibility, experimentation and the inclusion of all family members. This is supported by Harvey (1984:85) whereby the use of art, drama, metaphors and other creative methods are advocated for dynamic play therapy within family therapy. Salonia (2009:38) states that certain Gestalt therapists argue against Gestalt therapy being used with families and that family therapy manuals do not include the use of Gestalt therapy. However, there is evidence in the literature that Gestalt therapy was being used for family and couple therapy as far back as the 1970's. For example, the earlier work of Zinker (1977) provides a Gestalt approach for couple therapy and Kempler (1974,1981) also introduced the use of Gestalt principles for family therapy. A possible reason for traditional Gestalt therapists objecting to the use of Gestalt therapy for families, is that classical Gestalt theory focuses mainly on the individual and not on groups (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:202). Furthermore, Gestalt therapists have had difficulty in integrating systemic family therapy with Gestalt family therapy (Lynch & Lynch, 2005:202).

In sum, although there are critiques pertaining to the use of play or child therapy in family therapy, the literature (for example, Ariel, 2005; Gil, 1994; Harvey, 1994) largely supports the use of it, especially since it addresses an eco-systemic approach whereby children are perceived as part of multiple systems. In the researcher's view, the flexibility of the Gestalt approach is evidenced in the formation of the aforementioned five creative techniques and is testimony to its suitability for family and child therapy in an expatriate context.

The final section provides a summary of this chapter.

7.3   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The objective of this chapter was to present techniques to address the adjustment difficulties of expatriate families, and to include play therapy and creative methods to motivate positive change. From the analysis of the six themes and the findings in the data, it was found that whilst some family members struggled to adjust to expatriate life, other family members adjusted more optimally.   Chapter Four presented Gestalt family systems therapy whereby the difficulties of one family member is viewed as part of a systemic process and the *whole family* needs to be involved in the therapeutic process to increase awareness and understanding of the family difficulties. Chapter Three supported that a spouse and/or the children may experience expatriate adjustment in different ways, but the optimal adjustment of both parents is considered to have a more positive outcome for the whole family. With these chapters in mind, and the evidence that children of expatriate families may experience greater difficulty in expressing their adjustment problems than their parents, play therapy techniques were included as part of the five family therapy techniques.

The five techniques for expatriate family therapy, consisted of the home environment drawing, the sand play, the family team and empty chair, the collage bridge and the ship journey.   Each technique was evaluated regarding its strengths and weaknesses, and the final section of the chapter evaluated the use of a Gestalt approach for family play therapy. The following and final chapter reviews the work completed in the present study, also explicating its strengths and weaknesses. Recommendations for future research will be provided, followed by the conclusions that have emerged from the study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINAL OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

8. INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provided the objectives and motivation for conducting the present study. In this final chapter, these objectives will be revisited, and the overall outcome of the research will also be evaluated. Silverman (2005:325) posits that the final chapter in a thesis should ideally include the original research questions, the limitations of the study and the lessons learned including the implications and recommendations for further research as a result of the findings. With these suggestions in mind, the following sections are provided as follows.

The chapter commences with a discussion of how the present study addressed the research aims and questions presented in Chapter One and Chapter Five. This discussion will render an overview of how the research objectives were achieved. Following this section, the strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed. Thereafter, the researcher's personal reflections of the phenomenological experiences of the study will be presented. A section regarding recommendations for further research will follow. Finally, the conclusion is presented.

8.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Before commencing with a brief overview of the present study, the original aims need to be revisited. The primary aim of the study was to qualitatively explore the adjustment process of a sample of South African expatriate families living in the city of Dubai. The secondary aim was to utilise the data yielded in the study to assist in formulating family and child therapy techniques specifically tailored for expatriate families experiencing adjustment difficulties. Emerging from these aims, the following two research questions were formulated:

1. How do South African expatriate families adjust to the living conditions in Dubai?
2. What Gestalt family and child therapy techniques could be administered to expatriate families to optimise their adjustment process?

To meet these aims and to address the research questions, the first task in the research process was to obtain information from the South African Consulate in Dubai, and the literature that would verify; a) whether the study would be feasible in Dubai and b) whether the study would enhance and amplify current information regarding the field of expatriate adjustment *including* the application of Gestalt therapy techniques for expatriate families who struggle to adjust to

their new environment. An overview of the study reflects how the aforementioned aims and objectives were achieved.

