

**A DECONSTRUCTION OF DISCOURSES ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE**

by

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the study was to determine the influence/effect of discourses on love and marriage in the lives of people from their childhood up till this day. Twelve people participated in the study. These participants were defined as being "white, Afrikaans speaking, married couples between 30 and 50 years of age, with or without children and belonging to a church in the RBA of the Reformed tradition". The study sought to discover how people respond to dominant and marginalised discourses on love and marriage and how they portray this in their marital relationship. A further objective was to reflect on some modernistic descriptions of discourses on love and marriage and the deconstruction thereof.

Factors such as the marital relationship of their parents, peer groups, church dogma and theological interpretation, sex education at the time they grew up, culture, customs, etc were related by each participant and contextualised within each life story. Interviews were conducted with each participant.

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Thank you to all the participants who joined in the study with great enthusiasm and co-operation. Due to your valuable and honest inputs, I believe that many people will benefit from your life stories for their personal enrichment. I hope that what is reflected in this study will ignite dynamic processes in people's lives towards the construction and/or deconstruction of discourses on love and marriage that they feel comfortable with.

I am very grateful towards my wife Inge, who showed great interest in the research theme and consistently motivated me amidst a multitude of various

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'[Three umpires] are sitting around over a beer, and one says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way they are". Another says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way I see 'em". The third says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and they ain't nothin' until I call 'em".

*Walter Truett Anderson (1990:75), as quoted in Freedman and Combs (1996:19)*

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## Chapter 1

### **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH THEME AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

As a pastor I meet with many people in different contexts and within different problem situations. In numerous marriage counselling sessions I have realised that both dominant and marginalised discourses in society have an effect on the way people construct and co-construct their marital relationships. It is my experience that people live (willingly or unwillingly), either in accordance to or different from the discourses (see 1.2.4) they grew up with from their childhood. It might also be true that people don't discard of discourses entirely and also don't live exactly according to them, but make adaptations to certain aspects of the discourses concerned.

It has been said by a number of the people I have been counselling, that "background", amongst other factors, plays a significant role in their relationship. I suspect that this would correspond with the ideas on discourses in Narrative Therapy (see 1.2.7) and the influence thereof on people's lives.

All the couples who participated in the study grew up with discourses very well known to all of them and which constituted their lives in some way or another. The culture of the white Afrikaans speaking community with their adherence to the Dutch Reformed church (see footnote 20, page 72) and very conservative political views, form a very important part of the context in which they grew up. I grew up in the same cultural, educational, political and religious context. The impact of discourses on love and marriage in this particular context was, to my mind, very powerful. The influences I experienced from my childhood until adulthood will be reflected upon during interviews with the participants. The various factors involved will be

highlighted in 2.2.3. In 2.5.2 the author will elaborate in more detail on the religious context in which the participants grew up.

The above mentioned led me to investigate more closely the impact of discourses on love and marriage in peoples' lives. I hope to gain valuable insights from the study, not only for the sake of my own counselling work but also for other counsellors or therapists and for the people themselves who seek guidance from them. I hope that the participants in the study will gain worthwhile insights into their own stories relating to love and marriage.

## **1.2 Clarification of terms and concepts**

Terms that will occur frequently in this study will be explained as clear as possible without too much elaboration.

### **1.2.1 Post-modernism and related concepts**

The modernism/post-modernism debate has been characterised as the principal intellectual issue of our time (Hekman 1990, as referred to by Lowe 1991). Modernism is widely understood to represent the view that objective observance/interpretation/conclusion of realities is possible. It is also known as the observed systems theory.

Scholars differ widely on the definition or explanation of the concept post-modernism. Therefore it is not an easy and straightforward definable term or concept. It is used in a variety of contexts and should therefore be made clear within a certain frame of reference. Some scholars believe that 1969 was the beginning of a new era (the post-modern era?) for humankind with the first human being setting foot on the moon.

The President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel (1994) once said: "*We live in a post-modern world where anything is possible and nothing is certain.*" I believe that this statement is an oversimplification of the concept,

also bearing in mind the context of international politics in which it was used.

Post-modern thought reacts against the notion of objective knowledge or understanding from the “*outside*”. In general terms, postmodernism represents a radical questioning of the foundationalism and absolutism of modern conceptions of knowledge (Lowe 1991:43). Knowing is a search for “*fitting*” ways of behaving and thinking (Von Glaserfeld 1984). The post-modern view of reality are summarised by Freedman & Combs (1996:22) as follows:

Realities are **socially constructed**;

Realities are **constituted through language**;

Realities are **organised and maintained through narrative**;

There are **no essential truths** (bold – JL).

According to David Pare (1995), three beliefs regarding reality exist:

- (1) Reality is knowable – its elements and workings can be accurately and replicably discovered, described and used by human beings;
- (2) We are prisoners of our perceptions – attempts to describe reality tell us a lot about the person doing the describing, but not much about external reality;
- (3) Knowledge arises within communities of knowers – the realities we inhabit are those we negotiate with one another.



The third belief correlates with the post-modern, narrative, social constructionist view, which will be an important point of departure for this study.

### **1.2.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology seeks to understand the origin, processes and limitations of observation including such operations as drawing distinctions, establishing relations, and creating constructs and all consequences for knowledge. It therefore refers to the relationship between the one who knows and that, which is to be known. Furthermore it concerns the assumptions that inform and shape the process of knowing (Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle 1991:174). This results from communication between an observer and the observed and within a community of observers who may observe each other. Epistemology asks not "what is", or "what can we know" but "how do we come to know".

In this study a post-modern epistemology is followed which moves away from the modernistic belief of an objectively knowable world, independent of an observer (see 1.2.5). My approach to Practical Theology is therefore based on a post-modern social construction discourse (see 1.2.5).

### **1.2.3 Deconstruction**

The term deconstruction is usually ascribed to or associated with Jacques Derrida, a leading figure in the field of literary criticism. He reacted against the primacy of structuralism and semiotics in literary criticism that seeks to find structural objectivity within a text or action. According to exponents of structuralism, structure is placed at the centre of meaning and the structure of language itself produces "reality". This view however does not honour the multiplicity of meanings related to words/concepts in different contexts. Words do not have only one meaning but several possibilities of meaning within certain contexts. We could also say that words don't have any meaning *per se* but are carriers or vehicles of meaning.



Hare-Mustin & Marecek (1988:460) explains their view on the application of the term deconstruction: Deconstruction is generally applied to literary texts, but it can be applied equally readily to scientific texts, or, as we suggest, to therapeutic discourse.

Against this background we can move towards explaining what is meant by deconstruction within the context of this study.

According to Michael White (1991:121), deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert those:

“...taken-for-granted realities and practices...,  
... so-called “truths” that are split off from the conditions and the  
context  
of their production...,  
... disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and  
prejudices...  
and  
... familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of  
person’s lives”.

In this study the aim of deconstructing discourses on love and marriage will probe exactly what Michael White describes as the essence of deconstruction. My supposition is that the personal stories of the participants on love and marriage will reflect a multitude of aspects susceptible to deconstruction. My premise is based on the belief I hold that love and marriage, as reviewed in this study, are issues or concepts which are socially constructed within a specific homogenous cultural and religious group of people.

White (1991:122) believes that deconstruction is premised on what is generally referred to as a critical constructivist, or as he himself prefers to call a constitutionalist perspective on the world. From this perspective, it is proposed that persons' lives be shaped by:

“...the meaning that they ascribe to their experience, their situation in social structures, and the language practices and cultural practices of self and of relationship that these lives are recruited into”.

In a therapeutic setting, deconstruction often seeks to discover the “unsaid” or “not yet expressed”.

(Lowe 1991:43) writes: “In analysing such `regimes of truth`, attention is drawn instead to the gaps, silences, ambiguities and implicit power relations which inhabit them. This general strategy is often referred to as deconstruction...”

One of the implications of rejecting modernist metanarratives (see 1.2.5) would be, “a radical scepticism surrounding the claims of grand or totalising theories or scientific 'progress' or political 'emancipation'. In analysing such 'regimes of truth', attention is drawn instead to the gaps, silences, ambiguities and implicit power relations which inhabit them. This general strategy is often referred to as deconstruction, a somewhat broader application of a term conventionally used in the study of literary and philosophical texts” (Lowe 1991:43).

#### **1.2.4 Discourse (dominant and marginalised)**

The term discourse will be used frequently throughout this study. A discourse is a set of more or less coherent stories or statements about the way the world should be (Drewery & Winslade 1996). A discourse has the intrinsic characteristic that it sustains a certain worldview. This is mostly expressed by means of a restrictive set of codes and conventions. By doing so, the discourses bring certain phenomena into sight and obscure other phenomena (Hare-Mustin 1994:19).

Walker (1988) distinguishes between discourse as "everyday conversation" and discourse as "dominant texts or bodies of knowledge". Very dominant discourses can therefore function as "truths" in certain societies and can even exert power over people's lives. Dill (1996:101) calls postmodernism a completely new paradigm with a new epistemology. "It is critical realism...the discovery of the communicative value of language and the realisation that human beings are essentially narrative beings that live within and on the basis of certain discourses".

Anderson (1995:36) writes: "The various discourses in society have a constitutive or shaping effect on the personal discourses and lives of people. People, however, do not necessarily live in a reflexive and self-reflexive way within these discourses, but in a narrative way".

### **1.2.5 Social construction theory**

Social construction theory, as it is widely used by scholars, flows from the work of scholars such as Berger & Luckman (1966) and Gergen (1985;1994). Anderson (1995) refers to the term *social construction discourse* and explains that it attempts to create space for the unfixed and open idea of a social construction epistemology. I agree with her that the term social construction theory is a *contradictio in terminis* because it is associated with modernistic definitions of the concept. Kotze (1994:107) is credited for introducing the concept of social construction discourse. She writes: "In a social construction discourse people are viewed as existing within language and discourse in a process of co-constructing meanings that constitute their lives".

Shotter (1993:183) phrases the essence of what Kotze believes when he writes in the negative about knowledge as a living concept amongst people: "Knowledge does not consist in "static systems of forms, cognitive structures, or frameworks".



Social construction discourse places emphasis on social interpretation and the intersubjective influences of language, family and culture. This will be clearly illustrated in this study when dealing with the narratives of the participants on love and marriage.

Social construction discourse furthermore proposes that there is an evolving set of meanings that continually emerge from social interactions. It holds that all human beliefs about the world are social linguistic inventions made by people interacting in social discourse and are not true descriptions of any objective reality (Hofmann, 1990).

Gergen (1985a:266) writes as follows: "Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artefact of communal interchange". This reflects a very dynamic process of inter-communication between individuals or groups of people. Individuals are socially influenced and language is socially created.

L Faigly (1986:535) says that the social view insists that all language can only be understood "from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual". This is clearly noticeable in the views of participants on love and marriage in this study, who share many common factors such as culture, religion, language, etc.

Hofmann (1992:8) writes:

"Social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories being co-constructed within social interchanges and mediated through language. Through socialisation, the socially constructed meanings are internalised; they are filtered and understood through meaningful symbols. From these socially constructed meanings also flow scripts for behaviour. These meanings are part of a general flow of constantly changing narratives.

### **1.2.6 Co-construction/Co-constitution**

In following the narrative therapy approach, it is of the utmost importance that narratives (true-life stories of people) are respected and treated as such. In the process of people storying their lives, the dynamics of re-storying is already taking place. Anton Boisen coined the expression that every human being is a "living human document" (Gerkin 1984:37). Each individual living human document has an integrity of his or her own that calls for understanding and interpretation, not categorisation and stereotyping (Gerkin 1984:38).

I truly believe that the therapist becomes a co-constructor of the new story and eventually co-constitutes this in a collaborative way - no patronisation from the "outside" or "above" or "advice" given without the client asking for it. In this study the narratives of participants on love and marriage are respected regardless of my personal views which could differ from theirs at times. Even the deconstruction process is one of respect for the individuals while critically reflecting on their views or beliefs.

### **1.2.7 Narrative/Narrative therapy**

The term *narrative* denotes the act of telling or reciting the happenings of a story. Michael White and David Epston popularised this form of therapy. Using the narrative metaphor leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling (Freedman & Combs 1996:1).

Anderson & Goolishian (1988:380) write: "We live with each other in a world of conversational narrative and we understand each other and ourselves through changing stories and self-descriptions.

The core concept which makes narrative therapy stand out from other approaches is its emphasis upon the importance of the language we use



(oral and written). Anderson and Goolishian (1988:377) describe human systems as linguistic systems:

By language, we do not refer to a specific focus on signs, structure or style. Rather, we refer to the linguistically mediated and contextually relevant meaning that is interactively generated through the medium of words and other communicative action. This generated meaning (understanding) within a particular social context is evolved through the dynamic social process of dialogue and conversation. We live with each other, we work with each other, and we love with each other. All this occurs in language.

I fully agree with the views of Anderson and Goolishian. The conversations with participants in this study confirms every sentence quoted above. The participants each had their unique way of expressing the experiences and discourses that constitute(d) their lives.

According to Michael White (s.a.) the primary focus of a narrative approach is people's expressions of their experiences of life. He writes:

Expressions are constitutive of life – expressions have real-effect in terms of the shaping of life – in that: as expressions constitute the world that is lived through, they structure experience and subsequent expressions. Expressions are in a constant state of production, and these productions are transformative of life. Action in the world is prefigured on meaning, the specifics of action being determined by the particularities of the meanings that are derived in the processes of interpretation. Expressions have a cultural context, and are informed by the knowledge and practises of life that are culturally determined”.

The Afrikaner culture which all participants in this study share, is very much constitutive for the expressions on love and marriage. The cultural, as well as religious context, is a very strong common

factor amongst the participants and reflect clearly in their expressions on love and marriage as constituted in their own lives..

### **1.2.8 The client/participant as “expert”**

The stance that the therapist takes when viewing the client as “*expert*” is one of “*not knowing*”. The not-knowing position entails a general attitude or stance in which the therapist’s actions communicate an abundant, genuine curiosity. The therapist does not ‘*know*’ a priori, the intent of any action, but rather must rely on the explanation made by the client (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:29).

For the purpose of this study, it will also apply to the participants, each being “experts” on their own stories. They all have unique stories that were socially constructed amongst other people in language (and dialogue) with one another within a certain cultural context or setting.

### **1.2.9 Genogram**

The term genogram is derived from the Greek word γενεα (gena), which means “*origin*” and “*birth*”. The term “*family tree*” is also used as synonym for genogram. A genogram can be described as a graphic representation of the network of individuals over at least three generations, who are family related to each other (Kotze 1991:645). For the purpose of this study the genogram will not be used extensively but only to indicate the immediate family of participants (parents, siblings and own marriages with children, also referred to as the *Family of Origin*). The genograms illustrated in this study will not be used in a therapeutic context but to illustrate the familial context of the individual.

### 1.2.10 Paradigm

The term paradigm originates from the Greek word *παράδειγμα* (paradeigma), which can denote a pattern, model or plan (Liddel & Scott 1974:521). Today the term is widely used when reference is made to a theory, perception, assumption or frame of reference.

Covey (1990:23) writes: "In the more general sense, it is the way we see the world – not in terms of our visual sense of sight, but in terms of perceiving, understanding, interpreting".

Denzin & Lincoln (1994:99) simply define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or belief systems that guide action.

"Paradigms deal with first principles or ultimates. They are human constructions. They define the worldview of the researcher-as-bricoleur. These beliefs can never be established in terms of their ultimate truthfulness.... a paradigm encompasses three elements: epistemology, ontology and methodology".<sup>1</sup>

As researcher in this study, my paradigm is the postmodern approach with a specific set of beliefs that guide my action with the participants in narrating their expressions on love and marriage. My approach therefore is not to read my own beliefs and ideas into what the participants relate to me but to view and respect it in the context of their own paradigm(s).

Brueggeman (1993:17) writes:

"A simple way to understand paradigms, according to Covey, is to see them as maps. We know that a map is not the territory. A map is simply an explanation of certain aspects of the territory. Covey believes that we all have many maps in our heads and these maps

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<sup>1</sup> "Epistemology asks, How do we know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality. Methodology focuses on how we gain knowledge about the world" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:99).



can be divided into two categories: maps of the way things are (or realities) and maps of the way things should be (or values). We then interpret everything we experience through these mental maps. A paradigm could also be described as being determinative for how human beings generate their knowledge of the world”.

### **1.2.11 Culture**

Culture is one of those concepts that has a variety of possible meanings in different disciplines. The term refers to the way people think and act (practices) within a community. Such a community would largely share the same values and linguistic constructions. The different actions carried out in such a community would include rituals, customs, beliefs, music, art, etc.

Culture is composed of and is sustained by various discourses. This view on culture was confirmed over and over by the participants in the study. The Afrikaner culture, being the context in which the participants grew up and still live, either fully or partly, prove to have had a very strong influence on customs. Rituals, beliefs, etc.

This is a dynamic process and is never settled. People, who live within or according to a certain cultural frame of reference, are either very much aware of the discourses which constitute that culture (which could be experienced as negative or positive), or they take it for granted and live accordingly.

### **1.2.12 Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics was originally the discipline in which rules were described (or theory developed – JL) for the exposition of texts (Wethmar 1977:152). According to Deist (1984:73/74)<sup>2</sup> the concept of hermeneutics can be described as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Robinson writes: “The Greek noun *hermeneia* ... embraced the whole broad scope of ‘interpretation’ from ‘speech’ that brings the obscure into the clarity of linguistic expression, to

- (1) theoretical reflection on the process(es) of comprehension in general;
- (2) theoretical reflection on the process of communicating the message of a text to a specific audience (also referred to as homiletics) and
- (3) theoretical reflection on textual interpretation or on methods of exegesis

God wants to convey a message to people and that message needs to be made meaningful in today's context (cf. Hermes, the messenger of the gods in Greek mythology). In view of the social construction theory, meaning will be constructed or created through interaction amongst people and through language.

In conclusion, the background to the study as well as relevant concepts to be used, has now been clarified for the sake of a common understanding between the author and readers of the script. These concepts will also be explained to the participants. Chapter two will deal with the formal aspects of research theory and post-modern context of the study.

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`translation` from an obscure, foreign language into the clarity of one's own language, and to `commentary` that explicates the meaning of obscure language by means of clearer language." (1964:6).



## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH THEORY AND POST MODERN CONTEXT OF STUDY

#### 2.1 Research interest

For many years now, it has interested me to know *how* people, with a similar cultural background and belief system as mine, experience, think about and deal with discourses on love and marriage in their daily living. It is also of interest to me to find out what discourses on love and marriage existed when the participants grew up, how they responded to them in their own loving relationships and how it shaped their relationship with their marriage partners.

I believe that it will be of great importance to find out from the participants what kind of discourses constituted their parents' marriage and to what extent these discourses influenced their own thoughts and perceptions on love and marriage.

Many factors, as mentioned briefly in 2.2.3 had a significant influence on the social construction of discourses on love and marriage. To what extent were these factors influential in the lives of the participants and what are their thoughts on these matters when looking back on their lives? How do they manage the challenges of the post modern age that present themselves in different spheres of life as a result of the phenomenal information expansion and accessibility thereof?

Furthermore, the study will be directed towards probing the functioning of these discourses (unchanged or adapted?) in the education of their own children. The outcome of this study could then not only be used as a basis for further study involving a group or groups of people with more extended variables, but also benefit the participants in the study.

## **2.2 Demarcation of target/research group**

The research theme called for a well-defined group of participants (see 2.2.1) who would be representative of discourses which constitute both the thought processes and actions of that particular group.

### **2.2.1 Discourses on love and marriage amongst “white, Afrikaans speaking married couples between 30 and 50 years of age, with or without children and belonging to a church in the RSA of the Reformed tradition”.**

I associate myself with members of the research group and have my own ideas and experiences on discourses concerning love and marriage, from childhood up to this day. These personal experiences and ideas will not be incorporated into the study as part of the collecting of data. However, I do not believe that I can sit on the “pavilion” as an “objective spectator” or “onlooker from the outside”, metaphorically speaking. But I do believe that it will be a valuable and interesting journey to undertake and hopefully I will find new and meaningful insights, which will also benefit many therapists/counsellors and couples in future.

### **2.2.2 The influence of discourses on love and marriage on the research group from their childhood.**

One of the interests of the study is to explain the influence of discourses of love and marriage on people’s relationships over many years. Our lives are constituted by discourses. A relevant question for the purpose of this study would be whether people are able to recognise and acknowledge these

discourses (dominant or marginal) in their lives and specifically in their marital relationships.

In view of what was said in 1.2.7, I believe that every human being is a living letter or document with real-life stories. This concept reflects a dynamic interchange of ideas, perceptions, beliefs, values, etc - not only within the human being – but also in an environment where realities are socially constructed on a daily basis.

### **2.2.3 Important factors that played a role in the establishment of discourses on love and marriage during the formative years of the participants**

During my first interview with them, the participants conveyed the following factors that played a role in the establishment of discourses on love and marriage in their formative years.

#### **2.2.3.1 Education/Schooling**

Not only is it important to note the education policy of the time, but also the influence of political ideologies when the participants attended school. The influence of discourses on love and marriage as conveyed within, as well as outside the formal educational curriculum, will be noted as participants during interviews, express them.

#### **2.2.3.2 Culture and customs**

The significance of culture and the role it plays in the day to day living of people is of the utmost relevance to this study. Culture constitutes people's lives. Customs are the way in which people live out their culture. Culture and custom are both concepts that are constituted either by dominant or marginalised discourses. The influence of "Afrikaner" culture and customs on participants on the theme of love and marriage will also be reflected.

### **2.2.3.3 Folklore and tradition**

Folklore and tradition are terms used to denote the unique characteristics of a certain community of people. It could be a cultural or racial group with characteristic styles of music, art, stories, legends, heroes, etc. Tradition is a powerful and formative reality in people's lives:

Traditions are not simply the icons of a dead past. Rather, traditions are seen as living, dynamic, historical processes that move and change in the interaction between events and meanings over time, while remaining rooted in the primal images and metaphors of their historic beginnings.

(Gerkin 1991:60)

In this study it became evident that tradition played a major role in the formation and clear characterisation of discourses on love and marriage.

### **2.2.3.4 Church dogma/tradition and religious convictions/faith**

Religious convictions of people can be very strong and influential in their lives and can constitute a certain paradigm or frame of reference for living their lives. The different churches with their own traditions and dogmas also play a significant role in peoples' lives, as will become clear from the interviews as well as the literature review in 2.5.2. Powerful discourses can develop and be sustained within church communities. Any expression or view about God is in essence a statement of faith.



### **2.2.3.5 Peer groups**

The influence of peer groups should not be under-estimated in the lives of people from all ages. Peer groups are groups of people (of any age) who are of equal standing, for example, scholars in the same grade or of the same age. Simply put, it denotes people belonging to the same group in society especially when age, grade or status (Websters Vol. II 1971:1665) determines membership.

### **2.2.3.6 Gender, chauvinism, feminism and roles within a relationship**

In this study, concepts of gender, chauvinism, feminism and discourses that constitute a love relationship occur frequently. Theories on gender differences have been formulated and debated for many years. Two lines of inquiry have been followed to come either to exaggerate the differences between males and females or a minimisation thereof. The first representation is referred to as **alpha bias** and the second as **beta bias** (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:457). The constitutive gender discourses in relationships between males and females (for the purpose of this study, married couples) will be relevant in view of the quest to deconstruct discourses on love and marriage in a pastoral narrative context.

### **2.2.3.7 Relationship history**

It is also an essential part of the study to get information from couples as to the development of their relationship, leading to their marriage, and also relationships they had before they got to know each other. Partners bring their own histories into a relationship and these histories constitute the development of a unique relationship through social construction.



### **2.2.3.8 Popular reading matter/radio/TV**

People's perceptions or experiences of love and marriage are influenced and/or affected by popular reading matter (books, magazines, newspapers, etc) as well as radio and television. This was also reflected during the interviews.

## **2.3 Research methodology**

### **2.3.1 A Pastoral Narrative Therapy paradigm and Epistemology (The post-modern context of the research)**

Although the aim of this study does not lie within a therapeutic context but an in depth look at personal life stories, focusing on discourses of love and marriage, the pastoral narrative approach/paradigm warrants a contextualisation of the post modern epistemology of the research. The paradigm shift from a modernistic to a postmodernist paradigm with its accompanying hermeneutics, epistemology and the advance of narrative therapy, has radically changed the scene of therapeutic practice (Botha 1998:113).

The postmodernist view on reality is that it comes about via social interaction through linguistic constructions. People have their own way of languaging their experiences in life. The implication for therapy according to Bohart (1995), is that if the therapist can change how the individual languages a problem, the problem will change. I believe this is an oversimplified view because changing a problem involves much more dynamics.

For the purpose of this study, I will be looking at the deconstruction of discourses that form part of the participant's reality/experience of love and marriage. According to Parry (1991:43), the deconstruction of a story (or discourse - JL) is never aimed at the story (or discourse - JL), but at the

belief systems that are encapsulated within the story (or discourse – JL). It is these taken-for-granted beliefs or discourses (which are embedded in local culture) that shape people's lives. Therefore I believe that it is important to take note of those discourses in culture or social environment that constitute or co-constitute and sustain discourses on love and marriage – whether experienced as negative or positive by people.

This study will then offer reflections on different discourses that play a role in people's lives regarding the theme of love and marriage. The participants themselves will be languaging their own stories in terms of the role that discourses play in their lives. No "authoritative" assumptions or evaluations will be attempted from the "outside" and no pretensions from the researcher's side of "knowing better". It does not lie within the postmodernist paradigm to place people in "boxes" and prescribe what suits them best.

### **2.3.2 Aim of the study/research goal**

The aim of this study is to determine the influence/effect of discourses on love and marriage in people's lives from their childhood up till this day. The following objectives will be explored:

First of all, the study will seek to discover how people respond to dominant and marginalised discourses on love and marriage and how they portray this in their marital relationships.

A second objective will be to reflect on some modernistic descriptions of discourses on love and marriage and the deconstruction thereof.

The above-mentioned objectives will be contextualised within a post-modern epistemology, based on a social construction discourse (see 1.2.5 and 1.2.3). This will help therapists, counsellors, pastors, etc to understand and guide people in similar situations.

## 2.4 Research procedures/process and ethical considerations

It was my initial intent to conduct a quantitative study on the topic of love, relationships and marriage as portrayed in articles found in popular magazines, making use of 120 – 150 participants. I started out with informal conversations with males and females on the topic of love and marriage. I asked them about the kind of magazines they read and what kind of articles they mostly read and enjoyed. A wide variety of answers and views were expressed but the sole and common aspect that was expressed by all was the role/influence of discourses on love and marriage in their lives from childhood up till today. This was the practical day to day living and all of them wanted to talk about it. They also expressed their concern about raising children in the constant changing world we live in with it's ever changing morals and values (dominant and marginalised discourses).

Therefore I changed the scope of the study more towards these issues and decided to conduct a qualitative study<sup>3</sup> with six couples who comply with the criteria set out in 2.2.1. My approach was to conduct interviews with these couples and document their stories as they told them.

The research process was conducted as follows:

The first step was to identify six couples who met the requirements to be part of the research group. I approached six couples to whom I am known as a pastor and friend and according to my view, have a meaningful marital relationship. My aim was therefore not to select people who I regarded as couples whose relationship are troubled by problems and are in need of marital therapy.

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<sup>3</sup> Qualitative research stresses that each place, group of people and their development in time represents a context that may vary in some respect or another. Even a small variation may have important implications for what people believe, how they behave and how they will implement and respond to change (Ballard 1994:301).



The couples, who were invited to take part in this research, accepted it and articulated their willingness to co-operate to the best of their capability. I made appointments to see them for an initial interview by explaining the procedures to be followed and contracting with them on the confidentiality and contents of the interviews. I would then see them individually for an interview where they could articulate their own stories in relation to the theme.

Before the actual interviews I gave each participant a copy of a preliminary table of contents and explained a few concepts that would be used during the interviews. It was again stated clearly that each interview would be treated as confidential. During the interviews, I made use of probing questions to facilitate the process within the context of the research theme. The basic questions I asked probed their genograms, the cultural, social and religious context in which they grew up, the discourses they regard as playing an important and formative role in their lives relating to the theme of the study, their personal views on their own as well as other marital relationships, love, sexuality, raising child(ren), the role of education, schooling, culture and customs, folklore and tradition, church dogma and religious convictions, peer groups, gender, relationship history and popular reading matter/radio/television.

Participants were given the freedom to elaborate on different aspects of the theme as they wished. No participant was under any obligation to answer questions, which they preferred not to answer. They were left freedom of expression on their own life stories.

After documenting each participant's story, a transcription of the interview was given to each participant for editing. I expressed clearly to all participants that they could discuss their individual interviews with their partners if they wished to do so. From my side I treated every interview with the strictest confidentiality. The participants were free to make changes to the actual transcription of the interview (expanding or deleting) until they were satisfied with it. This also included the choice of real names or



pseudonyms. Added to the reported interview, were a few questions, which I requested the participant to respond to. I was interested to:

- (1) hear from them what their experiences were of the interview,
- (2) what their experiences were in telling their stories,
- (3) what they discussed with other people (if at all) and
- (4) if they had any further reflections on the discourses of love and marriage and the effect these would have on people's lives.

After editing the typed interview, each participant returned it to me and I made the necessary changes as was indicated by them.

A very rewarding and unexpected experience came about when the childless couple, after completing the interviews and subsequent pastoral narrative therapy that evolved from the interviews, were blessed with a child of their own. This situation led to another interview with them relating to their changed circumstances.

During the preliminary meetings I had with the participants, we set up an agreement with each other that further interviews could be conducted if they were made aware of issues that needed further exploration. Should these reflections lead to pastoral therapy sessions, they would have the freedom to approach me. The interviews that were held are reflected upon in chapter 4.

## **2.5 The research in the context of practical theology in the Reformed tradition**

The term *practical theology* is widely used to denote a specific discipline within the study field known as Theology. The term *theology* is made up of two Greek words, Θεός (theos – God) and λογος (logos – word or study),

which is translated freely as the *study of the Divinity* or literally *word(s) about God*.

I don't believe it is possible to define God. It is impossible to make God the object of study. Any definition *per se* is intrinsically meant to borderline and capture whatever is to be defined. God is beyond any definition or any attempt of humankind to "*pinpoint*" the essence or being of God and his way of dealing with man and the rest of his creation. The Word of God is the object of theology and not God Himself. Therefore, we cannot speak comprehensively about God in finite terms. Rather, we can only speak about God in metaphorical language. However, it is possible to view and practice theology as a science. Heyns and Jonker (1974:137) give the following definition of theology: "Theology is the scientific and the, by time (i.e. the current age we live in - JL), determined answer to the revelation of God concerning Himself and his direct relationship with the cosmos".<sup>4</sup>

This definition, they say, depicts the boundaries for theology at the same time. (174:139). In my view, this clearly reflects a confessional approach to the science of theology! They make use of the term modernism and explain it as follows: "Modernism is a yielding to the stream of contemporary ideas and a rejection of conservative-historical tradition" (translation and interpretation by JL). I believe that the term modernism is used as a synonym for that which is contemporary.

Hans Küng in his 1987 publication *Theology for the third millennium* (German title: *Theologie im Aufbruch*), takes a serious look at the future of Christianity against the background of the turn from modernism to a post-modernistic approach. According to Küng, modernism can be traced back to the time of the French Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. The term "modern" was then used in a positive sense to denote the new era of thought and view of the world. This new era emphasised the importance of

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<sup>4</sup> In the original text it reads as follows: "...teologie is die wetenskaplike en die deur die tyd bepaalde antwoord op die openbaring van God aangaande Homself en Sy direkte verhouding tot die kosmos".

reason, subjectivity, scientific infallibility and absolute truth. Today, two hundred years later, the same term denotes a world of thought that no longer satisfies the mindset of the current age. The so-called post-modern age has taken its place but cannot be enclosed in a definition. According to Küng an essential characteristic of post-modern thought is the acceptance of the openness and incompleteness of our reason and definitions.

Every reader and/or scholar of the Bible reads it from a certain point of view with a variety of perceptions, discourses, paradigms, values, knowledge, etc and interprets the text accordingly. A believer in the God of the Bible will read and interpret the Bible with faith as basis. Theology consists of the critical and reflexive discourses of a believing community about its faith in God. Therefore, faith can have many "faces". A formal study in the field of theology also exhibits many different facets. In my view, tradition, timeframe and politics play a significant role in forming a theology that is with time known for certain characteristics and contents. Theology then becomes known as Reformed or Protestant theology, Catholic theology, Orthodox theology, Liberation theology and many other depictions of theology.

Theology, like other science, utilises theories, or rather discourses, in its theological enterprise (Botha 1999:124). But whatever the theology is called, the choice for a specific theology will influence the so-called practical theology as sub discipline of that theology. Practical theology with no sound base theory will end up in syncretistic banalities (Van Andel, Geense, Hoedemaker 1980:10, referring to the ideas of Foucault). According to Rudolf Bohren (1985): "Praxis without theology is blind and theology without praxis is dead".<sup>5</sup>

This is equally true for a Pastoral Narrative Therapy as part of Practical Theology. For purpose of clarification as to the position I am choosing in

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<sup>5</sup> One of the remarks professor Bohren made in class during 1985 when I was a student of his in Heidelberg, West Germany, doing research for a Doctorate in Practical Theology.



conducting this study within the realm of practical theology, the following points need to be noted:

- (1) I accept the message of salvation in the Bible as being the Word of God<sup>6</sup> and I accept it as part of my belief system;
- (2) I position myself within the Protestant theological tradition but not without a firm belief in critical solidarity;
- (3) I view practical theology as an attempt to communicate the principles of God's kingdom hermeneutically (cf. 1.6.10) for daily living in this world with all its facets and to the glory of God.

The contents/knowledge of the Bible however, is not like water in a reservoir that can be poured into a container/person (Freedman & Combs 1996). God has a principle message(s) for every human being in every situation, regarding

the way in which he/she responds to the salvation in Jesus Christ. Believers/followers of Jesus Christ, according to the Bible, are expected to practice the norms and values correlating with the kingdom of God and not that of the worldly order. This also asks for an ethical code, based on theological insights according to which a community of believers can live their lives.

### **2.5.1 Love: reflections on αγαπαω (agapão), φιλεω (fileo) and ερος (eros) from a grammatical as well as theological point of view within the reformed tradition and hermeneutics**

The study concentrates on discourses that say something about love and marriage. Therefore I believe that it is necessary to reflect on the concept of love from a theological viewpoint.

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<sup>6</sup> I accept that a form of inspiration came from the Holy Spirit in an organic way, therefore incorporating human beings (writers of the Biblical text) to convey the message of God, which is salvation historical in essence, via social construction.



In the Greek language three words are used to denote the concept of **love** in different contexts.

**The term ἀγαπάω (agapão)**

The New Testament never uses the term ἀγαπάω (agapão) to mean love for ideas, norms and values. It is frequently used to denote the love of human beings for one another but it is primarily used in the context of love which God shows towards his people (e.g. John 3:16). God sends his beloved Son to the world. "The Son brings the remission of sins to which man replies with grateful love and to which he should respond with an unconditional readiness to help and forgive his fellows." (Kittel 1964:48).

It is the love, which He demonstrates towards sinners lying in the "dust" of their sins; like a pearl in the mud. This is love in the sense of: God loves sinners "nevertheless"! God does not love us because we are valuable and worthy; we are worthy because God loves us (Thielicke 1964:32). With *agape* the authentic being of the other person is the object. Jesus summed up in two sentences the meaning of the old and new righteousness: "love for God and love for your neighbour" (Luke 12:28-31).

**The term ἐρως (eros)**

In *eros*, the worth of the other person is the object (Thielicke 1964:28). In the context of love and sexuality the worth is obviously contained in what can be offered to the benefit of one party involved or mutually for both parties. Drawn to the full consequence, it is the selfish use and abuse of people's sexuality, according to Thielicke.

When referring to erotic love in literature, films, etc, the association with the term is that of romantic love without two people necessarily being committed to a relationship. According to Thielicke, the term denotes an

element of self-love because it is never pure surrender in the sense of giving oneself away. "...it always has in it the element of monopolising, of fulfilling oneself, and appropriating" (1964:30). The elements of passion and desire are frequently associated with *eros*. I am of the opinion that Thieliicke places too much emphasis on the negative and exploitive domain in which the term *eros* can function.

Botha (1999:224) writes in his thesis: "Lovers have experienced **romantic love (eros)** over many centuries. The Bible describes *eros* in The Song of Solomon. Greek mythology came up with the god Eros...Eros has, however, not always been the only basis for choosing a marital partner, nor was it the basis for marriage. Although desirable in marriage, *eros* was, in previous centuries, not the basis, nor the object of marriage". He then continues to illustrate how *eros* has become an institutionalised discourse in western society, accepting that an ideal marriage was based on love. Today romantic love (*eros*) is unimaginable without strong sexual overtones and most marriages are now built on romantic love and a commitment of some form (1999:225).

### **The term φιλεω (*fileo*)**

It is noteworthy that the Greeks sense a distinction between φιλεω and ερος similar to the distinction between "to like" and, with strong feeling, inwardness, devotion, and even passion, "to love" (Kittel (Vol. 9) 1974:116). The term *fileo* can also denote the act of kissing in different contexts. In the New Testament the term *fileo* is used far less frequent than *agapao*. Only John's Gospel with 13 of the total of 25 New Testament instances makes a more significant theological use of *fileo* along with the largely synonymous *agapao* (Kittel (Vol. 9) 1974:128). In the New Testament *fileo* is never used for love of God, and the same applies to *agapao* for erotic love.

In John 15:19 the original meaning of *fileo* is: "to love what belongs or is one's own". Jesus demands the unconditional love of his disciples with a

readiness for total commitment. He thus demands an uncompromising renunciation of self-love. The beloved disciple of Jesus as John is frequently referred to (John 20:2; 13:23; 19:26; 21:7) was denoted with the word *fileo*.

### 2.5.2 Views on marriage as reflected in the reformed theology of the Dutch Reformed Church in the past three decades<sup>7</sup>

The basic question that a reformed theological view on marriage would have to ask is what constitutes a Christian marriage according to Scripture? It is a very difficult task to try and do justice to a reformed theological view on marriage within such a short space. Within reformed theology, it is believed that God created man and woman with the intention (and possibility) of physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally becoming "one" (c.f. Gen. 2:24; Ephesians 5:31). With this union it is meant that a man and woman who have found love in each other, are bound together by God and the blessing bestowed upon them. Such a union was later in time sanctified by the church through liturgical rituals based upon certain theological perspectives/interpretations.

In 1 Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul deliberates extensively on the state of marriage as well as remaining unmarried. On the topic of marriage the following can be noted from 1 Cor. 7:

Each man should have his *own* woman (wife) and each woman her *own* man (husband) according to 7:2. Paul uses the expression "to have" in the sense of "to keep" (see also 7:39). Therefore he states clearly that it is forbidden to forsake your husband or wife. The readers of the letter to the Corinthians came from a non-Christian (heathen) background and had to be educated on Christian principles for a marriage. Paul also prohibits

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<sup>7</sup> In the early 1970's most of the participants were either teenagers or young adults. The views of the church at the time on love, sex and marriage should therefore be noted for the purpose of this study. Only 1 publication of the 70's on the specific focus of this study was found and used, but the literature of the 80's reflect the views on love and marriage which were taught in the Dutch Reformed Church all along during the 70's.



extra-marital relationships and sex outside of marriage (v5 – see also Eph 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2:15).

The message is also clear from Scripture that **love** in a marriage relationship is not only a privilege but also a command. This love-relationship in marital union is between one man and one woman (monogamy). Paul illustrates the exclusiveness that is inherent to marital love in view of the relationship between Christ and his church (Heyns 1986:137).<sup>8</sup>

Christ loves his church without the church having to deserve his love. Of course the marital relationship will have its own rules, moral principles and discourses that constitute the unique nature of the relationship.

Within the Dutch Reformed tradition, marriage preparation is viewed as being very important. The pastor will interview the couple who intend to get married for so called “marriage preparation”. This could be conducted as an interview, making use of direct or reflexive questions, a course on various aspects of a marital relationship, books, videos or cassettes for reading or viewing, etc.

The views on love and marriage as reflected by:

- (1) official publications of the Dutch Reformed Church and
- (2) publications by theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church over the past 30 years, will now be summarised as is relevant to the study.<sup>9</sup>

A chronological literature review of the most significant publications<sup>10</sup> on love and marriage will follow.

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<sup>8</sup> “Die eksklusiwiteit wat inherent is aan die huweliksliefde word deur Paulus ook geïllustreer aan die hand van die verhouding tussen Christus en sy gemeente”.

<sup>9</sup> Comments within the context of a post-modern epistemology will be made on each publication reflecting the theological context of the time.

<sup>10</sup> These publications represented the viewpoint of the Dutch Reformed Church as approved at the General Synods and were therefore representative theological reflections of the church.



In 1982(a) a booklet on marriage was published with the intention of conveying the church's view on marriage as interpreted from biblical passages. The author of the booklet is H Linde and the title "Ons twee is een".

This publication could also be used as a study guide and was intended for people who were already married. It contains several marriage evaluation aids as well as Bible study guides for couples, either doing it on their own or for marriage counsellors and/or pastors who facilitate sessions with couples. At the end of each section reference is made to notes on the particular section at the end of the booklet. The booklet identifies sixteen objectives for couples to reach and those which are relevant to the theme of the study, will be scrutinised.

Readers are led to name the most important "facts" the Bible teaches on marriage as an institution of God. It is however doubtful whether we can speak of "theological facts" because theology in my view is an interpretation of how God interacts and communicates with people through the written word, known as the "Bible". The booklet further intends to enable readers to summarise the destructive influence of sin on marriage. The relationship between Christ and his church serves as a metaphor for marriage and is extracted from the Bible in Ephesians 5. Readers are further prompted to name the typical features of a man and a woman and how these can be fulfilled in a marriage relationship. In post-modern terminology it is not viable to speak of "typical" features of men and women. With such typifications, men and woman are unjustly subjected to generalisations.

The features of real love in a marital relationship with the necessary "texts of proof" in the Bible, are listed. I find it very colonising when Biblical passages or verses are used a way of "proving" certain beliefs or ways of doing. Readers of the booklet are made to believe how important a clear definition of roles is for a marital relationship. How the roles are established, is even as important in the view of the author. At the time it

was very important to speak about and define “roles” because men and women each had “typical” roles they had to conform to or live up to the expectations of society or the church community.

The booklet speaks of God’s “master plan for marriage” and to my mind it almost resembles an instruction manual. It extrapolates from the book Genesis that man was created as image and representative of God. Therefore, the man is the one who has to take the lead in marriage because 1 Cor 11:8 says: “...for man was not created from woman but woman from man...” This is a very categorical and fundamental way of dealing with a biblical passage, actually very discriminating and simplistic.

In the same year, 1982(b), another booklet by the same author H Linde, was published for people who are engaged and plan to marry in the near future. This publication was also written as a study guide and makes use of personal evaluation questionnaires and bible studies on topics relating to love and marriage. The thoughts on love and marriage in the booklet correspond to the above mentioned publication.

Marriage is viewed as instituted by God and simultaneously a gift to mankind. A personal relationship with God as well as true love, which stems from Him, is believed to be the basis for a strong and happy marriage. The two unique persons become “one” which refers to the physical and emotional bond between them. The booklet places emphasis on the change from an “I” approach to an “us” approach in marriage.

I agree with the importance placed on readiness for marriage. Partners have to know themselves and their partner regarding personality, career planning, social interaction with others, interests, hobbies, meaningful communication, self expression, knowing the needs of their partner, etc. The importance of personal growth and development in a relationship cannot be denied, as the booklet explains. The importance of a sexual relationship in marriage is discussed and a very strong prohibition is placed

on sex before or outside marriage. The booklet uses Scripture passages to support these notions.

The booklet states that the wife should be subordinate to her husband and visa versa according to Ephesians 5:21. The husband is the head of his wife, and the family for that matter, in that he has to take the leading role. The author further states that both parties are equal partners in marriage. This statement is both contradictory and unclear. Does he mean that some are more equal than others?

It is interesting to note that a third publication was released in 1982 with the title "As jy hom liefhet", written by T van Zyl. The booklet focuses on giving young women guidance from Scripture as well as practical issues to think about. At the end of the booklet, a course test can be completed and sent in after which a certificate can be obtained, should the person pass the test. The booklet also provides opportunity for participants to raise questions, which will be answered via correspondence with that person from the publishers, making use of pastoral counsellors.

A lot of attention is given to the physical relationship between a man and a woman. Old Testament texts are used to condemn any form of physical contact that should be reserved for marriage e.g. the touching of a woman's breasts before she is married (Esechiel 23:2-3). Based on this biblical passage, the above mentioned example would be viewed as adultery or fornication.

Sex before marriage as well as all other means of physical loving is condemned in very strong terms, which comes close but doesn't end in sexual intercourse. It is assessed as being sin with reference to e.g. Rom 13:10 and 1 Cor 10:32. According to this publication, the devil is behind all forms of temptation and young people should be aware that in relationships, the devil will always be there to lead them to sin. It was a time in Dutch Reformed theological writings where the devil was re-depicted as the ever-present evil "personality" who haunts the children of God. The



devil is depicted as a masculine “person” and able to know every move you make and every thought that crosses your mind. In the publication however, it is also said clearly that you have yourself to blame if you fall into sin.

A few practical issues are dealt with as well, which I would depict as cultural discourses. Young women are encouraged to accept it when young men open the door of the motor vehicle for them or pull out the chair before they take their seat at the table. These acts constitute the discourse on acceptable behaviour amongst men and women in the culture of white Afrikaans speaking people.

A small booklet was distributed in the church in 1975 depicted as an open letter to the youth of the Dutch Reformed Church, compiled by the Northern Transvaal Youth Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church. The title suggested that answers from the Bible would be given to the youth on the issue of sex before marriage.

The booklet takes many Old Testament passages as departure point for arguments against sex before marriage. The Bible says that God created man and woman with the aim of becoming one. Sexuality comes from God and is something beautiful. Sin has affected it however in such a way that it can become something very ugly and sinful. The booklet presents the theme of sex in such a manner that a very negative picture of sex unfolds to young people. To illustrate the point, the following presentation of the Biblical message on certain sexual behaviours is portrayed. In the Bible, according to the booklet, we find several direct and clear utterances on sexuality that can even lead to the death penalty. Engagement of two people in biblical times had a stronger judicial meaning than today and did not allow sexual intercourse between them. Virginity up to the moment of marriage was a prerequisite according to Scripture. Sexual licentiousness in your young days leads to wreckages later in life, is said. Nowhere the Bible allows sex before marriage and sexual abstinence before marriage is also applicable to your thoughts



The use of Scripture and the exegetical method applied draws a direct line between Old Testament times and today. It reflects a fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture. The actual punishments prescribed in the Old Testament when rules are disobeyed, are left aside in the booklet because of the harshness thereof, I believe. It seems that the message which is conveyed to young people is then somewhat inconsistent. The booklet conveys a lot of negative thoughts on sex and very little positive reflections from Scripture.

In 1981 two publications were released on the topic of sleeping with someone of the opposite sex (English translation of titles: *Sleeping together? (For the boys)* and *Sleeping together? (For the girls)*). These booklets deal with the issue of sexual intercourse before marriage and also take a very strong stance against it. The verdict on such behaviour is that it is fornication. The author, A Basson, uses 1 Corinthians 6:15 as reference to support his view and adds that fornication or adultery is the only sin against the body of Christ (v18). The covenant child does not belong to him/herself and can therefore not do what he/she wants to (v19). Sexual intercourse is closely connected to procreation, according to the booklets. For that reason alone sex before or outside marriage is fornication because of the possibility of a new life that could have been formed. Furthermore the booklets focus on the biblical saying that no adulterers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9,10). According to the booklets this passage is thus also strictly applied to people who have sex before marriage. In other words, sex before marriage implies that you are spiritually dead (Proverbs 7:23-27) and as adulterer on your way to God's judgement (1 Cor 6:10).

The message of the booklets is clear: all people who have sex before marriage are adulterers and should expect judgement from God. They are spiritually dead and have no hope should they carry on with their sexual behaviour before they are married. I find it alarming that the message comes across as harsh without distinguishing between prostitution, promiscuity or sleeping with one partner before marriage. The message is the same: judgement is passed on the sin of adultery. The way in which the

booklets are written constitutes a very authoritative and reprimanding spirit. Even at the end of each publication, when young people who participate in sex before marriage are invited to confess, the message is that of severe guilt that has to be dealt with. The sin of sex before marriage is focused upon as one of the most serious of all sins possible. The focus on love and marriage should come from a more positive and encouraging point of view and address it in the context of love and abundant life in Jesus Christ.

In 1992 a study guide with the title "Soeklig op seks" (Eng: *Spotlight on sex*), was written by J van Rensburg and published with the focus on sexual issues relevant to young people, especially students. The booklet describes the world as "sex mad" as opposed to God's world. The view is held that everything related to sexuality is much more public and frank in its presentation by the media, literature, in conversations, different art forms etc, than it was in the years before.

Sex before marriage is strongly condemned on biblical grounds, referring to passages such as Deuteronomy. 22:13-30 from the Old Testament. The author believes that the rituals and purification laws of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ but the moral laws are still applicable in our times. Sexuality is created by God and meant to be enjoyed by men and women in a responsible way according to guidelines given in the Bible. The destructive nature of sin that attacks God's plan for sexuality, has to be taken seriously. It is further emphasised that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, according to 2 Corinthians 6:16 e.a. Sexual intercourse during which two people become "one" is meant within the context of marriage and nowhere else. Men and women alike have a responsibility towards one another to abstain from sex before marriage.

The booklet provides clear guidelines to all above mentioned aspects of sexuality but also leaves room for inputs from group members conducting the Bible study together. In this way openness is created for discussion and expression of different opinions.



The following chronological literature review focuses on a selection of publications by the most popular and well known theologians and authors in the Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1981 J A Heyns wrote a book on the ethics of love. This publication represents the thoughts and ideas of the author himself, therefore presented as an "insight book". The book deals with aspects such as men and women representing different gender and sexual profiles. Heyns believes that sexuality not only involves a part of our lives but a total or comprehensive involvement in relationships. He elaborates on the framework within which love finds fulfilment, distinguishing between *eros* (love for the other for the sake of satisfying your egoistic needs) and *agape* (love for the other in order to enrich him/her to the fullest).

Sexual focus on yourself, e.g. masturbation, is turned down as sinful practice. His argument that masturbation is a sexual act without the other person and should therefore be condemned as sin, comes from a very fundamentalistic and exclusive theological interpretation. It argues that man and woman become one with sexual intercourse, only allowed within the marital relationship, and therefore no other form of sexual behaviour without another person, before or outside marriage, is allowed. The irony is that any sexual behaviour, even with another person of opposite gender, which is considered to be too physical,<sup>11</sup> is also not allowed until the day of marriage.