Chapter One provided evidence from the literature indicating that not only was there a need to conduct more studies on expatriate adjustment pertaining to families, but that there was a dearth of information regarding Gestalt therapy interventions for expatriate families and children who struggled to adjust optimally. Presenting the required motivation to conduct the study, Chapter One described how the study would be conducted by detailing the intended research approach and procedures. The key concepts were identified and defined. The ethical considerations of the research were presented.

Chapter Two provided an overview of Gestalt theory, presenting the theoretical premises that underpin Gestalt therapy. The origins of Gestalt theory and its link to existential phenomenology were discussed. A critical evaluation of Gestalt therapy theory was provided and the significance of Gestalt therapy theory for the current study, was presented.

Chapter Three examined the literature and relevant previous studies on expatriate adjustment. Key areas in the adjustment process were identified. These key areas included cross-cultural adjustment, acculturation, the theory on coping skills, the four phases of expatriate adjustment and the significance of the developmental stages of family members and how this impacts on their adjustment experiences.

Chapter Four discussed the history of family therapy, the family life cycle, therapeutic approaches in family therapy, Gestalt family therapy, a Gestalt approach for child or play therapy, as well as the current trends in postmodern family therapy.

Chapters Two to Four thus described the theoretical perspectives regarding the key areas of analysis in this study. To address the first research question, which related to the exploration of how South African expatriate families adjust to the living conditions in Dubai, a qualitative research approach was identified. This was described in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five described the methodology used in the endeavour to fulfil the primary aim of the study, namely to explore how expatriate families adjust to their life in Dubai. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher selected a qualitative research approach whereby the experiences of expatriate families could be explored from their unique perspectives. To achieve this aim, the researcher firstly examined the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, ensuring that the selected research approach was appropriate for the study. A research design was then formulated and a sample group was selected. The sample group consisted of seven

South African expatriate families, one of whom constituted the pilot study. A focus group was held, consisting of fifteen South African expatriate women. The purpose of the focus group was to enhance the data, and to investigate whether the themes found in the six case studies, would be corroborated with the findings of the focus group. The research procedure was documented, providing a step by step description of how the researcher conducted the study. The chapter further described how triangulation and reliability was achieved.   Finally, the ethical considerations pertinent for the current study were presented.

Chapter Six described the data yielded in the present study. Each family case study transcript was analysed and six themes were identified.   The six themes were: social support structures, personality traits of family members, environmental conditions, acculturation, grief and feelings of loss and disillusion. Each theme consisted of sub-categories which served to explain the themes in a more in-depth manner. The excerpts from the transcripts were analysed and the literature was consulted in support of the findings. The findings from the transcripts revealed that some families showed more positive adjustment skills than others. Certain characteristics promoted more positive adjustment in some individuals than in others, for example extraverted personality traits and a desire to interact with other cultures. The findings revealed in this chapter were used to formulate Gestalt intervention techniques for expatriate families.   These intervention techniques were presented in the following chapter, namely Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven presented the five techniques formulated to assist expatriate families with their adjustment process.   The five techniques based on the Gestalt approach and the findings from the present study, were designed to enable all family members the opportunity to express their difficulties and experiences of expatriate life.

The study needs to be further evaluated with regards to its strengths and limitations. These are now presented in the following section.

8.2   EVALUATION OF THE STUDY: STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this section is to explore not only the strengths of the study, but to understand where the limitations exist thus identifying what may have been done differently.

8.2.1   The Strengths of the Study

- The phenomenological system of inquiry has assisted in accessing the experiences of all the members within the sample of expatriate families, from their unique perspectives. It is hoped that their experiences will alert organisations to create or provide a greater

support structure for new expatriates, thereby preventing premature repatriation or unnecessary difficulties for family members. With the exception of one family, the researcher was invited to interview the participants within their own homes, thereby providing added information about the perceptions of the participants and the way that they chose to live in Dubai. The participants were also more relaxed within their home environment and openly shared their experiences with the researcher and her assistant. This added information, in the researcher's view, enriched the data and made it possible to understand the perspectives of all family members, especially the children, who seemed comfortable sharing their experiences in their home surroundings.