Remaining unmarried is not viewed as a sin. Every person has the right to make his/her own decision on this matter. This is a drastic change of view from earlier times in the Afrikaner culture when it was expected that a young person should get married sometime. If it didn't happen, such person was regarded with "suspicion" or talked about as if it was totally against the will of God. This view is connected with that of every person having

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<sup>11</sup> Most publications (including the one under discussion) focuses a lot on all the prohibitions and dangers of physical engagement when being together. Very few publications offer positive advice



someone “out there” whom has been “elected” by God to be his/her future wife or husband. Many people in the Afrikaans speaking reformed theological tradition still believe that God elects specific people for each other from the earliest days of their lives – some even before they were born!

To abstain from sexual intimacy (intercourse) before marriage is seen as responsible and ethically sound behaviour. Marriage is also held high as an institution of God and forms the basis for family life, enrichment of both partners, becoming one in many ways, etc. Marriage is meant to be an institution which should glorify God, according to Heyns.

It is expected from couples to engage in family planning<sup>12</sup>. It is viewed as one of the responsibilities of a married couple. Furthermore couples, especially young people, shouldn't be put under pressure to marry after it has become known that the girl is pregnant. The author suggests strongly that the child be presented for adoption if the couple don't have another way out. In the Afrikaner culture it was a very powerful discourse that a young couple must marry each other as soon as possible when they find out that the girl is pregnant. In Afrikaans it has become known as a “must wedding” (“moet troue”). The discourse conveyed the message that it is a disgrace for a child to be born outside of wedlock, because of marriage being an institution of God. Pregnancy should only come after the couple have been married because children are a gift from God to married people.

Marriage is no prison but also no reason for boundless freedom, says Heyns. It should be viewed as responsible behaviour within certain boundaries. The book motivates the worth of marriage for three reasons:

- 1 it is an institution from God;
- 2 it is meant to enrich people's lives;

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and guidelines to young people regarding their physical commitment towards each other and how this aspect can be managed in the context of their total involvement/relationship with one another.

<sup>12</sup> Depending on the unique situation of each couple, family planning could either mean no children, few children or many children.

3 it is meant to be the context in which children are raised.

Two years later in 1983(a), a book by D J Louw on reconciliation in marriage was published. This publication is meant to be read in conjunction with another publication of Louw in the same year with the title "Die volwasse huwelik", reviewed later in this section.

In Chapter 3, Louw deals with the essence of the marital relationship. Based on his interpretation of biblical passages, the author views the essence of marriage as being an analogy of how God meets his church. Marriage is further viewed as a covenant between two people involving mutual privileges and responsibilities. Marriage is not automatically the result of a couple brought together by God as a predetermination of some kind. Marriage is also no self-evident right of a couple but a life-calling emanating from God's grace. Marriage and family is inseparable from each other. It is a fact that today many families have broken up or joined together as amalgamated or extended families with alternative ways of functioning.

The co-equality or equivalence of man and woman in marriage is essential. Louw fortunately moves away from trying to typify and generalise features of men and women. The husband is called the "head" of his wife and with that is meant a focus on the total wellbeing of his wife as Christ is focused towards his church (Eph 5:21).

In his second publication of 1983 (b), Louw writes on the theme of what a mature marriage is all about. He warns against fitting people into boxes by typifying their characteristics. He then immediately falls into the same trap by stating that a man lives from outside in and a woman lives from the inside out. He says this means that a man interprets life more objective-rational and a woman more subjective-emotional. A man gives love to receive love. This means that a man wants to take the lead and initiative when it comes to love. My question would be if this refers to love in a sexual context or love in all its finer nuances as a comprehensive reality.



He says that a woman receives love in order to give love. She needs the nurturing security of love and the protective security of faithfulness to be able to develop and bud to her full potential as a woman. To me this sounds very mechanical and simplistic. This is a modernistic approach whereby people are typified and certain characteristics in men and women are readily generalised, mostly in an exclusive manner. The postmodern way of thinking would follow a more inclusive approach and acknowledge the unique "make up" or composition of every individual. It is a way of speaking *about* and not *with* people.

In 1988 a book was published on growth in relationship for engaged and married couples with the title "Naak en naby". In the beginning of the book, J Nicol reflects on the "traditional" marriage and family as having a few definite characteristics, which clearly reflect a modernistic viewpoint. The father is "foremost in rank" as the leading, authoritative figure while his wife is under his authority. The children are under the authority of both parents. In such a definite role establishment, the husband as patriarch is the undisputed leader and makes all the important decisions concerning the marriage and family. Society expects law and order and therefore he maintains it at home as well. It is expected from a mother and children to obey and conform. Father, as the "stronger" one knows what is best for all. Therefore nobody questions anything and communication is closed. No "soft" emotions are reflected because as a boy he was taught never to cry. "You must be a man!". The role establishment in marriage has fixed patterns. Father is the breadwinner and he takes care of discipline at home. Mother takes care of the kitchen and all other educational responsibilities.

On the other hand, a form of reaction to the above mentioned can result in chaos where everyone does what he/she wants and no one knows what is expected from him/her. Today the "companionship" or "partnership" marriage is very popular according to the author. Husband and wife are equal regarding authority and discipline and plan the structure of their marital relationship together. They become partners. All members of the family become part of the structure via open conversation. Guidelines are



developed according to which everyone's personality, needs and wishes can be taken into consideration. It is also flexible to adapt to changing needs. The focus of the family shifts inward for better understanding of one another. The wife has become co-breadwinner of the family. The husband is more involved with the children. Communication becomes a fountain of life for the family.

This form of family structure brings more freedom for all. No one is forced into a role but it also asks for greater responsibility. Nicol proceeds to ask what the Bible says about the so-called partnership marriage. She uses Ephesians 5:21-32 as an example of a passage in Scripture to explain something on the love relationship between a husband and wife. To understand the passage the following points have to be considered:

- 1 All Christians are called to submit themselves to one another.
- 2 The man is not called to reign over his wife but to love her as Christ loves his church (v25).
- 3 The nature of Christian love is that it serves.
- 4 The Bible is no statute book or code of law. It is the message from God that gives direction in this life on earth.

D J Louw published another book in 1993 as a couples guide to growth and enrichment. The third chapter deals with "God's plan for your marriage". The Bible often uses the relationship of Christ and his church as a metaphor for marriage. Ephesians 4 and 5 is used as basis for extracting guidelines and principles for a Christian marriage. Eph 5:21 reads: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ".

Louw (1995: 56) explains it in this way:

Submit does not mean that one dominates the other, but that you unselfishly serve each other with sacrificing love because your most profound motive is serving Christ with reverence and, through your marriage, setting an example of what love should be in your community/congregation.

The author places much emphasis on the uniqueness of the Christian and therefore on his/her marriage. Core Christian morals, values and acts such as faithfulness, forgiveness, respect, reconciliation, etc are essential ingredients for a Christian marriage. The rest of the book offers interesting and valuable questions, insight exercises, tables with comments on specific issues for further thoughts and discussion in-groups.

In the year 2000 a book was published with "32 secrets for real oneness". The author, F Knouds writes about building a tip top marriage. The author mentions eight main areas in marriage that should be managed constantly:

- 1 Manage your inner self (inner world) correctly
- 2 Understand the gearing of your marital relationship
- 3 Work out the differences between yourself and your partner in a constructive way
- 4 Discover and use the secrets of effective communication
- 5 Change conflict into growth/development areas
- 6 Allocate the romantic-sexual part of your marriage it's rightful place
- 7 Play the game of life together with your partner as a team
- 8 Let your faith determine your behaviour in marriage

He explains that all people undergo changes all of the time. You are influenced by the magazines you read, the conversations you have, etc. You are constantly busy interacting with the world around you and interpreting what you experience. Even within the same marriage a couple can experience it as a constant changing relationship. In post modern terminology it would mean that various discourses play an influencing role in relationships and social construction is a dynamic reality (see 1.2.4 and 1.2.5).

In conclusion, a brief discussion of discourses found in the literature reviewed above, will now follow. The discourses on love and marriage all represent strong modernistic viewpoints.

The discourse on the husband as head of his wife, is taken from the Bible and interpreted in the context of a strong patriarchal system. The cultural heritage of the Afrikaner has shaped and socially constructed the "role" of the husband to be more rigid and defined to suit the cultural and social practices of the community. Boys are expected to take a stronger stance in life than girls. Boys are not allowed to show any signs of weakness because they are the stronger sex. The physical superiority of boys over girls have been promoted for many generations amongst Afrikaner people but the emotional development has been neglected by far.

The discourse on women constitutes that they are of the weaker sex in all regards. Therefore a wife should be submissive to her husband and care for all his needs as breadwinner and head of the family. It is interesting that many publications speak of men and women being equal in marriage and simultaneously the man has the leading role in marriage. I am not so sure that *primus inter pares* (first amongst equals) is the premise from which these roles are defined. In society this is reflected in the fact that women were refrained from access into the "man's world". The dominant message was that the respective worlds of men and women are not interchangeable. Today it seems to be changing, although at a slow pace.

Sex is a topic that was treated in more negative language and warnings against the devil than revealing the positive and beautiful aspects thereof. Biblical passages from the Old Testament were dealt with in a very casuistic way. I believe that young people were actually led to be curious or guilty about sex because of all the negative aspects that were emphasised. The discourse in Afrikaner homes was that sex should not be discussed openly because it is a private matter.

All of these discourses will be discussed with the participants in order to establish if and how it functioned in their lives over the years. The literature review reflects the context in which the participants grew up. They were all submitted to the theological opinions and interpretations of their time. The



social and cultural fibre is expected to be rooted in some way or another in each of the participants. This will be explored during the interviews with each of them.

## Chapter 3

### INTERVIEWS WITH COUPLES ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DISCOURSES ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE

#### 3.1 A rendering of how discourses on love and marriage were constructed in the lives of each participant

The interviews to follow were conducted in an informal manner. Each participant is known to me and it therefore provided a comfortable atmosphere in which the conversations could take place. I made appointments with each participant individually. The interviews began with some measure of uncertainty but progressed well with time. The interviews did not last longer than 90 minutes at a time. With the second round of interviews, the participants were much more at ease and even started to probe deeper into specific issues in a collaborative way.

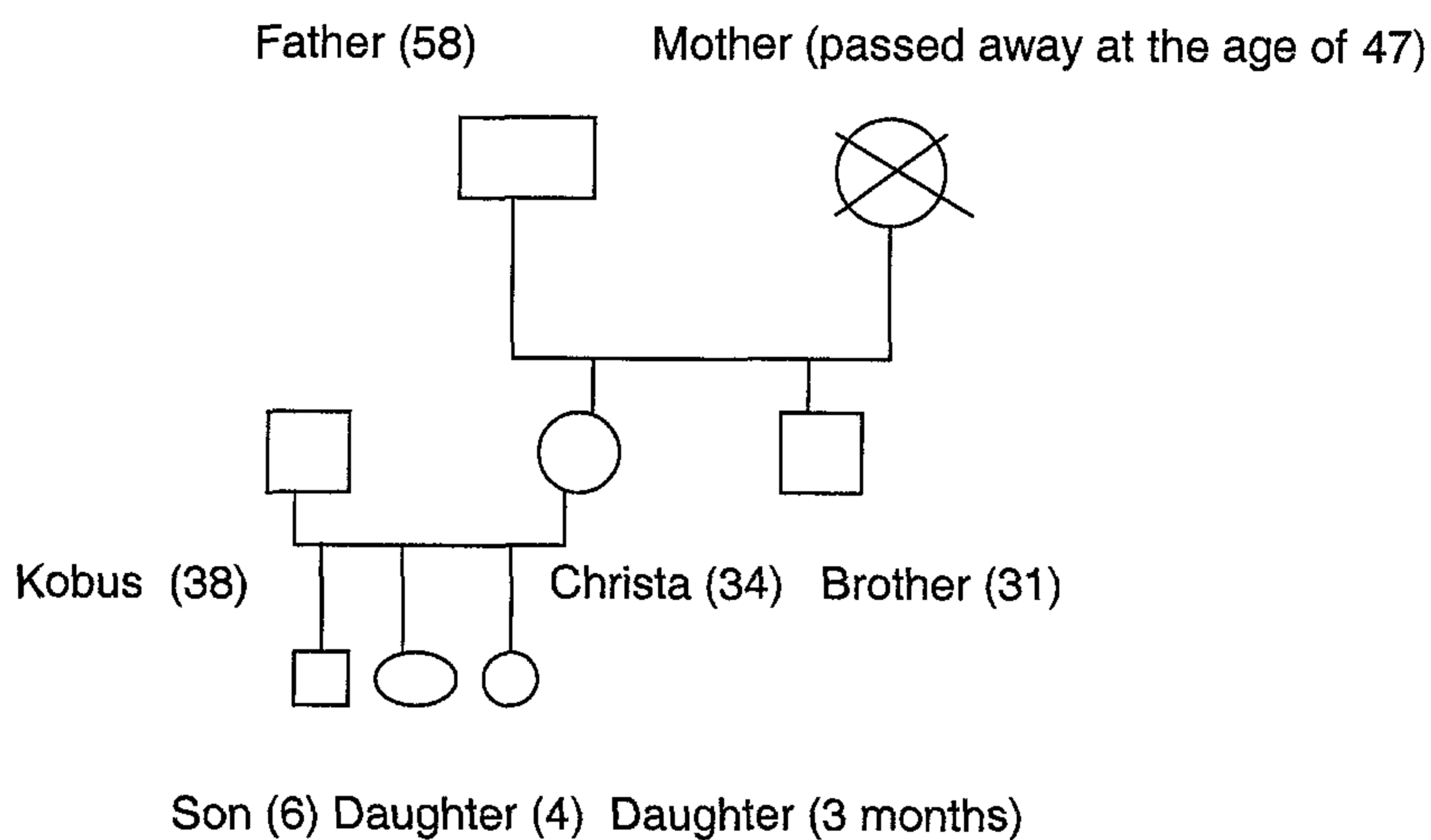
My reporting of the interviews reflect the views and interpretations of the participants. My reflections on what the participants conveyed to me relating to the theme of the study, will be covered in chapter 4.1.

One of the interviews led to pastoral narrative therapy with the couple, which is not recorded in this study. It should however be mentioned that the therapy sessions had a very positive outcome for the couple.

## 3.2

**Couple 1: Kobus and Christa**3.2.1 **Interview with Christa, a secretary, aged 34:**

We began with her genogram (including her own marriage and children) which can be drawn as follows:



Her father and mother had a very meaningful and exemplary relationship as she experienced it at home. She experienced them as having a loving and understanding relationship towards one another. They never had quarrels in front of the children and treated them with respect. This constituted a very positive image of love and marriage with Christa. She still treasures the positive image of love and marriage that her parents portrayed to them as children.

Asked about the discourses on husband and wife which constituted her parent's marriage, she responded that her mother fulfilled the traditional



role of “housewife”<sup>13</sup> and one who looked after the children and provided for all their needs. She was the soft spoken one, submissive, always concerned about other people and their wellbeing, always quick to say “yes” although it took a lot from her at times. She was very hard working and unselfish in her efforts. She was also a role model to Christa in many ways except for her “personality”, as Christa referred to it.

She believes that her mother did not have a very positive image of herself. Christa had great respect for her mother but she prefers to be more self-assertive and independent as a woman, wife and mother, while still acknowledging her responsibilities in the different roles she fulfils. She describes herself as “cheeky”, firm in her beliefs, a strict advocate for human rights and sometimes “dominating” in her way of handling situations/people. She believes that she and her father have much in common when considering the paradigms they use for life. The roles that her father and mother fulfilled in their marriage, exhibit the “traditional Afrikaner model” of the husband as head of the family<sup>14</sup> and the wife as the submissive partner. They loved each other very much and showed mutual respect in their relationship. Her father treated her mother with great sensitivity.

During her formative years at home the theme of sexuality was never openly discussed. It was a discourse of the cultural and religious community she was part of. Her mother would give her a book to read about the topic. She was invited to ask questions if she wanted to, but the discourse which encouraged silence and secrecy about sexuality, was too strong for a comfortable setting in which such conversation could take

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<sup>13</sup> “Housewife” in this context denotes the traditional role of a wife and mother in the home who is responsible for all the chores of a household and also plays an important role in the care taking of the children with their different needs. This however, did not replace the role of the father and his responsibilities.

<sup>14</sup> In most white Afrikaans speaking families, the man is viewed as the head of his wife (and family). This is derived from the Bible in passages like Eph 4 and 5. Most Christians in the reformed theological tradition believe that God instructed it. The understanding of what exactly is meant by “head” of the family differs widely.

place. Her mother did however talk to her about menstruation and what she should know about it.

Her peers at school also grew up in similar circumstances and they seldom discussed the topics of love, sexuality and marriage. They were not particularly interested in these topics and were also not exposed to situations where these issues would be discussed or focussed upon. They also did not engage in listening to the radio very much. Magazines and other reading matter on love, sexuality and marriage were not part of their frame of reference. She therefore knew a few "basic" things about sex but nothing more.

It was only when she met Kobus and they had a steady relationship, that she became more knowledgeable about the different aspects of sexuality. When she started working, she described her contact with other people who had other paradigms according to which they lived their lives, as being an "eye opener" to her. Christa believes that the strict way in which they were brought up, based on solid principles found in the Bible, was favourable for her wellbeing as a woman and mother today. She still believes that it pays to stick to steadfast principles in life.

Christa and Kobus had a relationship of 6 years before they got married. Christa did not have any other boyfriends other than Kobus and she doesn't regret it at all. She and Kobus have now been married for 11 years.

I asked her which qualities she found attractive in Kobus and she mentioned the following:

- His personality (the way he presents himself or makes himself known);
- His soft-spokenness;
- His caring for other;
- His loyalty, truth and honesty.

Furthermore she believes that the following aspects are important for a relationship to be meaningful but not necessarily in order of importance or priority:

Independence - the one must leave room for the other to be him/herself and also to enjoy hobbies, sport etc;

Trust in each another;

Love, described as caring for your partner, giving yourself totally and not wanting to live without that person;

Background is important for better understanding e.g. where you come from, traditions, language, faith etc;

Communication, especially "in depth" communication – "heart to heart".

Christa describes their marital relationship as being 50/50, which means that they treat each other as equals. Decisions on certain matters are taken as circumstances arise and the one best equipped for that particular situation will take the lead. They don't have "roles" cast in stone.

### **3.2.2 Personal feedback from Christa after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

#### **1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*It was easy for me to talk about the subject which I initially thought would not be possible.*

#### **2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*I enjoyed talking to someone who didn't know much about my personal life and of course to someone with whom I have a trusting relationship. This made me feel comfortable during the interview.*

#### **3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I discussed it in short with Kobus and came to realise the impact that a community/society can have on one's life if you allow it to happen.*



**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

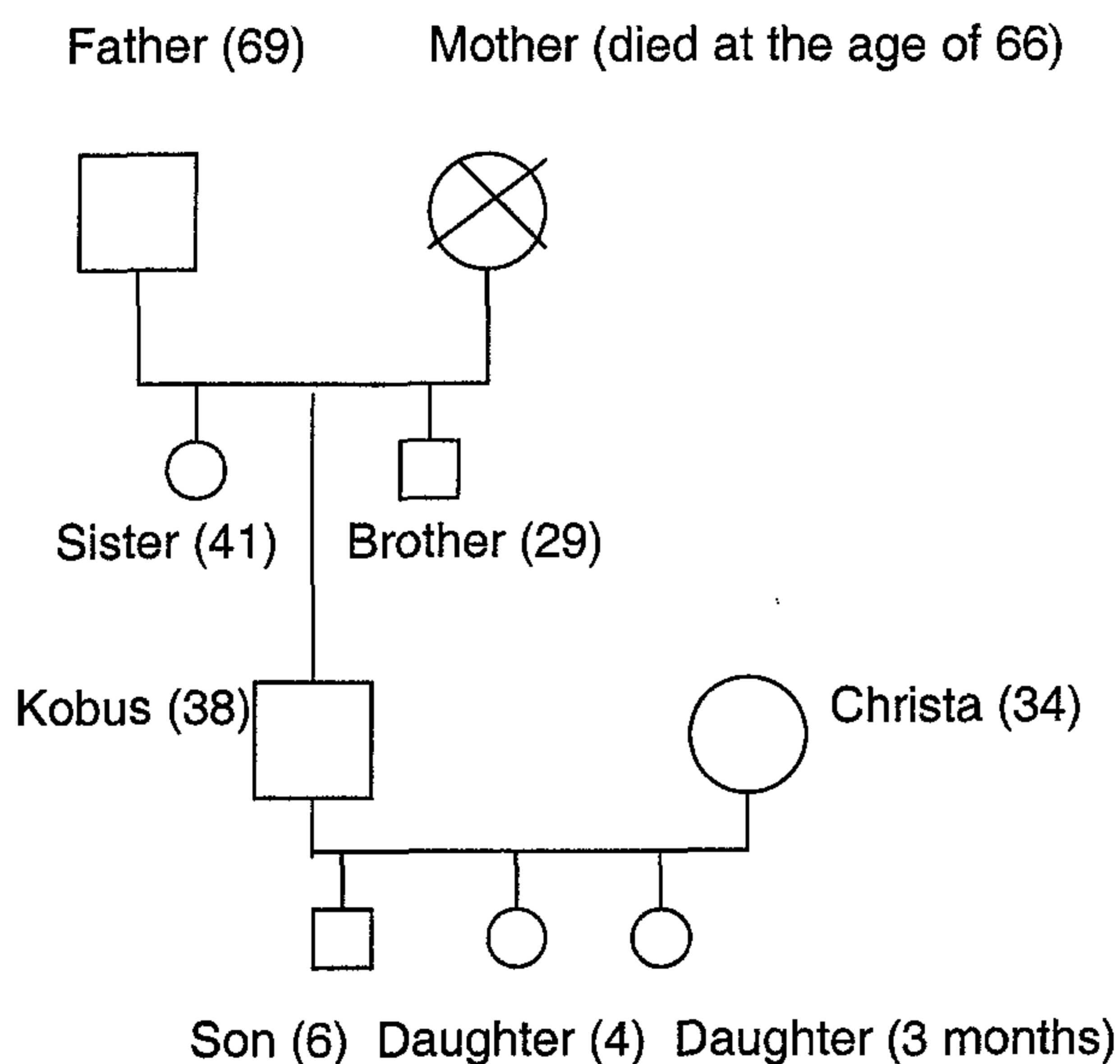
*I didn't discuss it with anyone else.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Not really, because I am not influenced by society and have never been, so it does not matter to me what the discourses of life are.*

**3.2.3 Interview with Kobus, an accountant, aged 38:**

The genogram for Kobus's family as well as his own marriage and children can be illustrated as follows:



Kobus recalls a very stable family situation at home and therefore a happy childhood. His father was the leading figure and head of the family while his mother took loving care of the family. She fulfilled the traditional role of

“housewife” and caretaker of the family. His father was the “breadwinner”<sup>15</sup> and did construction work for the Post Office. He was seldom at home but weekends he fulfilled his responsibilities as father and husband. His hard work and consequent absence from home was therefore not experienced as negative. He had a good relationship with Kobus and the other children.

During his school career his mother played a more prominent role in the daily lives of the children. Kobus’s father had a “man’s talk” with him once, which was intended to focus on sexual matters but did not address the issue at all. His mother gave him a booklet to read: “What every boy should know” (“Wat elke seun behoort te weet”). This was a well-known Afrikaans booklet in those days and the church also approved of this booklet, suggesting that its contents was quite sufficient. Kobus believes that this view is debatable. He did not have any contact with television in high school. They only got a television set when he was already out of school. Peer groups at school did not have a very strong influence on him regarding matters of relationships, love, sexuality, marriage, etc. Conversations varied on the subject and Kobus was never very impressed or interested in it.

He started dating a girl at school and continued the relationship during his “army days”.<sup>16</sup> The relationship ended after two years. He describes the relationship as one of being full of “hang ups” from her side. This ruined the relationship. He then met Christa and the relationship developed spontaneously. They could “chat” for hours and enjoy each other’s company. The “roles” they fulfilled in their relationship were never discussed in view of a decision to be taken. He believes that the roles he saw in his parent’s marriage had a great influence on him, although his marriage with Christa is more a 50/50 relationship. He doesn’t like the idea

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<sup>15</sup> The term “*breadwinner*” was mostly associated with the husband/father who had a career/job and whose monthly income would have to support the family. Today fathers and mothers alike are “*breadwinners*” in the family (being married or single).

<sup>16</sup> “*Army*” was the well-known term used by young men leaving school and doing their compulsory military training at different camps. After the basic training they would be placed in different camps and would eventually all do duty on the “*border*”, defending the RSA against “terrorist infiltration”. This duty kept many young men away from home for long periods (usually months) at a time.

of the man/husband dominating the relationship. He believes the emancipation of women is a very positive thing. Women are human beings in their own right and should enjoy the same opportunities as men to fulfil themselves. He believes that men and women should be complimentary to one another.

Questioned on how he experienced this role establishment, he said that he felt comfortable with it. He explained their role establishment in terms of strong and weak points in both of them and also combined strengths in their relationship. He explained that Christa is the one with the stronger "personality" and defined it as:

Knowing what she wants;

Her independence as a woman in her own right;

Her "extrovert" way of being because she expresses very clearly what her needs and feelings are.

Kobus describes himself as more "observing" and "reserved". He doesn't readily express his inner feelings. When he is amongst a group of people, his participation in conversations will depend on how comfortable he feels with them. But he is an "easy" person to get along with. Christa is the more impulsive one in their relationship. Kobus will take his time when it comes to decision making.

I asked him to describe love (in terms of what he views as important for a loving relationship, e.g. a marriage (not in order of importance or priority):

It is important to accept the other person as he/she is. Don't try to change him/her as you would like it;

You should be accommodating. Render space to your partner; don't keep your partner in a cocoon;

Cut out pathological jealousy;

Sort out problem areas before the marriage. They dated for 6 years;

Both partners must have the will to make the relationship work/meaningful;



Faith in the Triune God is an important factor, but not enough on its own to make a relationship work;

Mutual respect is of the utmost importance;

Love is not idyllic. You have to reckon with everyday living and the reality thereof;

He does not believe in unconditional love. True love draws boundaries.

On sexuality Kobus referred back to the role of the church when he was still in his teens. His recollection is that the church believed everything relating to sexuality was taboo and that sexuality per se was something to be ashamed of and not talked about in "decent" company. The church therefore left a negative association with Kobus regarding sexuality. With this he refers to sex education for teenagers and young adults and not necessarily views on sex within marriage. Today he believes that the church has changed somewhat on its view regarding sexual education for young children, teenagers and unmarried young adults but at large still follows much the same route. What bothers him is the legalistic way the topic of sexuality is treated and the negative focus instead of the positive which is placed on it.

A dominant discourse on the sexual behavioural pattern expected of men in society today, is according to Kobus that of the "hunter", which a man must live up to. The man must prove himself with a woman and always perform at a peak. He must take the initiative and leadership in all aspects. A woman on the other hand, should not make the first move or show her affection before the man has done so.

Kobus believes that sexuality is very important in a marital relationship. It brings two people very close to each other and is therefore a very intimate affair. It communicates a lot to the partner. Sex also makes you very vulnerable.

He doesn't read many articles or books on the topics of love, relationships and/or marriage but when he does, he measures the contents against his

own experiences, belief system, values and norms. He will discard of whatever he dislikes and take what he can relate to or assess to be positive/meaningful based on “common sense”.

Other discourses that we talked about were the beliefs that:

- (1) a man should always be older than the woman in a relationship,
- (2) the woman should not earn a higher income than the man and
- (3) the signs of the zodiac, also known as star signs, have a major influence on the relationship of a couple.

Kobus rejected all of them and believes that they are discourses that people live up to because of the powerful messages they convey in society. See elaboration on social construction theory, in par. 1.2.5.

I asked his opinion on sex education for children and how they as parents manage it. He believes that it is important to convey information on the subject to children in a controlled environment. With this he refers to a stable family life based on Christian norms and values. Most of their friends are very vague about the matter, especially when it involves their own children. Kobus believes that many people are uncertain about how to convey matters of sexuality to children as they grow up and experience different stages of their life. He also believes that education of children on relationship matters is neglected during the formative years. This should involve all aspects of relationships and not only sexuality.

### **3.2.4 Personal feedback from Kobus after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

#### **1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*The interview was a strange experience to me. It wasn't easy to talk about intimate affairs. It could be because of the idea that we as “Afrikaners” are not allowed to talk about “such things”.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*Initially I was quite uncomfortable. If it wasn't for the fact that I know and trust the interviewer, I wouldn't have been so open to the questions.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I broadly discussed the interview with Christa. We initially decided not to do it but were too curious.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*I didn't share anything with other people but I am now more aware of discourses that exist.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses, which could have an impact/influence on your life?**

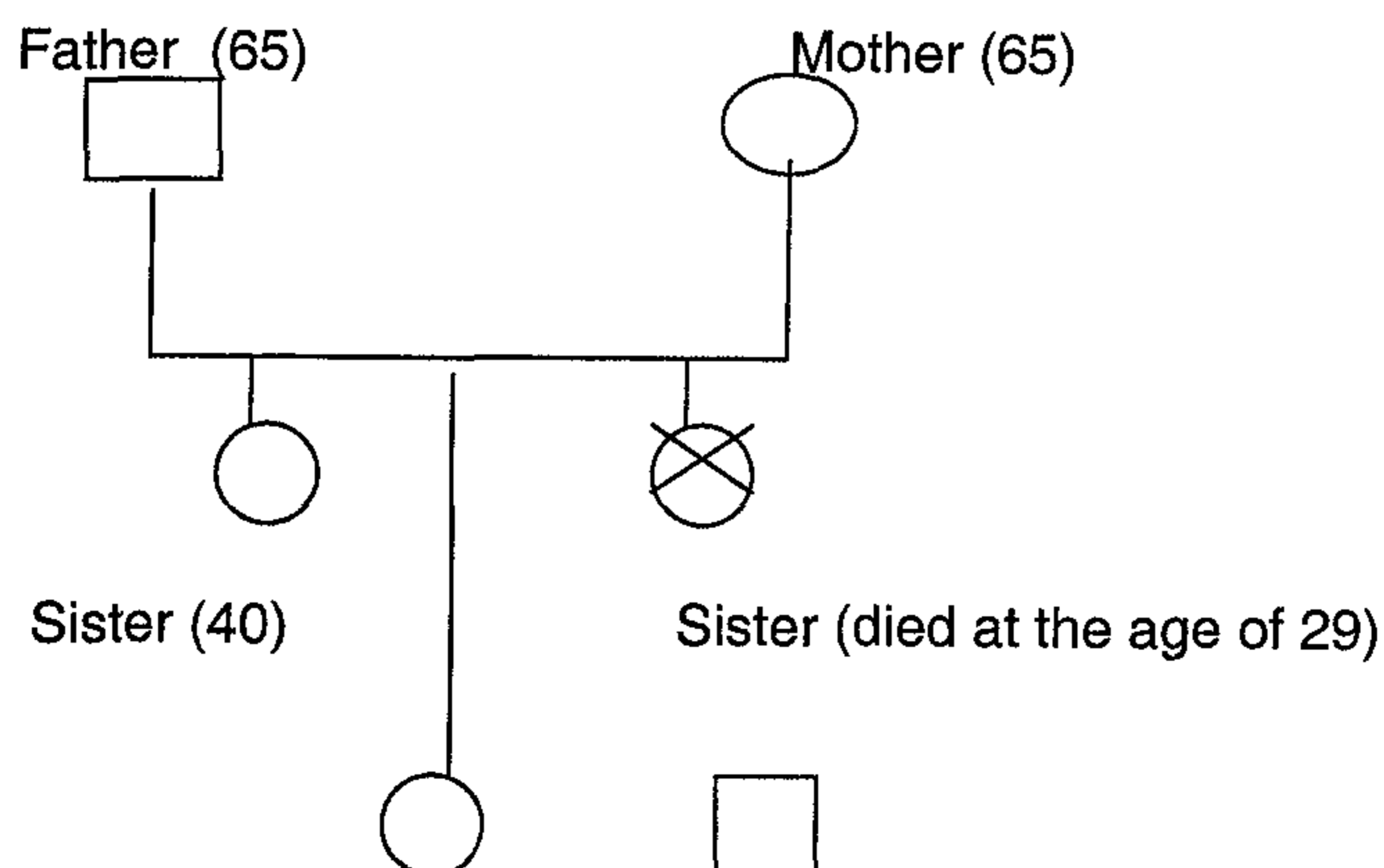
*Yes.*

**3.3**

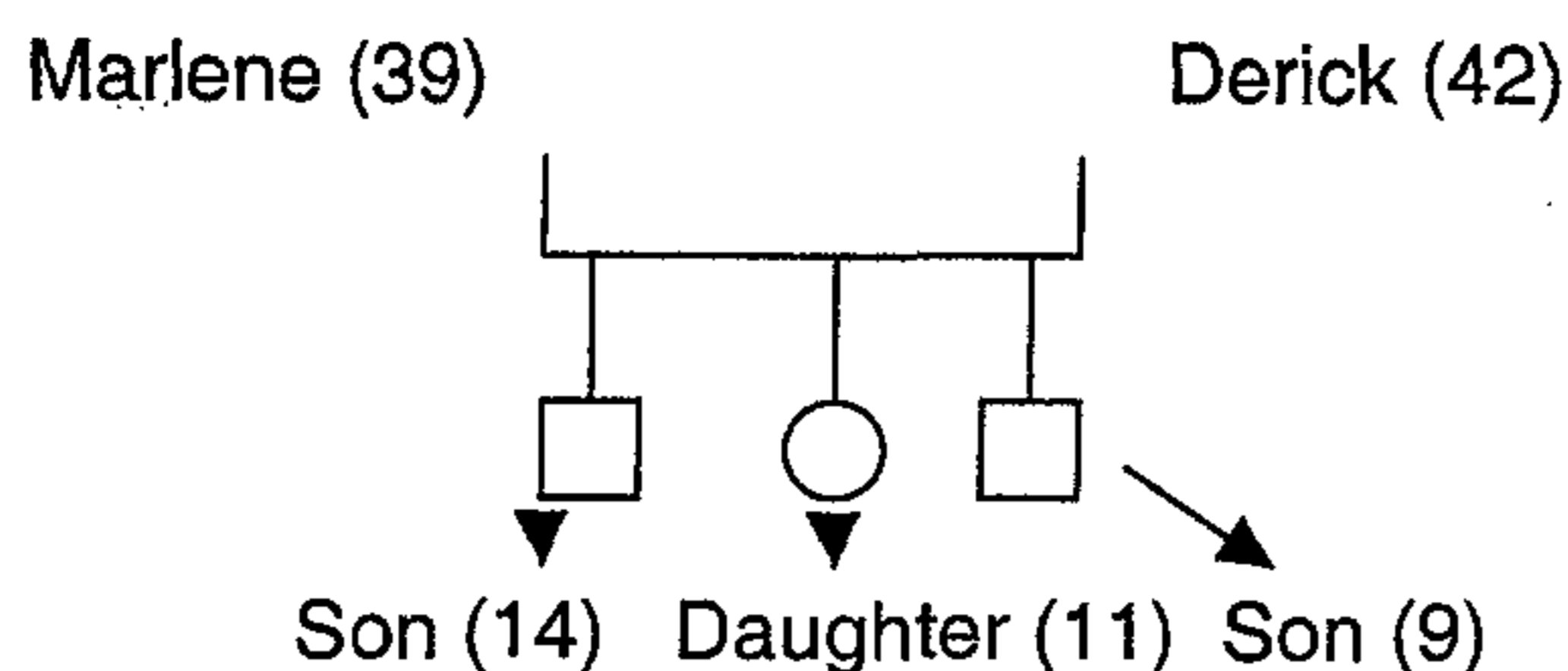
**Couple 2: Marlene and Derick**

**3.3.1 Interview with Marlene, a school teacher, aged 39**

The genogram of Marlene's immediate family as well as her own marriage and children can be shown as follows:







Marlene grew up in a home, which she describes as “ordinary”. With that she means that they had a peaceful setting at home, parents who were happy together, two sisters with whom she related very well and roles at home that were well defined. Both her parents were teachers. They moved to a farm from the time that Marlene was in standard 7 (grade 9) where her father was a part time farmer besides a full teaching post at school. They lived in a community of Afrikaans speaking people, mostly farmers. The traditional “Afrikaner way” of living was upheld in their day to day living. They would attend church services every Sunday and be active participants in church activities. This is a very short background of the cultural and religious setting in which she grew up.

Marlene experienced the relationship between her father and mother as meaningful. She describes their marriage as happy although she thinks that her mother was not always happy with the traditional role she had to fulfil. By this she means that her father fulfilled the role of head of the family and her mother was the submissive one who kept the household running with all the chores it demanded.

Marlene also describes the atmosphere at home as having been very “formal”. There were definite rules to be obeyed and the bedroom of her parents for example, was not an accessible area for them as children. The family members would not touch or hug each other much but did however show respect and sensitivity towards one another. In this regard they were quite reserved. Sexuality was never a topic that was talked about or discussed at home or in the company of other people. Her parents also did not talk to them about sexuality as children. It was a taboo subject and therefore no sex education was conducted at home.

She believes the church also avoided the subject and gave little or no guidance to children and young adults. The theological or dogmatic discourse on sexuality in the Afrikaans churches of reformed tradition was one of negativity and avoidance of the subject. With the close link of church and community/family life, this view was obviously adopted by parents in treating the subject as if it did not exist, according to her.

At school the subject was also not addressed because it was not part of the education curriculum. Children at school did not really converse about the theme, at least not amongst Marlene's friends/peer group. She describes herself as being very conservative during her schooling years. She wasn't bothered about the topic of sexuality but was "constantly in love". She wrote about it and would cherish love and affection as a valuable inner experience. The endless romance was enough for her.

She has never seen a pornographic magazine in her entire life and is very grateful for that. According to her, she discovered sex in the most wonderful way - through experience in her marriage. She has a very positive feeling about this and about herself as a woman. She does believe that her mother had some significant role to play in this regard. She also realises that she was brought up in a very protective environment. Young people today are exposed to many different portrayals of sexuality and not all of them in a positive way. She is aware of the fact that her own children are also exposed to magazines, films, videos, music etc, which she didn't have as a child. The positive side to this is that it stimulates parents and children to talk about it, although it still remains difficult.

Her own experience as a teenager was very positive. She was a good leader at school and did things that she enjoyed. She had a very positive attitude towards life and all its challenges. Academically she also excelled. In spite of all this she did not have a positive self-image. She didn't, and still doesn't, believe that she has outstanding qualities and talents as a person.

But she also believes that she is “finding” herself more and more, being surer of who she is and wants to be.

Marlene went to hostel in standard 7, grade 9 as it is known today. She got to know Derick when she was in standard 4/grade 6. Their friendship grew over the years and they started dating in high school. They got married in 1982 when she was 21 years old and Derick 24. They have three children.

Marlene describes the roles that they fulfil in their marriage as 50/50 although she believes that her husband is the head of the home and has the final say on matters. Derick, however, does not dominate her in the relationship but leaves room for discussion/consultation in order for them to reach mutual agreement on matters.

On matters that touch the inner self, Marlene doesn't open up easily. She doesn't share her feelings as freely as Derick does. She believes that she is an easy person to get along with. She describes herself as phlegmatic<sup>17</sup> and someone who always seeks peace in her life and surroundings.

I asked her if she believed that a person can be like his/her mother or father in the way he/she acts, thinks or believes, etc. I asked this question because it is heard many times in conversations that people refer to the “fact”<sup>18</sup> that, for example, someone abuses alcohol because the father or mother was an alcoholic, or a woman marries a man who fits the characteristics of her father, etc. She answered that it is possible and it does happen. What is important however, is that you should be able to recognise it as such. Marlene believes the way you were brought up does play an important role in your life. You should however, deliberately make

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<sup>17</sup> The term *phlegmatic* (together with sanguine, choleric and melancholic) is used in psychology as indicator of a certain personality or temperament. It dates back to 450 AD when Empedocles divided personalities/temperaments into 4 categories according to the four cosmic elements: earth, water, fire and air/wind. The phlegmatic “type” would then be someone who is “easy going” and adaptable to situations.

<sup>18</sup> It is often heard that people in conversations refer to common “beliefs” that are not tested or proved in any way. They are rather based on assumptions, prejudices or ignorance and then propagated as “truth” or “fact”.



your own judgements and decisions on what you are comfortable with according to your set of values and beliefs.

Marlene describes love or a loving relationship between a husband and wife as having the following qualities (not in order of importance or priority):

Companionship;

Sexuality (holistic sense);

Mutual respect and trust;

That "warm feeling" or "butterflies in the stomach";

A religious foundation which is very important;

Doing things together and assisting one another, for example in raising the children.

Marlene was requested to give her opinion on sex education for children. She believes that enough literature is available on the subject. She can think of several publications written from a Christian perspective. The problem however, is that no publication alone can be sufficient. The child wants a conversation on the matter, especially with the parents. She believes that they are well informed but they want the real facts from their parents. Parents surely have enough knowledge on the topic but could be shy or hesitant to talk about it with their children. The few times she talked about the topic with other parents, made her realise that people talk about it much more freely than 20 years ago. It is not a taboo subject any more.

She also believes that sex education should stretch much further than mere physiological knowledge of the human body. These aspects come naturally. It is actually the delicately entwined combination of emotion, love, respect, moral values, commitment, etc that make it a very complex matter. She doesn't believe that preaching to children or young adults will help much. They must see and experience these facets in the family home. The church also has an enormous task and responsibility to teach children and young people these values.

She is not too sure that young people (especially teenagers) always want to hear about sex. She recently saw a television programme called "7<sup>th</sup> heaven" in which the topic of sexuality, involving and addressing children in a family setting was conveyed with excellence. She believes that the media can contribute positively towards sex education but it happens rarely.

It often occurs that many parents, and the church, warn so much against the dangers of unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, etc that the wonder and beauty of sexuality is suppressed or ignored which drives young people to experiment and find out for themselves.

**3.3.2 Personal feedback from Marlene after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*I enjoyed the interview but was a bit nervous in the beginning.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*I don't really like it. I would rather have been at the other side of the table asking the questions! I feel uncomfortable when I have to speak about myself.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*Nothing at all.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

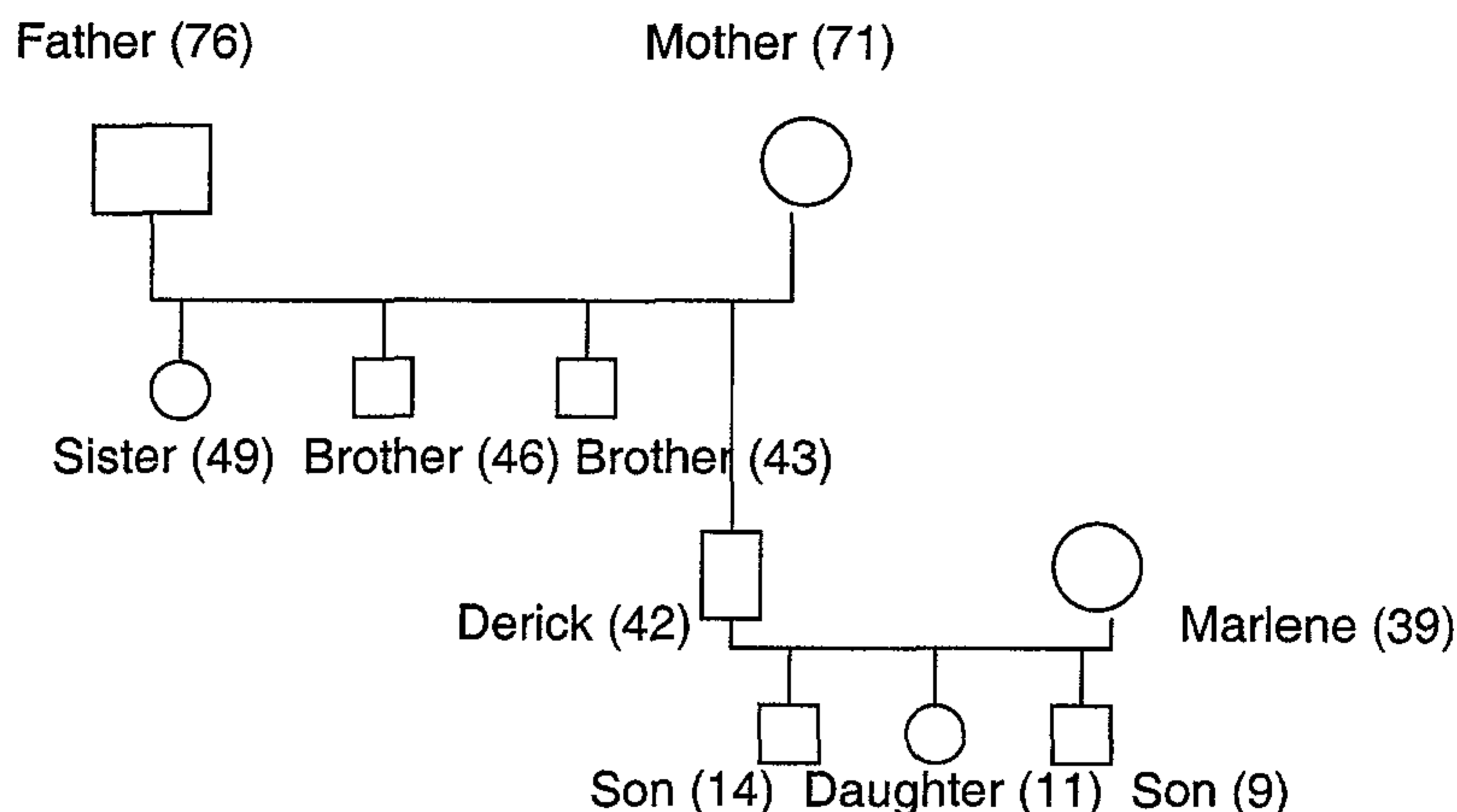
*Nothing. I suppose I still needed some time to think it over.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses, which could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Yes.*

### 3.3.3 Interview with Derick, a minister of religion, aged 42

We started our conversation with the genogram of his parents, sister and brothers (and also his own marriage and children):



Derick grew up in a traditional Afrikaner family ("Boeregesin" <sup>19</sup>). He describes it as very conservative, meaning that they upheld all the traditions and customs/practices of people who consider themselves to be Afrikaners (see footnote 8, page 39). They lived on a stud cattle farm. They were part of a broader farming community of Afrikaans speaking people with the same values, religious views/convictions, customs, etc. He remembers a very sociable lifestyle which involved friends and family getting together all of the time. There were always visitors at their home or they would visit other people. He experienced their family life as very happy

<sup>19</sup> "Boeremense" is a term, which refers to people who are mostly of European origin (a few generations ago) and who made their living out of farming. Afrikaans is the language that they speak and it developed with time mainly from Dutch and in some ways, German. Characteristic of "Afrikaners" or "Boeremense" (referring to the farming background of earlier Afrikaans speaking communities) is their hospitality, love for outdoor living, preparing food on an open fire, a very strong church orientated lifestyle such as attending church services on Sundays and other church activities, a very close knit community orientated lifestyle with regular get-togethers of families and friends, very strong ideas/opinions on politics which was closely combined with church dogma, etc.



and fulfilling, although he also learnt a lot about how things should not be done.

He also describes their involvement in the church as traditionally Dutch Reformed<sup>20</sup>. Biblical norms and values, (as interpreted and established by reformed theology – JL), were upheld in their day-to-day living. Church traditions such as women wearing hats to church and ministers wearing black suits and white ties were very strictly upheld and no deviation from these institutional customs was tolerated.

The strict obedience to sabbatical laws was a very powerful theological discourse in their lives. No work or any other activities that could be associated with anything usually done during the rest of the week, was allowed on Sundays.

Derick's parents also come from the same background and they transferred this to their children. The marital relationship between Derick's father and mother could however, according to him, not be described as "traditional" where the husband is the strong and leading figure in the marriage. His mother played a strong, leading role in the household and took most of the decisions. She has a very loud and strong voice as well which Derick believes expresses something of the way she presents herself in relationships. She was the eldest of six children and her husband was the youngest of four.

His father could be described as a storyteller who can keep a large group of people entertained with his art of telling stories. That made him the point of attraction during such events. His father (and other members of the family) suffered a serious vehicle accident, which left him unconscious for some

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<sup>20</sup> Afrikaans speaking people in general (but especially the farming community) were mostly members of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*). Women were not allowed to fill official clerical posts and therefore the men were the decision-makers in the church. Every man would sometime in his life be a deacon (*diaken*) or elder (*ouderling*). It was considered an honour but was also expected of a man to be available as a deacon or elder. It was also considered credit-worthy for your career to be a member of the church council (*kerkraad*).

time. He suffered a lot as a result of this accident and lost a great deal of his self-confidence.

Derick's experience of his parent's roles in their marriage is the following:

His father was not the "gentleman-type", meaning that a "macho" image was to be upheld by all men if they were to be called men. Derick grew up in a time during which negative motivation played an important role. With this he refers to an approach whereby all the negative factors of an issue are pushed forward, hoping that people would then refrain from those negative aspects and automatically focus on the positive ones.

His mother was the one who presented herself in a very strong manner. She is also the one who could be described as optimistic while Derick's father had a more pessimistic view on life. Both of them were very hardworking and did not step down from any challenge.

On the question of how strong the role model of his parents impacted on his life, he acknowledged the intensity thereof but says that he works hard not to fall into moulded patterns or discourses which tend to dictate his life.

Talking about his marriage with Marlene, he indicated that he knows her from the time she was in standard 4 (grade 6). They dated for 5 years and got married in 1982. His philosophy about life and marriage can be summarised as follows:

He wants to be the best husband to Marlene. With this he means that he wants to provide in all her needs to the best of his ability;

He wants to be the best for his congregation (as pastor) and towards all people he encounters on his way;

He places high demands on himself, but also believes that he doesn't have a high esteem of himself (degraded self image);

He does believe that he received talents that can be used fruitfully and also strives towards that;

He gives a lot to others and very little to himself.

His description of what love is, is summarised as follows:

Placing the interest of others in the first place (unselfishness);

To be without reservations;

Trust;

It must be uplifting;

Eph 5:26 ea. – to give your partner room to grow and realise his/her potential to the full as Christ would like it to be according to Scripture passages relating to this matter;

Derick describes the role establishment in their marriage as a 50/50 partnership. He is the “head” of the family and Marlene creates the environment for him to be just that. He takes note of her opinion on different matters and they take collaborative decisions. Marlene expresses strong viewpoints on certain matters and Derick acknowledges it as positive. She is however, not manipulative in this regard.

A very interesting fact is that they have never had a big quarrel in their marriage of 19 years. Marlene also confirmed this in my interview with her. Derick is not certain if it is always a positive feature although it works for them. He describes himself as a phlegmatic personality type (see footnote 16) which he interprets as someone who is highly adaptable to situations and who avoids conflict situations. He believes that Marlene is also phlegmatic (which she confirmed in her interview) but less than him.