- The semi-structured interview was used with the objective of obtaining as much quality information from the participants as possible. Although the questions in the interview schedule served as a guideline, there were times when it was beneficial for the study to allow the participants to relate their experiences without interruption or too much questioning. The researcher found that in many cases, the participants would discuss the topics that were on the interview schedule without needing to be questioned or prompted.

- The sample group of expatriate families and the expatriate women in the focus group, depicted the diversity of South African cultures that seek new prospects in foreign countries. The family participants included a Zulu family, an interracial couple consisting of a Cape Malay mother and a Latino father, English speaking South African families and Afrikaans speaking families. The focus group also consisted of English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans. In the researcher's view, the diversity of cultures in the sample group added a richness to the data, reflecting the adjustment process from many different perspectives.

- By interviewing six families and conducting a focus group, the same themes emerged and confirmed the value of using different research methods to explore a phenomenon. The use of drawings for children who wished to express their experiences on paper was also included. This combination of qualitative research methods served to attain triangulation and therefore more reliability in the data. Silverman (2007:291) supports that the assumption underlying the use of different methods to gain data, namely triangulation, aim to ensure that the findings obtained from the different methods yield the same or similar conclusions thereby establishing the validity of those findings.

- As revealed in Chapter One, the literature (for example, Caliguiri *et al.* 1998:599, Bester, (2007:1) indicates that little research exists on the role of the family as a predictor of the outcome of expatriate assignments. Furthermore, there is a gap in the existing knowledge base with regards to the adjustment experiences of expatriate spouses and their children. It is hoped that the findings in the present study, will assist not only in amplifying the existing research base regarding Gestalt therapy, but also the current knowledge on expatriate adjustment, especially pertaining to spouses and children.

- The use of a pilot study was viewed as valuable for the research process, in that it indicated to the researcher how to improve and amend the interview schedule. The pilot study was also an important indicator regarding what aspects to avoid or to include in the interview process, thereby enhancing the research process for the ensuing family case studies.

- The findings from the current research were compared with the literature on expatriate adjustment. Several of the findings in the present study were supported by the results of other studies discovered in the literature, including the theory on expatriate adjustment. In the researcher's view, this may serve to strengthen the validity and credibility regarding the findings yielded in the present study.

- In formulating the five Gestalt techniques to assist expatriate families in their adjustment process, it is hoped that the flexibility and adaptability of the Gestalt therapeutic approach was highlighted, especially since the Gestalt therapist is working in a changing world, an environment influenced by escalating global relocation and changes in traditional family structures. The formulation of the five Gestalt play therapy techniques within family therapy, is thus aimed to add to the knowledge base regarding Gestalt family and child therapy, including the opportunity for further research in this area.

8.2.2   The Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are also a reflection of the lessons that the researcher has learned from the research process. These limitations are as follows:

- The Gestalt five techniques presented in Chapter Seven, could have been explored qualitatively *after* a specific number of sessions with expatriate families. This would have

served to determine the efficacy of the five techniques and how the participants experienced them. However, during the latter part of 2008, several South African families were beginning to leave Dubai due to the global recession. With job losses imminent, the researcher discovered that many expatriates were focussed on relocating back to their home countries, and understandably did not wish to assist in further research projects. The researcher and her husband were also planning to terminate their stay in Dubai, making arrangements to return to South Africa that same year.

- Although the South African expatriate women from the focus group became the 'voice' for their families, a smaller focus group which could have accommodated the husbands and the children of each family, may have further enriched the research findings. One of the main difficulties in arranging a family focus group, was that *not all* family members could be present at the same time on a given day. Children had scholastic commitments and the working spouses were frequently unavailable due to work demands. A further limitation of the focus group, was that the somewhat larger number of participants (fifteen) may have prevented some members from participating in the time allocated for the discussion. To address this problem, the researcher provided each member with a biographical questionnaire sheet that made allowance for the written perspectives of the group members. Any written statements were incorporated into the findings of the study.

- Certain families within the sample group had lived in Dubai significantly longer than others. It may be argued that the families who had lived in Dubai for approximately six months, were still in the early adjustment phases and their experiences could therefore not be considered in the same light as those families who had lived there for longer periods. Interestingly, some family members who had lived in Dubai for several years, presented similar adjustment difficulties to those who had only been in Dubai for a few months. What was also revealed in the findings, was that certain adjustment difficulties that existed at the outset of the relocation process, seemed to remain despite the passage of time, thereby indicating that an optimal adjustment process does not necessarily occur in a fixed time frame.

- It is acknowledged that the researcher's role in the research process may have had an impact or influence on the outcome of the interviews with some of the participants. As a 'subjective being-in-the world', the researcher was bringing her own perceptions and

experiences into the research process, but endeavoured to address this by continuously bracketing these perceptions. In order to further address any possible influences by the researcher, an academic colleague assisted in identifying the themes from the transcripts. The academic colleague also challenged and questioned the researcher's observations. Direct quotations from the transcripts validated the themes which were further supported by the literature.

After evaluating the strengths and limitations of this study, the following section provides a personal reflection of the researcher's experiences during the research process.

8.3   THE RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As a South African expatriate newly established in the city of Dubai whilst conducting the research, and being faced with similar lifestyle challenges as many of the participants, I feel that it is important to provide a brief reflection of my research experiences.

During the early stages of the research, I felt like a 'detached' field observer, but very soon realised that this was a false perception, in that I was as much a part of the 'field' as were the participants. I also had to ensure that the questions asked in the interviews were framed to obtain the experiences from the participants' perspectives, and not be a reflection of my own perceptions of what the adjustment process was or 'should' be about. The semi-structured interview was therefore beneficial, in that it allowed the participants the freedom to discuss their views with very little interruption from me, their 'stories' belonging exclusively to them.

Some of the difficulties expressed by participant family members resonated with me, for example, the sense of loss for loved ones left behind in South Africa. I had to establish a method of recognising when certain difficulties expressed by participants triggered an emotional response within myself, as well as to distance my own responses from those experienced by the participants. To explore these responses, required many hours of self-reflection, bracketing and writing my experiences into a journal. Not having friends and family, including professional colleagues readily available with whom to discuss my experiences, was at times very challenging. However, revealing any difficulties to my research assistant was helpful, in that he became a 'sounding board' regarding my experiences, and this assisted me in recognising when I was not adequately bracketing my own responses during the research process. I learned that I had to be the 'professional researcher' during the interviews and not be drawn into 'comparisons' of experiences with the participants. This was not easy, since I sometimes recognised the same

difficulties that the participants had, within myself. The bracketing process to me, meant that I had to 'forget or put aside' my experiences during the interviews, in order to *completely enter* that of the participant's world. Any personal feelings and experiences could subsequently be revisited in the bracketing process, whereby I could 'own' my experiences, biases and emotions, thereby separating them from those of the participants.

Consultations with academic personnel or colleagues in South Africa had to mainly take place telephonically or by the use of the internet. My trips back to South Africa were not only to regain contact with family and friends, but also served to obtain academic material and establish face to face contact with academic colleagues. The trips were also helpful in providing me with the opportunity to *think* about the research whilst *out of the field or context* wherein the study took place. This to me, was another special form of bracketing regarding the research process. Being out of the 'field', also provided me with the opportunity to gain renewed insight and emotional energy to return to Dubai and continue with my life there.

In evaluating my overall experiences of the research process, I have found that the phenomenological research process has been an interesting journey, in that it served to challenge me academically as well as on a deeper, personal level. The interest and energy invested in this study has been more than an academic one, and my hope is that the self-growth I have gained from this experience will be of benefit for many years to come, especially in the application of Gestalt therapy with families and children.

The recommendations for future studies are now presented.

8.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations are based on the researcher's experiences pertaining to the topic of expatriate family adjustment and Gestalt based research.

- Evidenced in the literature (for example, Bester, 2007; Black and Stephens, 1989) there is a paucity of research addressing the *influence of a spouse's adjustment process* and the repatriation of expatriate families. The findings from the present study revealed that where the expatriate spouses felt supported, they were able to assist their children and husband to adjust more positively to their new life-style.   Further research in this area may benefit the understanding of how the spouse's well-being in a foreign country can assist the expatriate family to adjust more optimally. It would also assist in the planning

of further intervention programmes which could address adjustment difficulties that often lead to premature repatriation.