Asked why it works for them, he answered that it could be because they know each other for almost 27 years and the fact that they made a commitment towards one another and they stick to it. He also named the following binding or committing factors:

The death of Marlene’s sister in a car accident

The heart attack which he suffered a few years ago



The serious car accident that he and his parents had when he was still at school

I asked about the discourse on sexuality he grew up with. He replied that the topic was not spoken about in public and reflects what other participants said, who were from the same cultural and religious background. The context of the stud farming he grew up with made it much different than for other children. He was used to watch artificial insemination being performed and the process of a calf being born. This made it somewhat easier but regarding sex education as children, his parents gave them two 45" singles<sup>21</sup> to listen to.

The discourse on sexuality was however a taboo in any terms. The parents did not attend to this matter in educating the children by way of personal talks. Derick experienced a mixture of uncertainty and guilt feelings concerning sexuality. He heard a lot about it from friends (peer groups) at school – positive and negative. His older brother did attend to the subject by way of talking to Derick somewhat but it was not sufficient. He had to gain knowledge all on his own on the subject of sexuality. He wrestled with this for many years. Later in his life he was disillusioned by the way the church handled this subject because of the guilt feelings the church evoked in teenagers. Sexuality was not portrayed as something positive and beautiful in the first place but something that could be harmful and to be avoided by every young person. Once again, negative motivation was the way in which matters of vital importance were treated. The message was that faith or a religious lifestyle had no place for sexuality and this led to guilt feelings and much uncertainty. Derick believes that the generation 30 – 50 years of age is still busy with a process of disentanglement<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> These were 45-inch vinyl records onto which music was usually transferred but stories or other spoken messages were also available on them. Today the compact discs have replaced these records.

<sup>22</sup> With this term I refer to the process that many people undergo in trying to break loose from powerful discourses that were not necessarily helpful or positive towards handling essential life issues.

He believes that more publications (like books) on sex education are a waste of time. The percentage of parents who read these publications is minimal. Articles in well-known magazines are a better option. You attract more readers of different backgrounds, beliefs, etc.

**3.3.4 Personal feedback from Derick after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*I experienced it as very relaxed and I felt at ease with telling my story. I also felt safe while telling it and also being honest about it.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*It wasn't a threat to me. I think every person actually wants to tell his/her story.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I discussed it with Marlene and experienced how many discourses in my life surfaced again. It helped me to a better understanding of the current situation in my life.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*Nothing.*

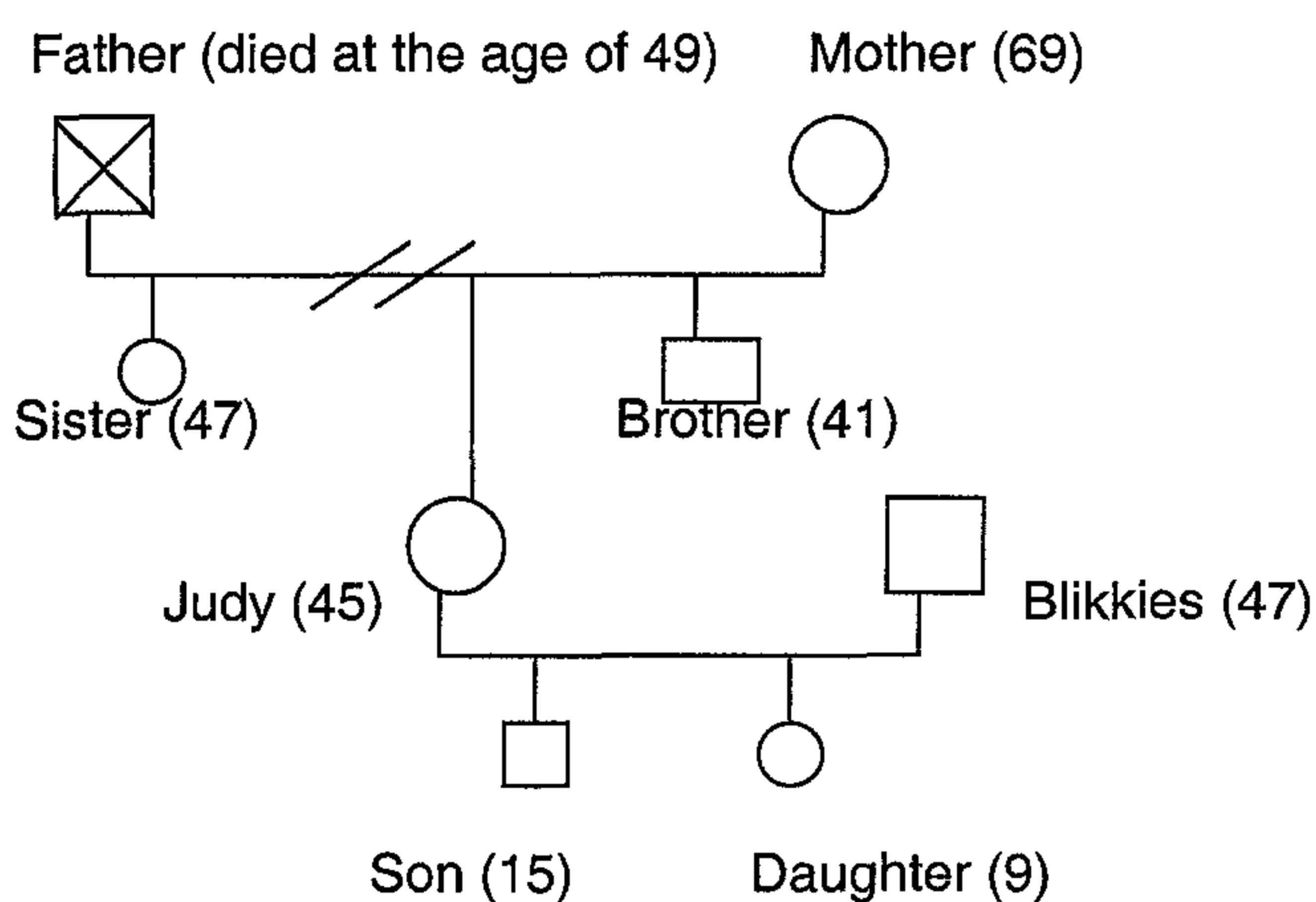
**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*I believe it did but due to the nature of my profession, I am constantly aware of discourses in people's lives and therefore also in my own life.*

## 3.4

**Couple 3: Judy and Blikkies**3.4.1 **Interview with Judy, housewife/part time typist, aged 46:**

Judy's genogram has the following composition (including her own marriage and children):



Judy grew up in the countryside amongst Afrikaner people with traditional Afrikaner traditions and customs. The whole community was like a close knit family and they all were very caring towards each other. Judy's parents separated when she was in standard 2 (grade 4). She didn't have much contact with her father and no contact at the time of his death. Her mother had to provide for the children and was therefore compelled to work. Her brother went to a school hostel from standard 7 (grade 9) onwards. He missed a father figure at home very much. Her sister got married at the age of 20 after she got pregnant. Judy says that she did not really miss her father or a father figure at home. She mentioned that she coped well without her father at home.



Her experience of the church is one of rigid traditions and views on different matters. Church, Afrikaner culture and politics were very closely linked and intermingled at times. She remembers attending church services twice on a Sunday, going to Bible study/prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings, and many more typical activities associated with church membership of the Dutch Reformed Church (see footnote 20, page 72).

Judy's experience of growing up in the community she described, is one of many rules and narrow-minded thinking. As a teenager she was very shy and part of a peer group where she did not feature very prominent. She didn't have very high aspirations to be the best in sport or to achieve success in a future career, etc. She describes herself as a very ordinary teenager. She was very naïve regarding a loving relationship between a boy and a girl.

Her mother didn't do much in terms of sexual education. It was a theme that was taboo in any conversation. It was always avoided and therefore children were uninformed about love, sexuality and marriage. She never talked to anybody about this at school. The first person was Blikkies when she was in Matric and he was at University.

The role of the church was very small in educating or informing teenagers on sexuality. The dogma on human sexuality was strictly Victorian<sup>23</sup> in nature. It was a theme referred to in negative language. Judy believes that the paradigm on sexuality according to the church has changed much, for the better.

She experiences it as a drawback that she grew up as very conservative and narrow minded regarding sexuality. On the other hand she is grateful for the high standard of norms and values she was taught. She thinks that

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<sup>23</sup> It represents the view that sex and anything related to sexuality should not be talked about and viewed as something very private. It is associated with Queen Victoria (1819-1901) who had strong views on this theme and even prohibited women to wear dresses showing their ankles because of the temptation it creates for men. The Victorian period regarding views on sexuality is referred to

her marriage could have been more pleasurable in the beginning if she hadn't had that many "hang ups" on certain issues, such as her shyness relating to her body and not being able to express herself more explicitly for greater enjoyment.

Today she eagerly reads articles in popular magazines on marriage and relationships, especially when famous or well-known people tell their stories on marriage, sex, role establishments and other interesting matters in people's relationships with one another.

Television shows have a definite role to play in her life because she learns a lot on how other people view and manage their relationships. She watches television talk shows such as Oprah Winfrey because of the many interesting shows on relationships, love, sex, marriage, etc.

Judy recalls that during the time she grew up, magazine articles did not openly discuss issues such as she previously mentioned. Television had not been available at the time when she was a teenager and even a young adult. It only became a public commodity when she was 22 years old. Radio talks at that time never discussed sex matter on the air. It was a topic that was never publicly discussed at all.

She met Blikkies when both of them were still attending school (the same school) but they did not date. In fact, she thought he was too impressed with himself and that did not impress her! Blikkies went to University and only after he returned home, he started visiting her. They engaged in a relationship that led to their marriage in 1977. Judy was then 21 years old. They both decided not to marry before she turned 21 but she was the initiator of the engagement (on her 21st birthday) and later also their marriage.

Judy believes that love in a marital relationship has many facets of which the following are some of the more important:

caring for your partner;  
being considerate even when it doesn't always suit you;  
having a sensitivity towards the needs and feelings of your partner;  
experiencing security.

When asked about role establishment in their marriage, Judy said that she is the one who makes all the decisions in their marriage although she is not really comfortable with it. In every decision or planning that has to be done, she is the one who takes the first step. She makes it clear however, that it works for them in their marriage. When asked how she would draw their relationship on paper, she said that she definitely stands taller than her husband does. He is one who avoids conflict as far as possible. She describes him as a "pleaser" who will never row with her or start an argument. He is also satisfied (so it seems to her) with initiatives that she takes. She acknowledges that she is manipulative towards him. She gets what she wants but not in a selfish way. It is mostly to the benefit of all parties involved in their family. She has strong convictions and will not allow herself to be "bulldozed".

Judy is not a person who takes notice or cares about discourses that try to dictate people's lives. She also describes herself as someone who seldom keeps anything to herself. Everybody knows exactly how she feels because it is very evident when she is angry or sad or disappointed, etc. She shows her feelings very clearly. Her self-image is positive and according to her, people can always rely on her.

Asked why Blikkies allows her to take all the decisions in their marriage, she says that he was the youngest child in their family. His mother as well as older sister, who was much older than him, took all the decisions on his behalf and he never learnt (or allowed himself) to take his own decisions.



This is what Judy believes could explain why it manifests in this way, also in their marriage.

Judy believes that it is possible to enact significant others, like people who play (or played) a formative role in your life, but she wilfully decided not to be like her mother at all. Her mother was very obliging and to the service of others, many times to her own disadvantage. Judy follows a very realistic approach in her life and is not very interested in world affairs or news headlines that don't come close to home. All of these facets have an influence on their marriage but the roles have been sorted out and established over many years of married life.

The influence of magazine articles or books on love and marriage is not significant in her life, although she reads a lot. She loves to read articles on these subjects and measure the contents with her own experience and/or values and ideas about it. The advantage of such articles or books is that it sometimes touches on subjects that she would never discuss openly with other people. She believes that sexuality and everything related to it, is not a subject to be discussed openly. The way she was brought up and the discourses on sexuality still play an important role in her life. It is an important but personal part of a marital relationship.

She believes that sex education plays a very important role in child education. She recently read an article on masturbation that gave the opportunity to have an informal discussion with her son who is 15 years old. She mentioned it to a friend of hers who has a son of 14. She bought the magazine as well to read more about it. She is of the opinion that sex education should be conducted in a holistic sense. Children think that sex only involves the body and hormones! They should be made aware of the emotional side as well. It seems that everybody is afraid of HIV/AIDS and venereal diseases but are very seldom concerned about the spiritual side of their being with a sincere experience of guilt because of sin.

**3.4.2 Personal feedback from Judy after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*Initially I felt unsure but later on it was very comfortable.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*It is no secret and therefore it didn't bother me. It was however a bit strange to tell my story to someone who doesn't know me that well. But after a while I was comfortable with it.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I discussed it with my husband.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

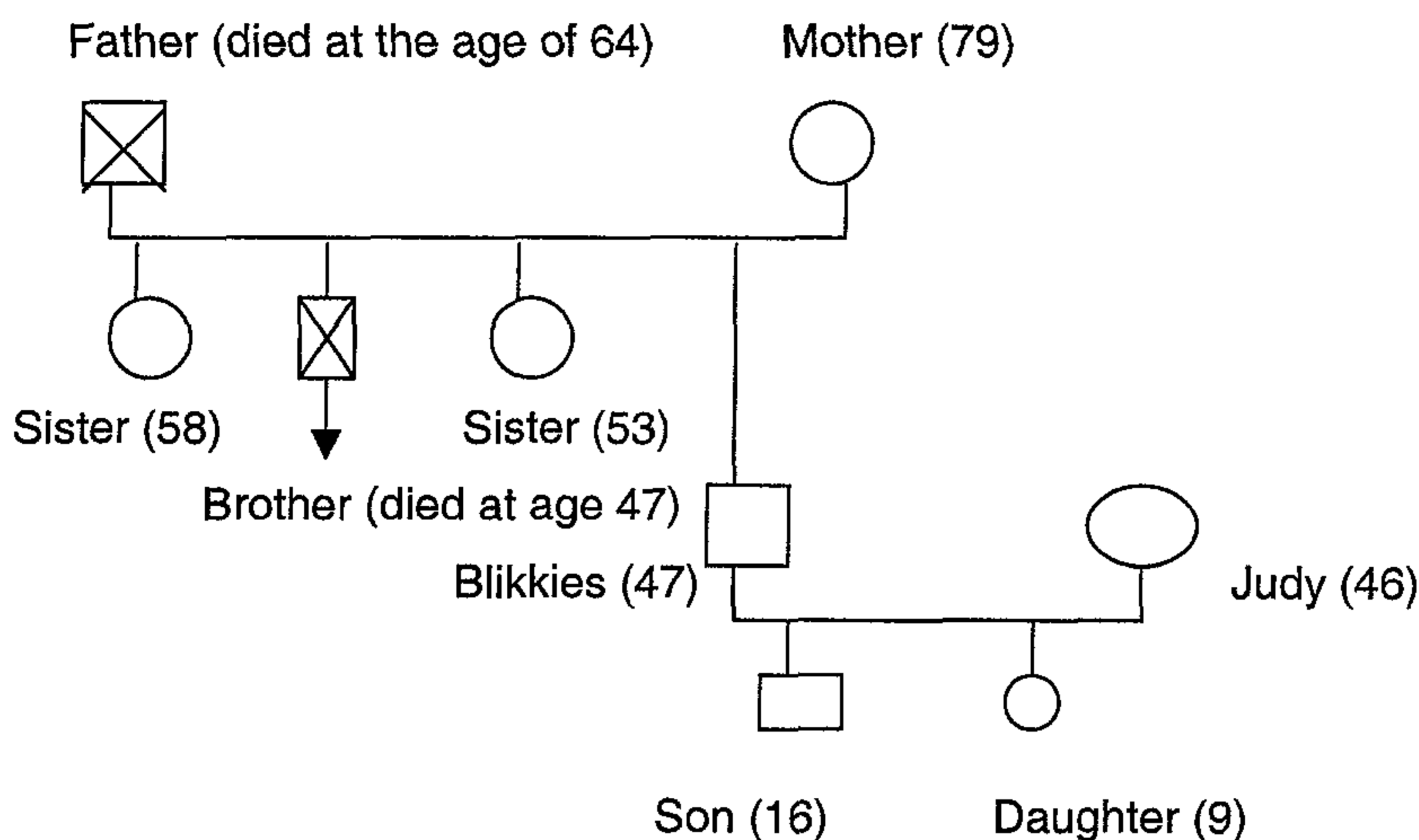
*For a period of time, very little. I thought I was not supposed to. Later I couldn't keep it to myself any more and discussed it with a few of my friends. As I heard from others who were also part of this study, I discussed it with them as well.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Yes.*

**3.4.3 Interview with Blikkies, a quantity surveyor, aged 47**

Blikkies was the youngest of four children. His genogram (including his own marriage and children) can be drawn as follows:



Blikkies grew up in the same environment as Judy – they lived in the same town and attended the same school and church. Their mother tongue was Afrikaans and they also upheld the typical Afrikaans traditions and customs. His father was very devoted to the clothing business and worked long hours in his store. He was the more dominant figure in the marriage, although he didn't talk much. His wife was the one who kept the household going and assisted the children with everything they needed. Blikkies recalls that the discourse on marital roles was very strongly based on the father as head of the family and the mother as "housewife". According to the Biblical understanding of those days, the head of the home is supposed to be the spiritual leader of the family but his father wasn't very active in church matters. He never openly or visibly expressed his faith or stance towards spiritual matters. Blikkies said that his mother was the one who showed her faith and participation in church activities. She also led the children in matters relating to the church or faith.

Blikkies and his father had a very good, meaningful relationship. His father was always well dressed and carried this over to him. Between himself and his brother there was not much of a relationship. His brother died at the age of 47 as a result of disease. The sister just before Blikkies was the "rebel" in



the family and vastly different from the other children in everything she did. She also suffered from an alcohol problem later in life.

Because of the age difference (11 years) between Blikkies and his oldest sister, and him not having a very close relationship with the other two siblings, he didn't challenge them in any way. His oldest sister took many decisions on his behalf and he accepted it as such. According to him this plays a major role in explaining why he allows Judy (his wife) to take almost all the decisions in their marriage.

This brought us to the roles that Blikkies and Judy play in their marriage. If he should draw a picture of them standing next to one another, his wife would stand a bit taller in terms of decision making and initiative in their marriage. (She was his first and only girlfriend and they got married in 1977. Their son was born after 9 years of marriage and their daughter 7 years after him).

Blikkies describes himself as an easy person to get along with. He has a way of communicating fairly easily with most people. He is very tolerant and says that he will probably test zero on an aggression scale of 1 - 10. These qualities are also reflecting in their marriage. He takes each day as it comes, which reminds him of his days as a child at home. In their marital relationship he finds it to be a disadvantage that he doesn't always stand up for his rights. His approach towards conflict situations is to avoid them as long as possible and attend to them if there is no other option.

He believes that he puts pressure on Judy because of "his way of being" in their relationship. Judy is the one who talks most and he will mostly listen in their relationship. Judy is also more expressive of her inner feelings than he is. He won't talk easily about how or what he feels/experiences.

His description of what love is, is summarised as follows:

A loving relationship should not be 50/50 but 100/100;

Mutual respect;

100% trust;

That “something special”;

Commitment;

Sexual relationship is important, however less so the older you get. Sex is a way of expressing love but not as important as above mentioned.

On the topic of sex education when he was a child, he shared the following. His mother conducted sex education at home. She talked to the children but did it very discrete. His mother believed that a wife must attend to her husband’s needs at all times.

His peer groups at school talked about love and sexuality and he got to know a lot about it, although much of it later proved to be wrong or distorted. The church didn’t have much to say on this issue and Blikkies, like most other boys of his age, was given the booklet to read: “What every boy needs to know”.

Today he has his own view on sex education because he has two children who need to be guided in this regard and the time we live in is vastly different from the time when he was a child. Children are exposed to much more public and explicit talk about sex. He is aware of a multitude of publications that are available on sex education but it is very difficult to assess which ones are suitable for your situation. The authors of these publications differ in terms of their departure point, scientific frame of reference, view of the world, social or cultural background, etc. It would be ideal for couples to read all of them before they have children but in reality it seldom happens.

Blikkies believes that an open, spontaneous relationship with your children is the best way in communicating issues like sexuality to them. The example they get from your own marriage is very powerful. It is necessary however to constantly guide them regarding the pro’s and cons of a relationship. No relationship is moonlight and roses. The media don’t

contribute much in portraying relationships that are based on steady moral principles and values. Blikkies says that he never knows what to expect when he takes his children to a movie theatre because even age restrictions are misleading. Motion pictures portray people in so-called love relationships but the main attraction is the physical appearance of the other person. Relationships begin with physical attraction and progress to sex within a very short space of time. These kind of portrayals don't contribute positively towards steady, meaningful relationships based on true love for one another.

**3.4.4 Personal feedback from Blikkies after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*I was comfortable with it. It made me think about things and see it from a different perspective. It also made me aware of the fact that I often think of our relationship in a certain way but act in a different way. The interview brought me back on track again.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*I had no problem with telling my story. Maybe because I see it as "a story with a happy ending". I am happy with our relationship and therefore have no problem in sharing our story with others. Through communication I can learn from others and also share my experiences to the advantage of others.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*Nothing initially, but later realised that there is still a lot to do from my side before I can claim that I am contributing 100% of myself.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**



*I discussed it with my wife.*

- 5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?

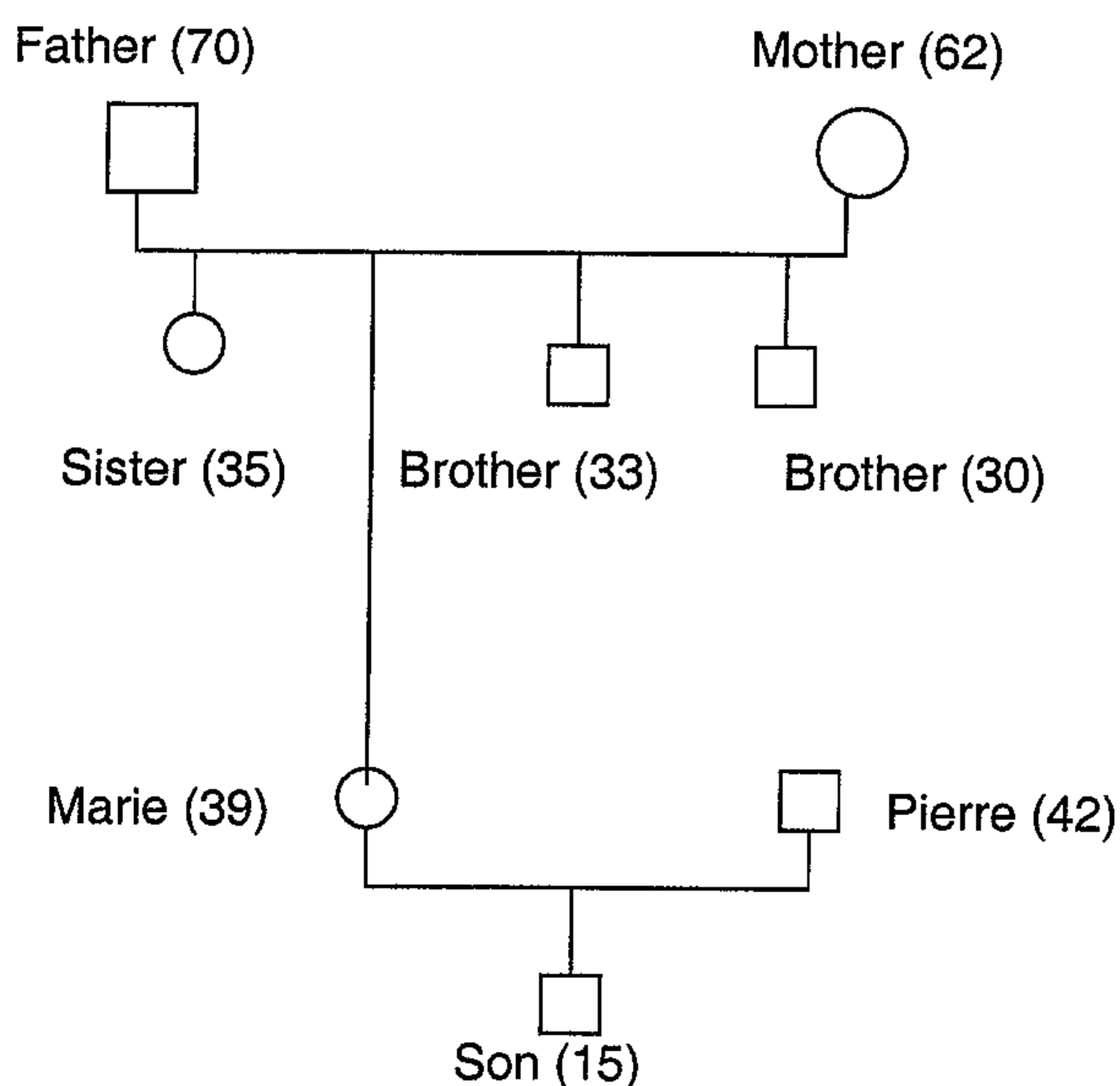
*There were certain things that I tried to change after hearing Judy's opinion on certain matters relating to our relationship. I wouldn't say that I have managed to really change, but at least it stimulated me to think!*

### 3.5

#### Couple 4: Marie and Pierre

##### 3.5.1 Interview with Marie, a secretary and housewife, aged 39.

Marie's genogram (including her own marriage and child) can be shown as follows:



Marie grew up on a farm in a community of Afrikaans speaking people, strictly adhering to all the traditions and customs associated with Afrikaners (see footnotes 18 and 19, pages 68, 71). They belonged to the "Hervormde Kerk"<sup>24</sup> with a very conservative stance towards liturgy, the keeping of the Sunday (sometimes referred to as the Sabbath), internal customs and traditions, etc. The whole community was Afrikaans speaking and a very close knit establishment.

The marriage of her parents also portrayed the "traditional" role of the father being the head of the family, taking all the final decisions and the mother being the caretaker of the family and household affairs. Her father is more introvert, meaning that he doesn't talk much, especially concerning his feelings/emotions. Her mother is the extrovert, who likes conversations and expressing herself. It is very evident that both her parents are very caring about other people and their home was always open to friends and family. She remembers a very happy and meaningful childhood at home with her parents and siblings.

She also recalls that there were strict rules in the home. All of them knew what was expected of them and they also had steady principles, derived from the Bible, according to which they lived. Marie believes that this way of life gave their family a sense of security and steadfastness. They lived within certain parameters set out in the Bible. The way they understood the Bible was influenced strongly by the Afrikaner culture, politics and church dogma.

Privacy played an important role in their home when Marie was still a child. This was also applicable to anything connected with sexuality. It was a

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<sup>24</sup> The "Hervormde Kerk" is one of three "sister" churches (the other two being the "Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk" and the "Gereformeerde Kerk"). All three churches have the same roots in Europe (Switzerland, Germany and Netherlands) but developed their own characteristics over the decades in South Africa. They all stand very firmly within their own dogmatic structure and

topic that was never discussed or even mentioned in front of the parents. The parents however, gave very clear guidelines in terms of what was not acceptable regarding sexuality, but never went into detail. They never openly discussed sexuality in front of or with the children. Their view on sex was negatively motivated because of the negative consequences it can have on people's lives, especially the girl when she is confronted with an unwanted pregnancy. Marie believes that it was better not to know too much about this. She didn't feel comfortable with this topic, in any case, she said.

In Secondary school (standard 6-10/now grades 8-12), her peers talked about it but was never a major issue to be discussed. The church's role in this regard was very small but as she remembers, it was positive. In spite of minimum sexual education, she matured with the years and experiences it as positive and rewarding within her marriage.

She remembers the following dominant discourses on relationships and love during her secondary school years:

A girl shouldn't be taller than a boy if they want to be a couple (Marie is taller than the average woman);

Boys don't visit girls in their bedrooms and vice versa;

The man is the hunter in the relationship.

In her own marriage the roles of husband and wife could be described as a 50/50 partnership. She believes that the role of her own parent's marriage is quite strong in her own marriage. She also believes that it is important to be able to raise your feelings towards your partner. She describes herself as extrovert because of the fact that she has the capability of expressing her deepest feelings and emotions. It is, according to her, important that other people know how you feel.

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viewpoint, and many attempts in the past to unite as one church have failed time and again. But all of them are well rooted in the Protestant reformed tradition.



Answering to the question of what she believes, true love is, she replied:

It is a feeling that comes from the Lord and He is the One who generates it, not you;

It is closeness/being close;

The sexual component is important; also to touch and be touched;

Mutual respect;

Allow your partner to enjoy what he/she loves;

Wanting happiness for your partner;

Spending time together.

She again underlined the fact that faith in God is a very important and conserving factor in any relationship. Family devotions are therefore very important to her.

Asked about negative factors in a relationship, she mentioned that mistrust and a lack of communication could be detrimental to any relationship. To build and maintain a healthy and meaningful relationship requires constant inputs and preparedness for it to *"work"*.

Marie believes that a false image is created and projected by the media on love and marriage for example the so-called "soap operas", and this affects many people. Fantasies are created with the aim of convincing people to believe that this is the way it should be, forgetting about reality. People then experience something different and become despondent.

She believes that times have changed drastically from the time she was young. Discussions on radio and TV, articles in magazines, books etc, are much more open and frank regarding sexuality. Videos, TV shows and motion pictures portray much more explicit scenes and discourses on love, sex, relationships, marriage, etc and it is also much more accessible to young people. It conveys the message of "easy love", "every body is doing it" and therefore it is "OK". Children are, according to Marie, exposed to sexual matters too much and too early in life.

According to her, this scenario compels her to think differently because of her Christian values and norms. Therefore she approaches sexual education as a comprehensive approach, not only focussing on the physical component. Christian norms and values are very important to her. She believes that the church is much more in contact with young people and their way of thinking today and appreciates the guidance given by the church.

It is not acceptable, for example, to provide teenage girls with contraceptives so that they can be protected against becoming pregnant. Marie believes the message should be that they abstain from sexual relationships until their marriage.

She does however, have fears of not being able to conduct this task as well as she would like to. She is open and frank with her son about sex and relationship matters, but keeps it on the level of his intelligibility. She doesn't give answers to questions that are not asked. She believes that education at home is a constant involvement with your child. You should make the best of the formative years while your child is still at home and under your care.

She experiences a need for reading- or audio-visual material giving guidance in this regard. She believes in constantly communicating with her child on relationships. And again, as with many other matters, faith is very important to her.

A dominant discourse that she has to face many times, is the "only child" discourse. Their son is now 15 years of age and many people convey fears of overprotection, loneliness, the danger of falling into the "spoilt child syndrome", etc. She doesn't allow these comments to bother her. Love is still the most important factor to her and she believes that she would have given her love equally to the other children if they had more. She is very careful not to establish or engage in an "only child" discourse with her son.

**3.5.2 Personal feedback from Marie after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*You conducted the interview excellently. I never felt uncomfortable with any question. It wasn't something strange to talk about this theme, but we seldom look into such detail on general issues that have a tremendous impact on the life of a person. The interview took place in a relaxed atmosphere.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*I was relaxed and gladly share my life with other people. At times it felt as if I am seeking to find fault with the role of my parents in my life, e.g. them being old fashioned or that they could have been more frank about certain topics, but still I wouldn't change them for any other parents in the world.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I pondered on the questions asked and the answers I gave, and eventually realised that I had grown as a person over the years. I now realise that I am not easily influenced and that I keep to my convictions. I also know that God's grace was my protection. As a young person you sometimes live on the edge of the narrow road. You can easily take the wrong decision that influences the rest of your life. I also made mistakes and took wrong decisions but I learnt from it. Certain things you cannot learn. They must be experienced. With age comes wisdom, they say.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*I believe that women, who give too much attention to disempowering discourses, have difficulty when they lose their spouse. Women should*



*empower themselves and be able to function independently. Actually I feel a bit tight in the chest when I say this because it feels like a door being opened for women to walk out of problematic situations too easily in stead of solving the problem effectively.*

*I don't take too much notice of discourses but I like the idea of not having to take all the decisions alone. I sometimes become agitated when I am not involved in certain matters, but will yield to suggestions when it is discussed with me.*

*Where do discourses come from? This leads me to ask the question whether God did not establish a few discourses Himself e.g. that the man should have the authority over his wife?*

*I asked some people if they thought that all discourses were negative. Many of them could not answer right away because they were head and heels part of the discourse and have never critically examined the effect or meaning of the discourse on their life. I came to the conclusion that there were a few discourses women accepted without asking critical questions about it, e.g.:*

- *The man is the "hunter"*
- *The man is the head of the home*
- *The man drives the car when we go somewhere*
- *The man pays the bill when we go out*
- *The man opens the door for a lady*

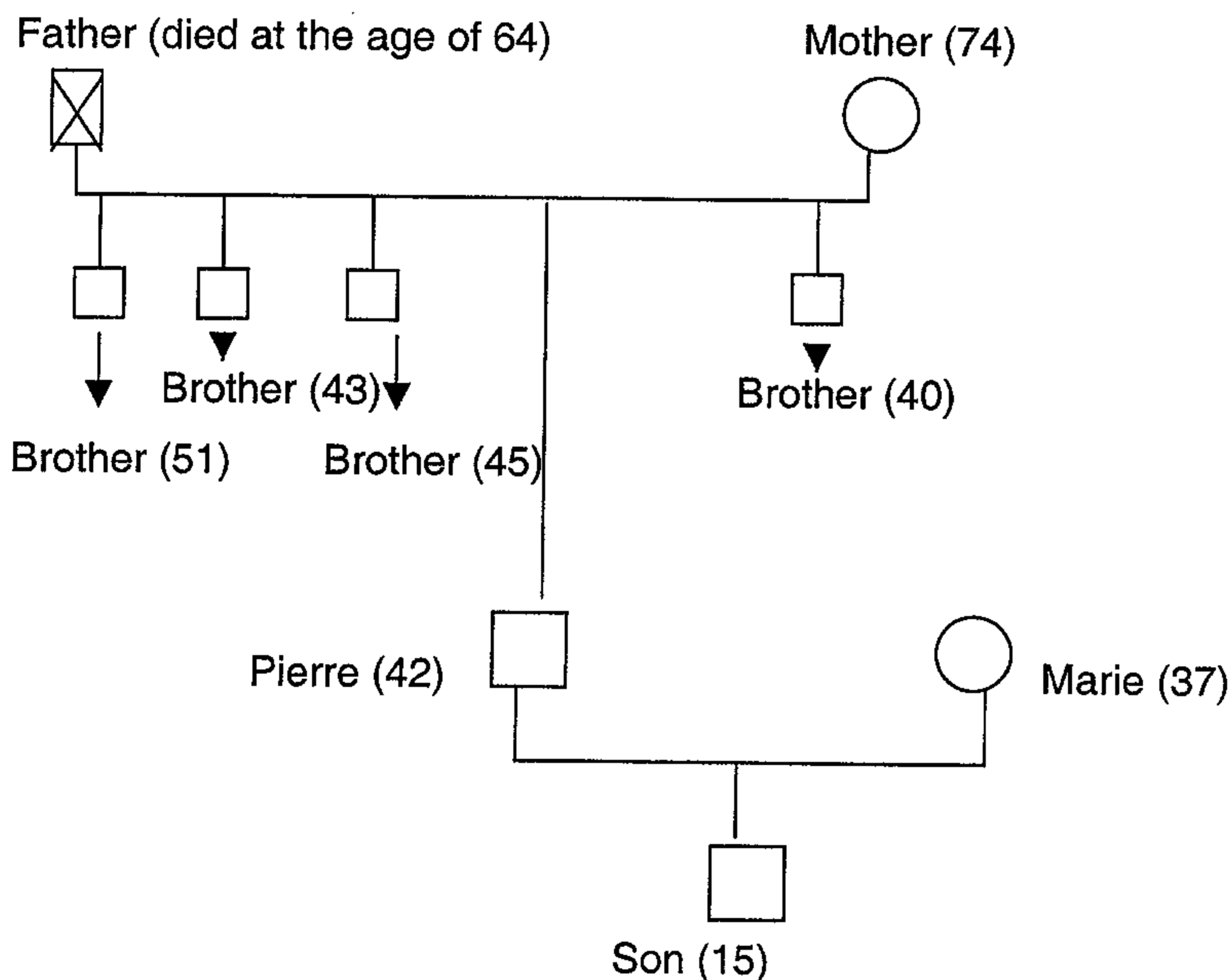
*It seems to me that women who do not follow a career in the formal economic sector (who are financially dependent) accept discourses much easier than their counterparts who are financially independent. I would be interested to know how the women of the Bible would have felt about it. Life must certainly have been complex as well in those days.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses, which could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Yes, I certainly thought about it and I believe that there are less positive discourses than negative ones. The discourses that I was exposed to, didn't have much of an influence on me – but I could have grown (developed as a person) sooner in relationships if it hadn't been for all the rules in the back of my head.*

### 3.5.3 Interview with Pierre, a businessman, aged 42

Pierre is one of five sons to his parents. Their genogram (including his own marriage and child) can be drawn as follows:



Pierre grew up in a suburban area where most inhabitants were Afrikaans speaking who strictly upheld Afrikaner traditions. This way of living was also portrayed in their own family's day-to-day living. His father wasn't very

involved with his sons and he spent little time with them. This doesn't mean that he never spent any quality time with them but he was someone who went his own way while devoting a lot of time to his work as an accountant. Later he established his own business. He wasn't expressive regarding his inner feelings. It was difficult to find out what he experienced and what his thoughts were.

As a father he wasn't very approachable when Pierre was still a child. Later in life, as Pierre grew older, it changed for the better. Pierre's mother fulfilled the role of housewife and caretaker of the children in all their needs. She was the submissive one and Pierre's father the head of the family. The brothers got along well with each other and Pierre had a comfortable position in the family. He grew up without experiencing hardships or battles in gaining a "position" in the family. According to him, he made life comfortable for himself. That is still the way he approaches life, he said.

Sexual education at home was "non existent" according to Pierre. He views it as negative because he learnt everything about it from friends at school. He would have liked his parents to inform him about these matters in an honest and frank way. The church didn't play much of a role in his life although he attended "Sunday school"<sup>25</sup>. His father didn't attend church services and did not have a very positive attitude towards the church. His mother saw to it that the children attend church services and Sunday school.

Pierre met his wife Marie in 1979 when they both worked for a Post and Telecommunication company. Marie attended his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party and after that they started dating. One year later they got married. Pierre was attracted to Marie's physical appearance from the beginning and very much in love. He admits that this was more important to him than her

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<sup>25</sup> "Sunday school" was the name given to catechesis (teachings of the Bible) which children from school going age had to attend every Sunday. Classes were conducted by voluntary "teachers" who spent time explaining the church dogmas and creeds to children up to the age of 17/18 years of age when they could be allowed to become "full members" of the church/congregation and celebrate the Eucharist.



*"personality"* at that stage although last mentioned wasn't a problem. It was a matter of him recognising other factors with time and realising what is actually important in a relationship.

With time he discovered more and more virtues of Marie, like:

her steadfast character;

loyalty;

faithfulness.

She also played a major role in changing his view on life and the church. He experiences this as very positive in his relationship with her as his wife. It was she who persisted that they attend church services again and devote their time and energy to church matters as far as possible. This proves to be very significant in both their lives today and is very positive for their relationship and the upbringing of their son.

Pierre describes true love as having the following characteristics/facets:

Adaptability;

To leave room for your partner;

Acceptance and management of the other person the way he/she is;

Touching and closeness of the person in totality;

Enjoying life together.

The relationship of Pierre and Marie has many ups and downs, as Pierre believes, happens in most marriages. He describes himself and his wife being different from one another like day and night. Although they differ on many aspects, they have a very special relationship because of their love for one another. Therefore he believes that "opposites attract". He furthermore describes them in terms of either "left brain" or "right brain"

orientated<sup>26</sup>. He tends to be more of a “right brain” person while Marie is, according to Pierre, a combination of “right brain” and “left brain”.

He describes their relationship as both “really caring” for each other in a sense of them becoming part of one another. He can’t imagine himself being without her in his life.

Asking Pierre about the way they handle differences/quarrels, he replied that Marie would initially keep her distance and not talk much. She moves into a “quiet patch” and only after some time speaks out on what bothers her. He angers quickly but also quiets down just as soon and forgets the difference(s) they had. He believes that people should, as far as possible, sort out their differences before they go to sleep at night.

Pierre can’t stand people walking around with “masks”, pretending to be what they are not. His belief and motto in life is “to be yourself at all times”. In their marriage he views it as important that they are a team. He describes their role establishment as 49/51, last mentioned percentage belonging to him! Being a businessman he believes having a 50/50 partnership is never a good thing! The arrangement as it is works for them.

Asked about the topic of raising kids in today’s society, he is of the opinion that people have been doing the same things at the time when he was a kid than in today’s world. It just isn’t being hidden away as it was years ago. The juncture we live in is much more open on subjects like love, relationships/marriage and sex. Sex education is conducted very different now than in his time. He believes that norms and values have become superficial and lacks depth. The availability and accessibility of information via computer networks has a positive as well as negative component. When it comes to the sphere of morals and values, the dangers lurk around

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<sup>26</sup> This distinction is followed by scholars who try to explain the differences between “*right brain*” people who tend to be very creative and artistic, not very bothered about tidiness or outside appearances (the way society expects), etc and “*left brain*” people who are more into linear thinking, well organised, placing everything neatly in “*squares*” and “*boxes*”, etc. This approach or view carries the danger of generalising people into categories and moulds (authors view - JL).

every corner. People (young and old) are being exposed to all kinds of information.

When it comes to sex and relationships, it is a major task that rests on the shoulders of parents to inform their children on these issues in a clear and appropriate manner. Pierre believes that he should inform his son on these issues in a manner relating to the Christian way of looking at it. It is no easy task however, because children are much more informed than we think. The information might not always be correct but they are exposed to information on sexual matters via the media, magazines, films, peers, etc. He is of the opinion that sex education should not start later than grade 5. His son has told him some frightening stories about sex that he heard from other children.

Pierre views it as very important that sex education be placed within a broader framework than physical or biological facts only. Every person finds him or herself in some form of relationship. A relationship between a boy and a girl should therefore be built upon firm principles of respect, good values, unselfish love, etc. In any relationship it is expected of a Christian that he/she should consider the other more important than him/herself. We must serve and not abuse one another. He places sexual education in a Biblical perspective when he talks to his son about these matters and views it as it important to convey the message that sex is not sinful *per se*.

**3.5.4 Personal feedback from Pierre after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*It was a strange experience at first because I never had an interview like this before, but being a person with an open mind, I was soon comfortable with it.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**



*I had no problem with it. It made me think about my life and relationships.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I gave my wife an extra hug. I also think that I have been more considerate towards her since.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*Nothing.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses, which could have an impact/influence on your life?**

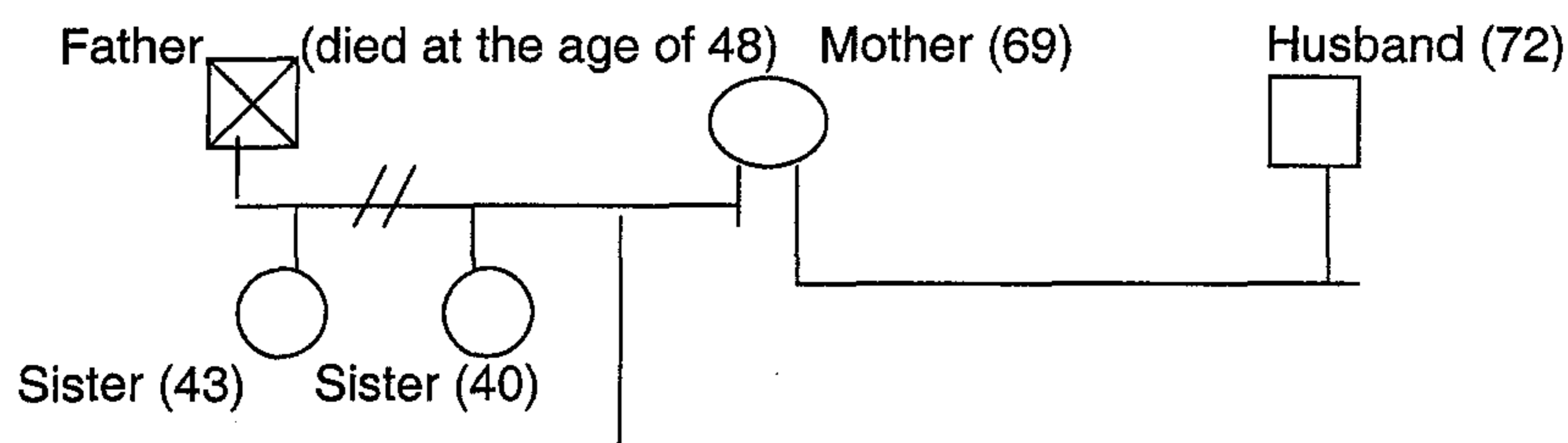
*It really triggered me to start discussing sexual issues with my son. But I must admit that it is still not easy to discuss these things with him. He sometimes laughs at me as if I am not telling him anything new. It seems to me that sex education should start at the latest in grade 5.*

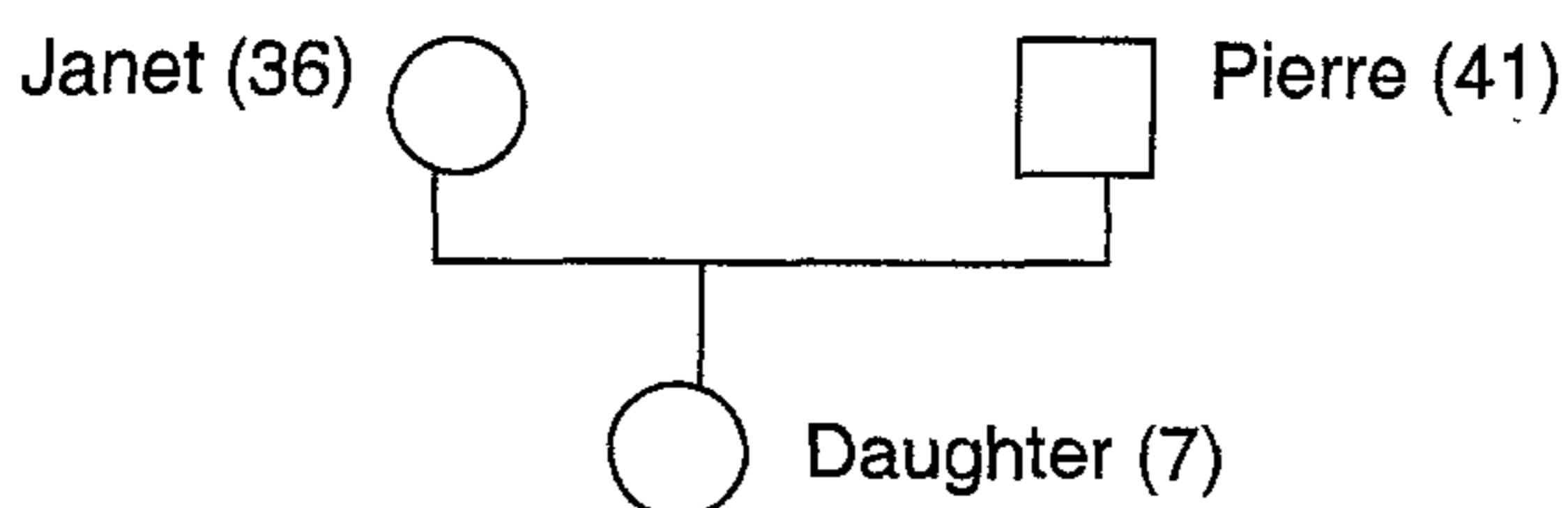
**3.6**

**Couple 5: Pierre and Janet**

**3.6.1 Interview with Janet, a primary school teacher, aged 36**

The genogram for Janet's family (including her own marriage and child) can be illustrated as follows:





Janet grew up in a typical “Afrikaner” community (see previous interviews and footnote 18, page 68). They knew and upheld the traditions and customs associated with “Afrikaner” culture. They were members of the “Hervormde Kerk” (see footnote 24, page 88) and were used to adhere to all the expectations of going to church services twice every Sunday and participating in all the church activities. The whole community knew one another and was very caring towards one another.

Janet’s father died when she was about 13 years old. There was a good relationship between them. The relationship between the sisters is also very positive and meaningful. They were without a father for a very long time. Her mother got married again but he was “oom Jan” (uncle Jan) to the children, although he is very good to them. Her mother is an introvert, according to Janet, because she finds it difficult to express her inner feelings. It also applies to her mother’s feeling towards her husband. She doesn’t show much affection in the presence of other people.

For many years Janet also found it difficult to express her feelings. She told me that she only managed to say: “I love you” out loud to her mother, when her mother had an operation in 1999. It was the way they grew up, she said. They were not used to being hugged or cuddled, although they loved each other. The expression of feelings however, was not given enough room, according to Janet.

On the topic of sexuality and relationships, the existing discourse in her younger days prohibited open discussion. Her mother never talked about this subject and Janet also didn’t get much information from her peers at school. The church conveyed the message that sex is taboo and also ugly.

This was a very negative way of looking at the whole issue and influenced children to believe that it was not really part of God's plans for his creation.

Janet had to read more about these matters on her own. She then had to decide what was acceptable to her and what not. It developed more and more as she grew older and got married. She is of the opinion that the lack of sexual education at home, church and school is a negative factor. It creates a lot of uncertainty and false perceptions on sexuality.

Janet and Pierre met in January of her first year as a teacher at Tzaneen Primary School. She stayed in the hostel of the school and knew no one in town. Pierre worked in Pietersburg and a mutual friend arranged a blind date with Janet. Both Pierre and Janet owned the same model car. When he saw her car in the driveway (before he saw her) he jokingly told the guy who was with him that if it was her car, he would marry her! The evening out with Janet went well although not one of them was very impressed with the other. Another evening out was arranged and with time love grew between them. As the relationship developed, they saw more and more of each other. They travelled overseas for a month and got to know each other under circumstances that were not always easy. Shortly after that they decided to get engaged and the wedding was planned. They got married in December of the same year.

Their marital relationship is a 50/50 partnership according to Janet. This way of conducting their relationship developed spontaneously. There was no deliberate planning or negotiating of roles before or during their marriage. She believes that Pierre should be the head of the family as the Bible refers to it. This means that he should be the head of the home in spiritual affairs without negating the role of the wife and mother. She also sees him in the role of taking the overall decision when matters were discussed with each other.