- The findings of the present study also revealed that expatriate families welcome support from organisations upon their arrival in the foreign country. The spouses expressed how organisations could play a pivotal role in assisting families to 'find their feet' in the new country, providing social support, information, guidance and preventing feelings of being abandoned in a foreign environment. Further research into how organisations may provide support programmes for expatriates may not only assist families with adjustment challenges but prevent incidences of premature repatriation that often result in negative ramifications for the families and organisations alike. It is hoped that this study further emphasises the need for organisations to assist expatriate families to plan their relocations, as well as addressing issues of loneliness, reduced social support structures, different cultures, languages and possible ways to cope with extreme environmental changes.

- During the review of the literature, the researcher identified that there is a dearth of research conducted on the efficacy of Gestalt therapy interventions aimed specifically at assisting families. Brownell, Meara and Polák (2008:3) question whether Gestalt therapists have sufficient evidence regarding the competency of the modality in which they practice. In the light of this perception, more empirical studies could be conducted with a view of evaluating Gestalt therapy interventions aimed at families, individuals and children.

- As a result of the global recession coming to a head in the latter stages of 2008, the researcher observed that many expatriates living in Dubai had to return to their home countries due to terminated work contracts and the withdrawal of job offers. The researcher came into contact with several South African families who were suddenly faced with a financial crisis. With no fixed income and uncertain job opportunities in South Africa, these repatriated families also struggled with emotional difficulties and family conflict. Expatriates who have lived in foreign countries for several years frequently can no longer identify with the South Africa they knew before emigrating, revealing that the South Africa they had left behind, had irrevocably changed (Marchetti-Mercer, 2009:129). Further research, as to how repatriated families could be assisted

from a psychological perspective, may be of benefit regarding interventions for families struggling to readjust to their country of origin.

- The present study revealed that not only do the expatriate families living in foreign countries experience feelings of grief and abandonment, but that the family members *left behind* experience a great sense of loss as well. Marchetti-Mercher (2009:82) contends that the loved ones left behind when other family members emigrate, are faced with the loss of continuity between generations, family traditions and the loss of an important, loving support group. Further research in the experiences of these family members 'left behind' and ways in which to assist them may be beneficial to life coaches and therapists working in this area of intervention.

- Chapter One provided evidence from the literature with regards to the large number of South Africans who have chosen to emigrate. This literature (for example, Black and Stephens, 1989; Marchetti-Mercer, 2009) revealed that mental health professionals may be increasingly faced with the challenges linked to migration and expatriate life. For this reason, further research regarding the assistance of expatriate families and their adjustment in foreign countries should not only be considered of benefit to South African expatriates, but to expatriate families globally.

The aforementioned sections systematically evaluated not only the strengths and limitations of the study, but included the personal reflections of the researcher. Recommendations for future research were provided. Flowing from these sections, the final conclusions of the study are now presented.

8.5 CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to qualitatively explore the experiences of South African expatriate families living in Dubai. The methods used to accomplish this, were described in Chapters One and Five. The formulation of Gestalt interventions for expatriate families was the second main objective. These interventions were devised as a result of the findings accumulated throughout the research process and were presented in Chapter Seven. As a result of these research endeavours, a number of conclusions were formulated.

Upon analysis of the data, it was revealed how children and spouses in expatriate families may struggle to adjust to expatriate life even after years of living in the new country. This would suggest that each individual may experience the expatriate adjustment process at different stages

depending on their own psychological and environmental circumstances. The literature control presented in Chapter Six, supported the findings linked to the six themes identified in the study. What was pivotal in the findings, was the importance of sound social support structures and communication throughout the expatriate adjustment process and thereafter. A recent study conducted by McGinley (2008:66), supports this finding, revealing that the quality of social contact is essential for expatriate adjustment. More importantly, was the emotional support that family members could provide for each other during the first three difficult phases in the adjustment process. From these findings, it may be concluded that characteristics supporting poor adjustment, for example negative ways of perceiving the new environment, withdrawal from social support, and poor communication skills, may result in less optimal adjustment. In contrast, extravert personality traits, a sense of humour, an interest in other cultures and a sense of adventure supported positive adjustment abilities. Where there was a lack of parental and child communication with regards to the initial relocation process, namely where and why it was necessary to emigrate, it was evidenced in less optimal adjustment in the children. The theme of environmental conditions and the effect this may have on expatriate adjustment, was also explored in Chapter Six. It was found that extreme climatic conditions, barren landscapes and isolated living conditions may impact on the individual's well being and ability to adjust to a new environment.

Evident from the current family case studies was the impact of adjustment stressors and the link to developmental phases, especially in adolescents and spouses in their mid-life years. The findings revealed that during the adolescent years when peer acceptance is important, the forging of friendships with others of the same age group was pivotal in adjusting optimally. The adolescent participants that failed to forge these friendships felt isolated and indicated signs of depression and anger. Spouses that faced their mid-life years without having achieved their desired career and financial ambitions in the new environment, also revealed less optimal adjustment skills. These struggles were reflected in disillusion with the new country, the cultures, and a lack of hope for the future.

In reflecting back to the original motivations for conducting this study, the current findings from the case studies and the literature, support that family therapists should attend to the problem of grief and loss in the dimension of culture shock involved in the relocation process. The current study also draws attention to the importance of providing children in expatriate families with a voice and to ensure that they receive the social support from their new environment that has shown to be essential in optimal adjustment.

The findings from the current study including those obtained from the literature, reveal that where the spouses and the children are not adjusting optimally to the new environment, the expatriate family is more likely to experience repatriation or family conflict. Sluzki in Marchetti-Mercer (2009:131) posits that migratory stress is less likely to take its toll on families in the first months following the migration process. The findings in the present study indicate that where family problems 'arrive with the family' or have a problematic history prior to migration, the family difficulties will be prevalent upon arrival in the new country and are bound to remain until the original sources of the conflict are resolved. Also, should the spouses experience marital problems before migration, the stress of adjustment in a new country may actually exacerbate spousal and family conflict. It may be concluded that the current findings with regards to family support and communication and the impact that these factors have on expatriate families, is supported by other expatriate studies found in the literature. For example, Lev-Wiesel and Shamai (1998:108-110) found that stress and uncertainty associated with relocation may impact on the way the family deals with normal daily stressors and can result in dysfunctional behaviours, poor communication patterns and even greater levels of stress. Caliguiri *et al.* (1998:598) studied the relationship between family adjustment and expatriate work adjustment. Data was obtained from 110 families that had been relocated for global assignments. It was found that communication skills, family support and family adaptability were strongly related to expatriate adjustment. The current findings presented in Chapter Six, suggested that the aforementioned factors were also strongly related to the adjustment process in expatriate families and it may therefore be concluded that these factors play a pivotal role in how expatriates adjust.

After evaluating all the aforementioned findings from this research and the literature, the question arises, what are the implications of the present study for mental health practitioners and Gestalt therapists? Nichols and Schwartz (2008:300) supports that there is a growing recognition for the need regarding individualised techniques in family therapy, specifically formulated to address different population groups and problems in contemporary society. The literature, for example, Black and Stephens (1989) as well as Marchetti-Mercer (2008), reveal that mental health professionals may be increasingly faced with the challenges linked to migration and expatriate life. It may be concluded that the formulation of specific techniques as presented in Chapter Seven, exemplifies this need regarding modern family therapy.

The present research has revealed that expatriate adjustment is a complex psychological phenomenon that has significant and lasting ramifications for those families who fail to adjust

optimally. In exploring the experiences of the South African families in Dubai, and formulating intervention techniques to assist families who need to adjust more optimally, it is hoped that this study will open more doors, not only for Gestalt therapists who endeavour to assist expatriate families, but for researchers seeking to expand the knowledge base on expatriate adjustment and migration studies.

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ANNEXURE A

<div align="center">

CONSENT FORM

</div>

CONSENT FROM THE PARENTS:

I, _____(father) and I, _____(mother) of

_____(name of child), and _____(name of child) provide consent for the researcher, Susanne Long to proceed with the research project involving the use of tape recorded interviews, and drawing techniques with the children. As the parents, we both understand that:

- The participation is completely voluntary,
- All data will be handled with confidentiality and is to be used for research purposes only,
- Anyone in the family may withdraw at any stage during the research process,
- We fully understand what the research entails (as it was explained to us) and what is expected of us.

Signed:_____(father)

Signed:_____(mother)   Date:_____

ASSENT FROM THE CHILDREN:

I, _____(name of child) and

I,_____(name of child) have been informed of what is expected of me in this research interview with my parents. I am willing to participate in the research, and I know that I can withdraw at any time if I feel uncomfortable or unhappy.