Her description of what true love is, is summarised as follows:



To understand and stand by one another

Mutual respect

Leave space for your partner to be him/herself

Mutual trust

Sexual part of relationship and the man mostly takes the lead

Janet describes herself as introvert, finding it difficult to express her innermost feelings and emotions. When they have to settle a difference, she will rather be quiet for a while rather than expressing what she feels at that moment. Pierre is the extrovert who doesn't experience difficulty in expressing what he feels or thinks.

Janet's self image was described by herself as being the following:

She has a lot of perseverance

She can face challenges and overcome them

She is there for other people who need her

Things must work out and be orderly

If she had to give young people something to think about before they get married, she would say that they must be able to communicate on all levels, how much can they converse with one another and what do they believe in terms of religion. They should have consensus on last mentioned but also within that context, have the freedom of own opinion.

Today she experiences a feeling of uncertainty towards the whole issue of sex education for children and especially her own child, aged 7. She wants to know when to start with sex education and how best to conduct it. She knows that sex education forms a very important part of education in general and for this reason she would like to have clear guidelines on this matter. After she had informal talks with other parents, she was shocked. All of them said that a parent should speak out frankly and not try to euphemise. She doesn't agree with this and wonders if it has something to do with the way that she was brought up as child. She believes that too much emphasis is placed on the physical aspect.

Some schools do contract knowledgeable speakers to spend time at the school and inform learners (grade 7) on sex matters. Many of them conduct these sessions very well but once again the emphasis is placed too much on the physical aspect of sexuality. After all this is not the starting point. She would prefer her child to hear it from her as parent. Her child should know that sex could only be meaningful in a relationship that is built on true love (see her view of true love later in this interview).

The media (television, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc) place too much emphasis on the physical side of sex as well. She finds it problematic but also acknowledges on the other hand, that it creates the opportunity for parents to talk with their children and point out the difference between glamorous, “unproblematic” television romances (and often short lived sexual relationships) and real life.

She believes that parents should talk more freely about these matters to their children, keeping in mind their intelligibility levels. It is a good thing that it will be part of “Curriculum 2005”<sup>27</sup> in government schools. More information should also be given to children on the HIV/AIDS threat and reality thereof. Children should be prepared for their sexual development in life, according to Janet.

Moral values and principles according to the Bible should play an important role in sexual education. Janet concludes her thoughts on sex education by saying that she experiences a need for more professional guidance in this regard, especially for young children.

### **3.6.2 Personal feedback from Janet after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

#### **1 What was your experience of the interview?**

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<sup>27</sup> Basically, “Curriculum 2005” is an educational approach whereby scholastic success relies heavily on “outcome based education”.

*It was a bit uncomfortable in the beginning because questions were asked which are not normally discussed. But as the interview progressed, I felt more comfortable.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*It was difficult because I can't easily talk about it.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I realised some of the shortcomings in my marriage, which I will have to work at. I also realised that sex education would have to begin with our daughter, aged 7. But I don't know how and when! I realise that it is very important but I am not sure how to conduct it.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*I have started to enquire from other people how they go about sex education and also tried to find out how and when. It seems that other parents with young children also battle with this issue.*

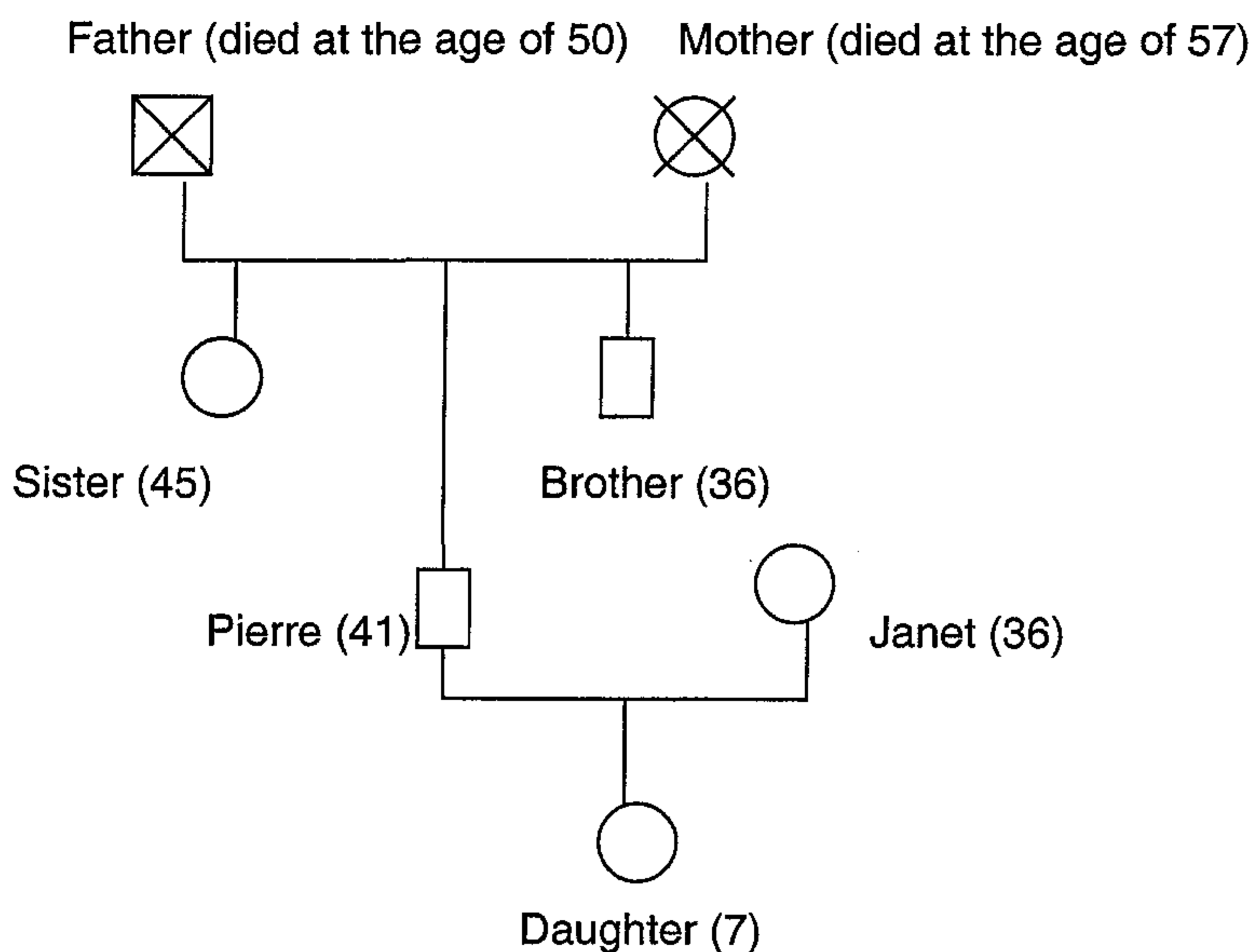
**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*I thought about it quite a lot and realised that there are so many discourses that can obscure one's impressions on certain aspects of life and this influences a person negatively. I want to prevent whatever had a negative influence on my life, being transferred to my child as well.*

**3.6.3 Interview with Pierre, a product manager, aged 41**

The genogram for Pierre's family (including his own marriage and child) can be illustrated as follows:





Pierre grew up on a farm with all the traditional customs of “*Afrikaner*” people (see footnotes 18 and 19). The whole farming community upheld the Afrikaner way of living, which included a very strong church, orientated commitment. The Christian faith and subsequent lifestyle formed an integral part of the community and also Pierre’s family life. Pierre and his family belonged to a church denomination known as the Christian Association of South Africa (“Christelike Vereniging van Suid Afrika”)<sup>28</sup>, upholding very strict obedience to church dogmas and theology. Pierre remembers growing up with very strict Christian norms and principles. His parents, for example, did not tolerate any alcohol at home. They were a very close knit family characterised by lots of love for each other.

Pierre’s experienced his parents’ relationship as very loving. They had a marital relationship, which could be described as equal, meaning that both

<sup>28</sup> This church denomination is closely related to the three “sister churches” in the reformed tradition/theological paradigm (see footnotes 11 and 16), but much more focussed on retaining traditional theological views, dogmas, traditions and church customs.

had consideration for the other, but each one had his/her role in the family. Pierre's father was a businessman and farmer while his mother took responsibility for the household and care of the children. Pierre remembers a very comfortable and uninhibited atmosphere in their home. They were all very much orientated towards touching one another (e.g. hugs or kisses) and being close.

The father, who talked about the "facts of life" to the children, conducted sexual education. Pierre experienced this as positive. The peer groups also played a significant role in getting to know more about sexuality and everything related to it. There was no formal sex education at school as part of the curriculum. The church played an insignificant role in terms of educating young people on sexual matters and relationships. Pierre is of the opinion that the church left a negative image of sexuality with young people. Sex wasn't portrayed as something holy and precious that God created but rather something to be afraid of and to be avoided as much as possible because of all the dangers attached to it.

The discourse of the man being the hunter and the woman being hunted was very dominant in his young days. He believes that this discourse places men under great pressure, because they have to carry most of the responsibility for sexual behaviour. He is a promoter of the emancipation of women. Men and women are different in many respects but they should not be placed in "boxes" reserved for "men only" or "women only".

In their marriage Pierre is the head of the family, which means that he is considered before decisions are made and he then has a final word on it. He doesn't view this in a manner of him being dominant and not considering others in the home. He also interprets the "head of the family" in a Biblical sense where he has to carry responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of his family. He does however illustrate their overall marital relationship as being 100/100 and not 50/50. With this he means that each partner should give 100% towards the relationship.

In their marital relationship, Pierre and Janet differ in the way they handle conflict or differences. He describes himself as extrovert because he wants to talk things over as soon as possible and settle the differences. Janet doesn't react very easily in this fashion. She will be quiet and retreat for some time before communicating her side of the story.

Pierre is a perfectionist in his approach to life. Everything must be in its place and everything must be taken care of in the best possible way. He can't stand disorder and misunderstandings. He believes that the way he was brought up has much to do with this way of doing things. He does however, believe that it is dangerous to make statements as "You are exactly like your mother/father". People should avoid discourses like this in a relationship.

He describes true love in a relationship as having the following characteristics/facets:

- Comradeship
- Acknowledgement of the other person
- Mutual respect
- Communication
- To do and experience things together
- Sex (it brings closeness like nothing else)
- Healthy jealousy of your partner
- Enjoy conversing with your partner
- Being faithful
- Respect for the feelings of your partner

Asking him about sexual education regarding their child, he responded that he doesn't view it to be a major problem, as many people tend to make of it. Sex education is a parental responsibility. He believes that most parents don't know how to conduct sex education with their children. They also don't talk about it in the company of other parents.



He would personally like to have more information on the topic. Sex education should be a part of the total education of your child. He regards it as very important to be a good example to your child and to keep control on what the children see and experience. He realises that it won't be possible at all times.

The way he perceives today's way of life, with the multitude of influences and many of them portraying a negative image, it calls for clear guidelines and steadfast morals and values on sex education. He believes that the media such as television and magazines are mostly interested in sensation (90%) and much less in education (10%). Parents don't receive the necessary guidance via public media coverage, which he believes, could have a widespread positive effect.

You should take conscious decisions based on your convictions. He furthermore believes it should be biblically founded. The child must always know why you do, say or ask something. Explain to the child on his/her level.

#### **3.6.4 Personal feedback from Pierre after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

**1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*It brought me to realise the changes in moral values from the time I was young up till today.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*I felt proud to be able to tell my story.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I focused more on my family and marriage and observed some changes.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*Nothing.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

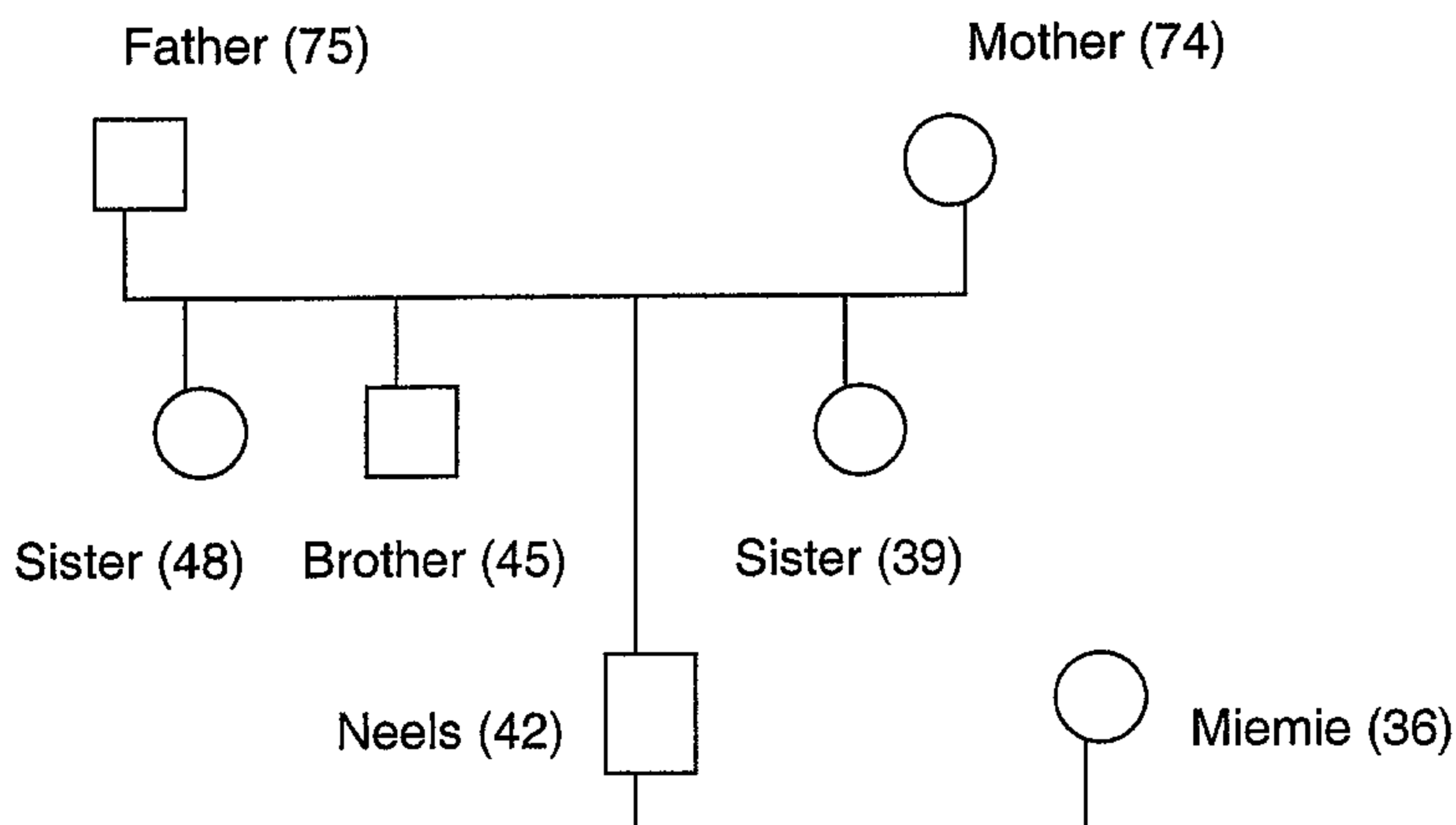
*Yes, certainly. I was stimulated to think more about discourses in my life and also about my inputs towards the upbringing of our child.*

**3.7**

**Couple 6: Neels and Miemie**

**3.7.1 Interview with Neels, a draftsman, aged 42**

The genogram for Neels's family (including his own marriage) can be illustrated as follows:



Neels grew up in a town with wide-open spaces around it. The language and culture of the inhabitants were predominantly Afrikaans and "Afrikaner"

orientated. He enjoyed his childhood very much and engaged in sport from a young age. He went to boarding school at the age of 13 and was very independent. He could look after himself and carried on with his day to day activities. He describes himself as being very orderly in the way he does things and also likes order in his surroundings. He looks after his possessions and still has his toys (model cars) which he played with as a young boy.

His mother was very strict with their upbringing, including schoolwork. She fulfilled her role as mother very well and took care of the household in its entirety. She later also filled a post as church secretary for many years. She was involved with geriatric homes as well and later became matron of such a home. She is a very devoted Christian and very much involved with church activities.

Neels's father was a soft-spoken man who didn't talk much but could stamp down authority. He could be strict with the children and they knew where they stood with him. He worked very hard, initially as electrician and later as engineer. According to Neels, he spent enough time at home with his family.

Regarding the roles in their marital relationship, Neels's father was the head of the family and his mother the one in a strong supporting role. She was however, not submissive at all. He experienced his mother as becoming more and more manipulative as time went by. He places it in the context of her state of health. She had some health problems after the birth of her children and it deteriorated further as she became older – especially her eyesight.

Neels had (and still has) a good relationship with his younger sister but with the other two siblings he had (and still has) no good relationship.

He can't remember that they ever had any sexual education at home from the parent's side. He heard a lot from his peers in boarding school. At



school it was never presented as part of the curriculum. The church didn't officially guide young people on this topic but the pastor did talk to the young people who were busy with their last year of catechesis (see footnote 25). Neels experienced it as negative because he interpreted the talk as having the aim of scaring young people off. It is a negative way of conveying the facts on sexuality and many young people were confused.

Neels didn't have girlfriends during his school years. After completing his school career he had an enjoyable social life but only dated girls to social events – no steady relationships. He admits that he was very ignorant regarding relationships.

He did however meet a girl whom he dated for three months and then got engaged. They had already started planning for the wedding when he, after speaking to one of her uncles, realised that it was not what he really wanted. He broke the engagement and was relieved by his decision. He then met Miemie at the tennis courts and they played a game. They got along very well and he started visiting her regularly. They got married after about 1 year.

Neels mentioned the following qualities and interests of Miemie that he was attracted to (and still is):

- Her general knowledge;
- Her love for sport;
- Her enthusiasm about many things in life;
- Her leadership in many regards;
- Her conversational abilities.

Neels however, believes that Miemie would sometimes prefer a more "intelligent" guy. She dislikes it when he doesn't say much at times in the company of other people.

His view on true love between two people in a relationship is:

Meaningful communication;  
 Understanding for each other;  
 Social adaptability;  
 Mutual respect;  
 Mutual trust;  
 Physical contact and everything related to sexuality;  
 To leave room for your partner (such as time alone, hobbies, friends, etc)

Neels believes that sex is very important in a marriage. If a couple has opposing views on this it can be very destructive to their relationship. He also believes that a person's upbringing (the way they were taught to perceive and do things in life) is something that can be very powerful (positive or negative) and therefore something to be reckoned with. In their case Miemie was not used to so much physical contact and closeness as Neels. He believes that it does affect their relationship. He also believes strongly in communication on the subject and that partners in marriage should get rid of inhibitions that could hamper their sexual relationship.

Getting closer to himself, I asked him about his self image (how he views himself):

He feels inferior when he experiences that people don't acknowledge him for who he is and what he can contribute;  
 He has a good knowledge of human nature and can assess people quickly;  
 He is critical of people and not easily misled;  
 He wants to see people happy and will do much to help people achieve or experience happiness.

We then talked about their childless marriage. I asked him if they had encountered any discourses on a childless marriage. He confirmed it with exclamation. He believes that a married couple should have children. It is a heritage you leave behind, he said. He would love to have a child from Miemie. He also believes it is conducive for self-development as a person

to be a parent. He longs to have children of his own and believes that people, who don't want children, are selfish.

Neels and Miemie have been involved in a multitude of medical tests and are currently in yet another process of medical tests and artificial insemination. All previous tests of a similar kind have failed. Neels is very supportive of Miemie during the process but still believes that it can be solved in a natural way.

When we talked about solving differences in their marriage of 10 years, he said the following:

He is the "quite type" who will think something through before speaking his mind. He is very sensitive and is hurt quickly.

Miemie will get angry and speak her mind immediately. Eventually they will solve the problem by reaching consensus.

They have a marital relationship where Neels is the head of the home, which means that he is the decision-maker in most of the cases. Miemie is comfortable with it. She will consult with Neels before doing something but also takes initiative in some cases. In terms of this role, he says he fulfils 80% and Miemie 20%.

### **3.7.2 Personal feedback from Neels after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

#### **1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*I once again realised the importance of childhood days and thought a lot about the role of my parents.*

#### **2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*No, I don't really like it but understand the aim of your study.*



**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I thought more about what we talked about and the influence of discourses on my life.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

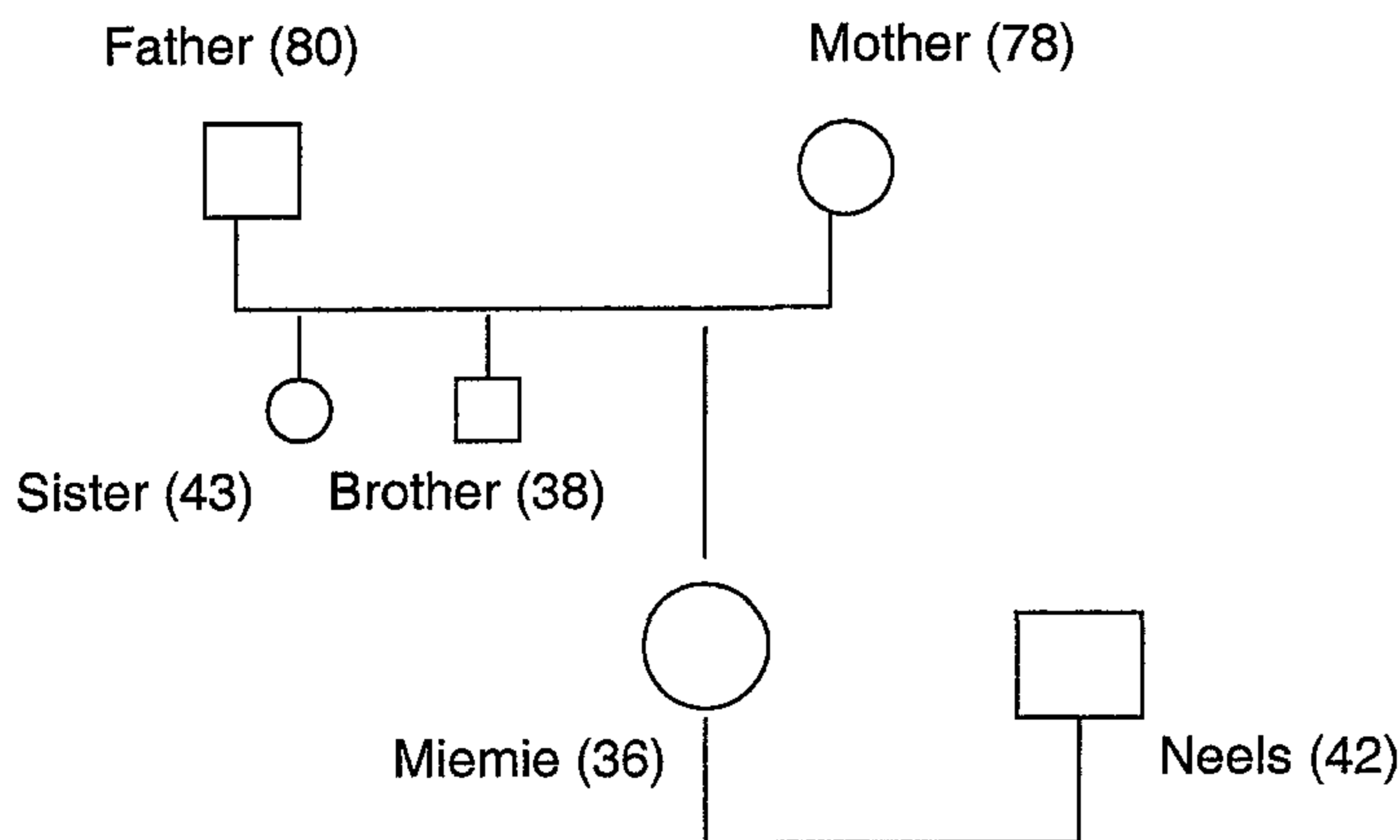
*Nothing. I rather thought about it by myself.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Yes, I am more aware of discourses and it taught me to look further than my own situation.*

**3.7.3 Interview with Miemie, a nursing sister, aged 36**

Starting with her genogram, it can be illustrated as follows (including her marriage to Neels):



Miemie grew up on a farm where her father worked very hard for a living. Her mother saw to the household and looked after the children for most of their needs. They had good relations with one another at home although Miemie's brother and sister didn't get along very well. Miemie got along well

with the whole family. They had good relations with the community around them.

Miemie's parents portrayed the following roles in their marriage – her father being the dominant partner and her mother the submissive one. According to Miemie her father would stand very tall above her mother if their relationship could be illustrated with a drawing. Her father was very strict and firm. Although he portrayed the image of being very insensitive, the children knew that he loved them very much. He spent a lot of time with them and taught them many things in life that Miemie can still recall up to this day. He would attend many of their extra mural activities at school and be supportive of all his children. Miemie's mother is a very gentle person who shows love very clearly. Miemie has fond memories of sitting on her mother's lap and giving her a hug.

Miemie's father never attended church for reasons of party political differences as well as internal church politics. Miemie doesn't think that he is a true believer in terms of the Christian faith. He did however, strive towards doing good to other people and in that sense came close to Biblical ethics in his daily living.

Miemie attended boarding school from grade 1 through to Matric. The entire boarding school had ±130 pupils. Miemie enjoyed it most of the time but had to stay in many weekends because of the distance home. She didn't like that at all because she missed her parents and the farm. She is an outdoor person and loved to help her father on the farm.