Signed: _____

Signed:_____   Date: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONAIRE

FOR THE CASE STUDIES AND FOCUS GROUP

Date:_____

Marital Status: _____

Age and gender of children:_____

Reason for coming to Dubai:_____

Duration in Dubai:_____

How long do you envisage your stay in Dubai?_____

Husband's occupation:_____

Wife's occupation:_____

Age group: (for example, 30-40 years):_____

Any additional information regarding your experiences in Dubai, that you wish to share in writing:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank-you for your participation.

ANNEXURE C

DRAWING FROM DAUGHTER IN FAMILY A

ANNEXURE D

DRAWING FROM SON IN FAMILY A

ANNEXURE E

DRAWING FROM DAUGHTER IN FAMILY E

ANNEXURE F

(INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FAMILY CASE STUDIES)

Initial experiences upon arriving in Dubai

- What were the first impressions and hopes you had upon arriving in Dubai?
- What support did you have upon your arrival? (for example, organisational support).
- In what way was this initial support helpful to you?
- If you did not obtain any organisational support upon arrival, how did this impact on your initial experiences?

Environmental Stressors

- Describe where you first stayed upon arrival and where you are now staying (explore the impact that the new environment has on the person).
- What are your perceptions and thoughts of the environment, for example, the vegetation, transport, buildings and living conditions.
- What are your experiences of the climate of this region? (explore if and how the climate has impacted on personal adjustment and quality of life).

Social Support

- Have you made friends with other expatriates or the local people? Describe your experiences.
- Where have you made new friends? (explore what is important to the person, for example, expat clubs, social networks, church and so forth).
- Describe how new friendships may have assisted you in adjusting to the life in Dubai.
- Do you think the roles in your family may have changed? (explore and discuss with the participant. Assess how a change of role or occupation may have impacted on the non-working spouse's wellbeing).
- Describe what your experiences are regarding your workplace (or school) and what it is like for you to meet people of different cultures?

Acculturation

- Describe your experiences in adapting to the new cultural groups of this region, their laws and religious customs.
- What has helped you adapt to the new culture?

- What has hindered you in adapting to the new culture? And in what way?

Coping with change and transition

- How would you describe your personality? (does the participant enjoy meeting new people?, explore how the participant interacts with others in new social situations).
- How do you communicate everyday experiences of Dubai within your family? (explore caring and sharing, support, conflict, the communication process).
- What has helped you to adjust to the living conditions and life-style here? (explore spirituality, resilience, the use of coping resources).
- What has been difficult for you as a family or individual?
- How do you manage the difficulties or challenges of living here?
- What do you like about living in Dubai? And/or dislike about living here?
- What is hard for you?
- Describe how you think other members in your family experienced coming to Dubai? (explore the participant's awareness of how other family members are adjusting).
- What are your feelings about living in Dubai? (explore feelings of anger, depression or positive feelings and what causes these feelings).
- What has helped you cope with 'missing' loved ones left in South Africa? (explore experiences regarding family members, friends and pets left behind).
- What would you suggest to new expatriates as being helpful or positive things to do during the first weeks or months upon arriving in Dubai?
- What should they not do or avoid upon arrival?
- What advice or comments would you make to people wishing to come to Dubai as expatriates?

ANNEXURE G

(DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP)

Discussion guide

You are invited to describe your own or your family's experiences of living in Dubai:

- In your opinion, what are the most important factors that assist families to adjust to living in a new country?
- What factors do you think hinder the adjustment process?
- How do you manage the 'feelings of loss' regarding family members, friends and pets left behind?
- How have your children adapted to their new schools and different living conditions here?
- How have the non-working spouses adapted to living in Dubai?
- In your opinion, how have your husbands' adapted to the life here?
- What are you views concerning the use of counselling to enhance the adjustment process?
- What are your views regarding the different cultural aspects of this region?
- What has been difficult or positive regarding the cultural differences?
- What are your views of social support with regards to adapting to your life here?
- Do you think personality impacts on your adjustment process? What are your views and experiences?
- How long, in your opinion, should the adjustment process take? (discuss problems).
- What would you tell people who wish to come to Dubai as expatriates?

ANNEXURE H

Should any interested party wish to peruse the full seven transcripts analysed in this thesis, the researcher may be contacted at her postal address, namely, P O Box 522383, Saxonwold, 2132, Johannesburg, South Africa.