Miemie learnt to become more independent but still kept contact with her family and friends, up to this day. She enjoyed a happy childhood. According to her she has been an "easy going" person from a young age. She was never aware of the "difficult teenager" discourse in her own case.

Her parents at home never provided sexual education for the children. The theme was not meant for children's ears, they believed. It was at most

stories about them being baboons who were caught in the mountains and then having their tails cut off and hair shaven! At school, sex education was not part of the curriculum and she doesn't remember it being discussed much in boarding school. She attended "Sunday School" (see footnote 25, page 96), which she didn't like at all because they were forced to go and she didn't experience it as very meaningful.

Miemie had many "dates" at school but nothing serious. She loved sport and socialising with her friends. When she commenced her university studies in nursing, she wilfully disappeared into the masses and only wanted to do well in sport and academics. She wasn't bothered to have a boyfriend. Her first year at university was dreadful, according to her. She was used to 130 children at boarding school and now she was part of thousands of students. She had to find her identity amongst so many students and being far away from home. She was afraid that she wouldn't pass her exams and generally felt unsure of herself. From her second year onwards, she enjoyed it very much. She socialised very much with her student friends who studied nursing with her.

After her studies she went to Israel and worked there as a nurse for two years. During that time she worked hard but enjoyed every minute of it. She made good friends and also met a young man with whom she had a very meaningful relationship. He was from a Jewish Orthodox family and she felt very comfortable with him and his family. She contemplates that she probably would have married him if it were accepted that a Christian and a Jew marry. She was prepared to accept Judaism if it would get to that point. Her father, however, fell ill at that stage and she came back to South Africa to help look after him on the farm.

This period was also very enjoyable to her and she again had a lot of contact with the community she knew from her childhood. After her father recuperated, she moved to another town where she met Neels. At first she didn't think of him in a romantic sense and wasn't ready for a serious relationship. Neels wanted to marry soon but Miemie still had the dream of



going back to Israel. Eventually she said yes and they married after dating for about 1 year. She would have wanted to wait longer but she isn't unhappy with her decision to marry Neels.

I asked her how she would describe true love in a relationship:

Mutual trust (because distrust creates jealousy, it takes away freedom and loses respect);

Mutual respect;

Leave room for your partner (to build and maintain own identity and to enjoy your interests);

Being good to your partner;

To care for each other.

She has never been "in love" with "butterflies in her stomach" as some people describe it. She is very realistic in her approach to life.

She described her self-image in terms of negative and positive features:

**Negative:**

She is impatient, and things are either right or wrong. She can't tolerate anything in between;

She isn't focussed on being tidy;

She doesn't forgive easily.

**Positive:**

She sets high standards for herself and can work hard in order to reach them;

She is loyal;

She is honest with herself and other people.

I then proceeded to the next issue which is quite sensitive for them both – the fact that they are married for 9 years and don't have a child. The reason

for their sensitivity is the discourse that expects a married couple to have children. The discourse says that a marriage without children misses its purpose. People who use this discourse expect that a couple should have a baby within a year or shortly after. Miemie still experiences this discourse as very dominant in the Afrikaner community/tradition. People constantly want to know what's wrong. Is the problem with the wife or the husband?

Early in their marriage it bothered Miemie a lot to hear these things. She then at one stage wilfully decided that she does not want a child. Neels is the one who always wanted a child and still does. When she began to ask herself if one of them had a medical problem, she started longing to have a child. She has however, come to terms with the idea of possibly not having a child at all. Neels still very much wants to have a child. Miemie says that she admires him for being prepared to go for tests and also supporting her in medical attempts to help her become pregnant. Most of the tests however, were done with the focus on her as having the problem. No solution could be found for the fact that she couldn't get pregnant. A very large amount of money was spent on medical tests and interventions over a period of several years. Miemie became more despondent as time went by. She later became agitated when the subject was raised. The result was that they eventually avoided speaking about it and it created some tension between them.

I asked her how they manage conflict in their marriage. She replied that they generally have a very equable relationship but when they differ from each other, they both retreat. They would speak the minimum with each other until one of them (the guilty one!) apologises.

#### **3.7.4 Personal feedback from Miemie after receiving a copy of the interview for editing and answering the following questions:**

##### **1 What was your experience of the interview?**

*I was good to "re-live" my past and to share it with someone.*

**2 What was it like telling your story relating to the theme of the study?**

*It wasn't a problem to me.*

**3 What did you do with it afterwards?**

*I discussed some of it with Neels.*

**4 What did you share with other people (if at all)?**

*Nothing.*

**5 Were you stimulated for further thought on the theme of discourses that could have an impact/influence on your life?**

*Yes and no – because I know who I am and what I want, a discourse doesn't actually bother me.*

The interviews confirmed a lot about discourses on love and marriage in the context of Afrikaner culture, tradition and religion as reflected in the literature review in chapter 2. All the participants were familiar with what is reflected in the reviewed literature without me referring to it during the interviews. In the following chapter, various aspects of discourses on love and marriage will be discussed as they were expressed during the interviews. Reflections will also be made on the participants' views regarding sex education for young children and teenagers. I also reflect on my own experiences and insights gained from the study.

I conclude with an addendum on interviews with Neels and Miemie after the birth of their child. I view it as noteworthy to conclude with this joyful narrative of a couple who had a dream come true after 10 years of marriage and very little to no hope at all of ever having a child of their own.



## CHAPTER 4

### PASTORAL NARRATIVE REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVIEWS WITHIN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT/Framework

#### 4.1 Reflections on interviews with couples (chapter 3) specifically relating to discourses on love and marriage

The following reflections will be presented by naming the different topics/themes and discussing them from a pastoral narrative paradigm and epistemology as set out in 2.3.1.

##### 4.1.1 Husband and wife discourses in marital relationships

It became evident that all the couples come from homes where their parents fulfilled the role establishment of husband and wife having to fit into a predetermined framework and act their roles accordingly. To speak of role establishment or role expectations fits exactly the modernist way of thinking.

It became evident from the interviews that the father is the head of the family and the mother has the responsibility for the household although some of the mothers also had occupations. The role of "housewife" however was still allocated to the mother in spite of her having an own occupation. Goodrich (1991:7) gives the following description of the "woman's place":

Regardless of economic necessity, personal desire, natural talent or acquired skills, a woman is expected to find her true place and true joy in the home, in marriage, in motherhood. Her much-touted reign in this "private" sphere is, however, illusory...More to the point, her authority in the home, in the marriage, and with the children is only delegated; her husband is

the recognised authority, however minimal his participation might be.

These comments from Goodrich might represent the more extreme view on women's position in marriage and at home, but much of it still manifests itself in broader society.

The "head of the family" discourse as well as the "housewife" discourse in general present themselves in different ways. These notes are derived from the literature review in 2.3.2:

- 1 The husband/father is the breadwinner. A few decades ago and in many cases still today, men are considered to provide the main source of income although many women, e.g. single mothers or husbands earning insufficient salaries, are compelled to work and keep up the household with all its demands.
- 2 The husband is the one who takes all or most of the decisions in the home.
- 3 He is considered to provide security for the family, not only financially but also physically. For this reason boys are taught not to cry when they get hurt and not to show interest in activities like art or music, which is associated with girls.
- 4 The area outside the house, like the garden, is the domain of the husband or father and inside the house is that of the wife or mother.
- 5 The wife should obey and be submissive towards her husband.
- 6 The father as head of the home is also the one responsible for spiritual guidance<sup>29</sup> of the family, as some people believe

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<sup>29</sup> Decades ago it was the responsibility and religious custom of the father as head of the family, to conduct the evening devotions with Scripture reading and prayer. Today it is seldom done or not done at all. Many mothers today take up the responsibility to read to the children from the Bible and pray before they go to sleep. It is my experience as a pastor that women today are more focused on spiritual matters in the home than men. This is confirmed by many of my colleagues who are full time pastors in a congregation.

is derived from various passages in the Bible such as Deut. 6:6-9.

All these views have undergone changes with time and don't necessarily present themselves in the same way or in totality within all families. Most of them as mentioned above represent a discourse within the white, Afrikaans speaking community over many decades. It is embedded in a Christian frame of reference. The Bible speaks of the man having authority over his wife ("head" of the family - JL) just as Christ has authority over his church (Ephesians 5:23). The message however, is not that the husband can do what he likes and expects his wife to submit to everything, as some people have interpreted it. The Bible explains the authority of Christ over his church as creating freedom for the church. This should reflect in the way a man treats his wife by creating an environment/relationship context in which she can live her potential as unique person. This should of course be with respect and presuppose a mutual engagement.

Five of the couples still maintain a relationship where the husband is expected to take responsibility as head of the family. With this they refer to him taking the final decision on most matters although the wife also has a significant input in this regard. One couple turns it around with the wife taking the responsibility for decision making and initiating decisive matters. All couples however, clearly expressed that the arrangement they have in this regard, is positive for them. Therefore it will be safe to say that amongst the participants, most of them still buy into the patriarchal gender discourse.

Most couples said that they have a 50/50 relationship. I am not sure what they mean with this even when I asked them about it. They explained that they are equals in the relationship, which means that:

The one is not more important than the other;

The one won't deliberately overrule or ignore the inputs of the other, although the husband has the final say in most cases;



They show consideration and respect to one another.

When taking the above-mentioned into account, it seems that we could speak of a partnership marriage when it constitutes a 50/50 or 100/100 relationship. All the couples however, still uphold the discourse of the husband being the head of the family. Even in the case where the wife takes all the decisions, the husband is still the head of the family, because being the head of the family does not necessarily mean that he should also be the main decision-maker in the family. He is the principal "breadwinner" who provides for the household although his wife also contributes with her part time occupation.

Blikkies said that he believed a marriage should not be a 50/50 but a 100/100 relationship. This kind of relationship implies a 100% give and take from both sides. According to them it is important for their marital relationship to develop. They also believe that it is a responsibility the couple has to accept when they decide to get married. Pierre (the businessman) jokingly said that a 49/51 relationship works for him, because you should always have the majority share in business! It seems to me that men still have a gender supremacy as "head of the family" (or "head of his wife")<sup>30</sup>. The discourse on marital "roles" for men and women amongst traditional Afrikaner people clearly constitutes the patriarchal system. Although the couples who participated, expressed equality in their marital relationships, it still seems that men are "more equal" than women!

It is interesting to note that, regarding job establishments, all the women who participated in this study, are involved in careers that are associated with a "woman's world" as opposed to a "man's world". Although the situation is changing somewhat today, some careers such as teaching, nursing, secretarial work, catering, fashion designing etc, are still largely associated with women. Men are largely engaged in and associated with careers such as church ministry, politics, engineering, accounting or

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<sup>30</sup> The Afrikaans translation of Ephesians 5:23 reads: "Die man is die hoof van die vrou, soos Christus die hoof van die kerk is."

bookkeeping, research, law, private enterprise etc, which constituted the "man's world".

#### 4.1.2 Conflict management

What is conflict? Louw (1995:103) says: "Conflict is more than a difference, it is a dispute: when differences give rise to irritation; when two people's viewpoints are in direct contrast, causing frustration and resistance". Conflict on certain matters are managed differently by each couple.

Murray Bowen (1987:79) believes that conflict occurs when both partners try to be dominant. Distancing then occurs as the two attempt to relieve the tension but the distancing does not bring resolution of conflict.

Derick and Marlene have a relationship in which they minimise conflict to such an extent that they have never had a big quarrel in 19 years of marriage. Both describe themselves as phlegmatic (see footnote 17, page 64) and they try to avoid conflict as far as possible. The husband is not so sure that it is always the best way of dealing with differences although it has worked fine for them all these years. Would they convey the same way of conflict management to their children? The couple explained that they would teach a few basic principles to their children such as not to express your unhappiness, anger or frustration in the heat of the moment. In such circumstances, things are usually said that could have remained unspoken. You should talk about the issue that bothers you. Don't keep it to yourself. Learn to exercise self-control at all times.

I believe it is an unfounded generalisation (discourse?) which is heard in many conversations that women are prone to sulk and retaliate when they are unhappy about something in their relationship with someone. They never forget a negative incident while men talk about it and then forget about the matter when it is settled. Many jokes are made with this discourse as underlying theme. I believe that societies or cultures can

jokingly create or sustain a range of different discourses via generalisations on various issues or concepts.

In one of the marital relationships, the husband is the one who avoids conflict at all cost while his wife will address the matter by expressing herself clearly. She wants the problem to be solved as soon as possible and carry on without referring back to it.

It seems a viable option that couples come to an agreement that they manage their conflict in such a way that both parties express themselves on their true feelings without hurting the other. Effective communication is of vital importance. Louw (1995:95) explains in-depth communication as follows:

By in-depth communication in marriage is meant communication through love. The motive for this type of communication is not, primarily, putting forward *your* point of view, but to truly understand the partner's feelings and convictions. In-depth communication means picking up the emotion *behind* the person's words, then interpreting so sensitively that your mate can hear him-/herself in your "echo".

This was the essence of what all the couples expressed although they confessed that it is a difficult road to take and all of them struggle with it. The benefits however, are long lasting and of great value to both parties for personal as well as relational development.

#### **4.1.3 Sexual education and loving relationships/marriage**

Sexual education and loving relationships/marriage relates only to the couples themselves and how they were educated on sexual issues. Throughout the interviews, all participants shared the same experience on sex education. It was either the bare minimum (or nothing) they received



from their parents at home or fragments from peers at school now and then. The message on sexuality from the side of the church was not experienced as positive at all. The participants only received negative motivation on the subject. A lot of attention was focussed on the dangers and the prohibitions concerning sexuality. As teenagers and young adults they associated sexuality with unwanted pregnancies, judgmental passages from the Bible warning against adultery and the great sin of sex before marriage. These are real dangers to be aware of but this is the one side of the coin. So much positive can also be said about sexuality. All of them had to catch up on reading material later in life or discover and learn from experience within their loving relationships.

Did it leave a gap in their lives that had negative (side)effects on their relationships or marriage? Nobody experienced it as a serious gap in his or her education. Some said that they would have wanted to be more prepared for their relationships to come, not necessarily regarding the physical aspect but all the other aspects like emotions, closeness, self expression, etc. It seems that all the emphasis on sex education should be altered to express a more comprehensive approach. My personal view is that we should rather speak of *relationship education* to include all aspects of a loving relationship. Sex education would then form part of the comprehensive picture regarding a loving relationship. Such educational approach could include the various development areas of a human being from childhood to adulthood, important aspects regarding maturity in any relationship, personal development and growth, self-esteem, social adaptability, basic life skills, the role of morals, ethics and faith.

All participants in the study mentioned faith or Christian convictions on sexuality, as very important and decisive for any loving relationship. It played an important role in their own relationships but they are not too sure if it still plays that important role in the lives of people today. The reality of AIDS is important to take note of and therefore people should have moral principles and convictions on sexuality and the practising of sex.

#### 4.1.4 What makes a marital relationship work?

During the interviews the couples mentioned some aspects of importance to them. Many of these aspects were mentioned by more than one couple. The following is a summary of what they said:

Independence is very important. The one must leave room for the other to be him/herself and also to enjoy hobbies, sport, etc.

Love was mostly described as caring for your partner, giving yourself fully (also sexually) and not wanting to live without that person.

They all believe that similar backgrounds relating to traditions, language, culture and belief are important factors for better understanding.

Communication, especially "in-depth" communication was mentioned as critically important.

Partners should accept each other as they are. You should not try to change your partner to suit your needs.

Both partners should be accommodating. The one must render space to the other. Don't keep your partner in a cocoon.

Pathological jealousy kills a relationship.

Problem areas should be sorted out before the marriage.

Each partner should be fully engaged in making the relationship work.

All participants expressed the importance of faith in the Triune God as an important factor in a relationship. Faith on it's own however, is not enough to make a relationship work.

Love is not idyllic. You have to reckon with everyday living and the reality thereof. Life is not simple and demands a lot from any relationship.

There is no such thing as unconditional love, according to the participants. True love draws boundaries.

Companionship is important for any relationship.

Sexuality in a holistic sense is very important. Not only the act of having sex.

It is important to do things together and assist one another with various responsibilities such as raising children together.

Partners should not engage in selfishness.

A marital relationship should be uplifting and to the benefit of both parties involved.

The Biblical passage of Ephesians 5:26 e.a. was quoted by one of the participants. He interprets the passage as a call to give your partner room for personal growth and realise his/her potential to the fullest as Christ would like it to be.

A loving relationship should not be 50/50 but 100/100.

Mutual respect and 100% trust was mentioned as very important.

True love has that "something special" to it, which cannot always be expressed in words.

Commitment to each other is of vital importance.

Most participants believe that love is something that comes from the Lord. He generates it.

True love is associated with closeness.

You should allow your partner to enjoy what he/she loves.

Love is to want happiness for your partner.

Love means spending time together and enjoying it.

Partners in marriage should be adaptable to various situations.

Love is enjoying life together.

Meaningful communication;

True love will seek to understand the other.

Love is to really care for each other.

It is evident that the couples place high value on being accommodating towards one another and leaving room for their partners to be themselves. It also became clear that they have grown in understanding of each other as partners through the years. They did however acknowledge the areas still to be attended to. I believe that in spite of the patriarchal ideas that still prevail in most of the marital relationships of the participants, they are also constantly moving towards the idea or concept of gender equality in marriage.

Two couples, Pierre and Marie as well as Derick and Marlene, are now married with their partners whom they have known since their schooling



years. Derick and Marlene dated for six years and then married. It was Marlene's first steady boyfriend. Pierre and Marie met each other and married within less than a year and a half. All of them said that the roles they fulfil in marriage were established gradually without them really noticing it. It could be that the discourses they grew up with, led them to adopt what they know and live up to accordingly. It could also be that they reacted against such discourses to establish a different kind of relationship.

#### 4.1.5 Further thoughts on discourses

The couples mentioned a few interesting discourses relating to love and marriage which still function strongly amongst many white Afrikaans speaking people:

- 1 A man should be older than a woman. It lends him greater authority;
- 2 A woman should not earn a higher income than her husband. He might feel inferior to her and this could jeopardise their relationship;
- 3 A man should always open the door for a lady; carry her bags for her etc., because she is a member of the "weaker sex". Is this a discourse or simply good manners? It could also be a discourse on good manners;
- 4 The man is the hunter in a relationship. When an unmarried woman takes over this role she is judged as being promiscuous;
- 5 A man should be taller than a woman. Once again he would feel inferior;
- 6 A man should never cry in front of a woman because he must uphold the image of: "cowboys don't cry" and "men can withstand anything";
- 7 The man is behind the steering wheel when they go somewhere because he must have control;
- 8 The man pays the bill when they have dinner at the restaurant because he is the breadwinner and has to support his wife.

All these discourses are about men and what they want or should be. Not one of these discourses can be upheld as reflecting what women really

want and how they experience it. These patriarchal discourses represent a form of power over women. Dominant discourses as mentioned above tend to exert power in relationships and most of the time the power belongs to men. Goodrich (1991:8) says:

Efforts to explicate the nature of power usually begin by drawing a distinction between power-to and power-over. Power-to refers to the ability perform or produce and implies also the freedom and resources to do so. Power-over refers to domination and control...In patriarchy men have this power-to and have used it in theology, law, education, psychiatry and history to justify their domination over women.

Many of the individuals who were interviewed said that they grew up with these discourses and that they never challenged them or at least thought about them before (see 4.3). They are now more focussed on analysing discourses critically to determine the effects on their own life. Some people, especially the women, allow dominant discourses to constitute their lives. Many reasons could be found to explain this. The women who participated in this study experience some form of the mentioned discourses but don't necessarily feel threatened by it because their husbands don't abuse the inherent "power-to" or "power-over" possibilities of the discourses. It could also be that they readily submit to patriarchy.

## **4.2 Reflections on sex education for young children and teenagers**

During interviews with the couples as reflected in Chapter 3, it became evident that sex education for children was a difficult matter to deal with. Many of them expressed a feeling of incapability to deal with this matter adequately. It is a topic that was rarely or in a limited way discussed in their homes and other places such as the school and the church when they were still children.

The fact that they gained most of their knowledge from own experience and the minimum theory, is not necessarily a negative aspect. Some of the participants view their limited knowledge and experience of sexual matters during their schooling years as positive. They were not exposed to all the explicit talk and media coverage on sex as we experience it today. Some are of the opinion that they were more protected from the negative side of sex such as pornography, prostitution and other forms of eroticism. Others believe that children should be made aware of sexual matters and be guided to distinguish between the negative and positive aspects thereof.

One participant said that sex education should be conducted by the parents in the safe environment of the family home and based on Christian morals, values and ethics, such as chastity before marriage, respect for one another as persons in all respects, faithfulness to your partner, etc. Parents should be well equipped for the sex education of their children.

Some of them also said that sex education is not something shared with children once in a while in a formal manner. It is an ongoing process and part of daily living. Television is much more explicit in what it offers to the public. People today are much more challenged to act as censors themselves. Children sometimes watch television without the parents being present. They should be equipped to know how to react to certain scenes, language, talk shows etc, based on principles, belief system, morals and values set by the parents. Magazines containing articles on sex and related matters are readily available in bookstores, cafes, etc. Children do come in contact with these publications and therefore need a frame of reference according to which they can respond.

The electronic technology creates almost unlimited access to information on millions of topics. The world of information has come into the homes of millions of people around the world. Children are exposed to the so-called knowledge explosion of our time. The current outcome based education system is also conducive to critical thinking and exploration. Children ask questions and want answers that make sense.



Media reports on the AIDS epidemic also contribute much to the open debate and frank discussions on sex matters, which makes it vastly different than 30 years ago. This obviously necessitates that children should get the correct facts about sex and everything related to that. Parents have an important role to play in this regard. People differ in opinion whether sex is a subject of privacy or something to be openly discussed. What I believe to be important is that children should have the freedom and trust in their parents to ask them when they need to know more about this topic.

One of the participants said that she does not believe in providing answers to questions that are not asked. Children will ask what they want to know. Parents should be careful not to make presumptions on what they think their children want to know. Another participant quoted a situation where the topic of sex was once again raised with children at a church gathering and the teenager commented: *yet another talk on sex?!*

Publications such as books and magazines as well as audio-visual material on sex education for young children and teenagers are readily available in bookstores all over the country. These publications do differ in their approach on the topic. Personnel at well-known bookstores are usually well equipped to give advice on these publications should parents need help. Professional people like pastors, doctors, counsellors, social workers, teachers, etc can also be approached for guidance.

### **4.3 Significant experiences and insights gained from the study**

#### **4.3.1 Reflections on personal experiences**

The following thought crossed my mind, as I was busy interviewing the participants: if I had chosen couples who were not known to me at all, would they have conveyed their stories and views/opinions more true to themselves?

Could they have conveyed only selective information to me because of the fact that we know each other and they want to keep certain personal information to themselves or perhaps because of the sensitivity thereof and them being afraid that I would know too much about them?

All the participants know me as a pastor and it could be that they felt intimidated by the office I represent. From my own experience I know that many people do and say things that they believe the pastor would like to see and hear. It is a discourse which is very much alive in a large section of the Afrikaans speaking church community of reformed theological tradition. People feel good about it when the pastor gets a good impression of them.

The study opened my eyes for discourses in my own life. I was once again prompted to focus on my own marriage. I always find it fascinating and educative to hear from other couples how they deal with certain issues in their relationship. It created a learning opportunity for me.

Neels and Miemie's childless marriage proved to be exemplary of an apparent impossible scenario which changed into one that brought a whole new dimension into their lives, when she became pregnant. It also confirmed once again that no one should ever give up his/her dreams, hope and faith in the Lord.

#### **4.3.2 Gains for those who participated in the study**

Many couples who were interviewed have indicated that they experienced a lot of personal growth during the process. It could be summarised as follows:

They had never before focussed this closely on the various discourses in their lives. "Discourse" is a term that they got to know via participation in the study. It prompted them to think about it and one of the men said that he deliberately began to make some changes in his life, especially in his relationship with his wife.

The interviews also stimulated them to think more critically when they hear or read about various matters relating to their own life. They have been sensitised to identify and evaluate discourses that influence their lives.

Several participants identified areas in their personal life that required attention regarding personal growth and development. Louw (1991:67) refers to a process of self-discovery for growth towards personal maturity. He mentions important factors such as independent thinking and acting, responsible behaviour, respect for other people, words and deeds that usually coincide, self-control and patience, serving in a spirit of sacrifice, realistic self-insight and self-acceptance, flexibility and adaptability, reliability and sincerity, constant purposeful conduct and perseverance.

All the participants expressed their anticipation in reading what the other participants have said about the theme. According to them it might on the one hand, confirm many of their own ideas or discourses they live by or, on the other hand, offer them the opportunity to learn and benefit from other situations and experiences.

#### **4.3.3 Reflections on the formal aspects of the study**

The choice of a very homogenous group of participants resulted in many predictable or expected answers on certain questions. However, it also served an important function in confirming certain dominant discourses that have a very strong influence on individuals as well as communities. These communities include different areas such as religion, culture, career, social life, education, politics, multi-media (e.g. journalism), literature, art, etc.

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, respect for personal views, beliefs, anonymity, etc, were of critical importance. The participants were involved in every phase of the study and it once again confirmed the



importance and uniqueness of every individual's life story when they proudly said that telling their story, was a positive experience for them.

The unpredictable element in the study was the unexpected pregnancy of Miemie that led to a postponement in the research process. I wanted to interview them after they had experience the baby in their life for a few months. I expected that their life would change drastically to their advantage by having the baby they wanted for many years.

The procedures for the research were laid down and could be carried out accordingly for most of the time but the process proved to have a dynamic element that nobody expected. This element provided the study with a new dimension.

#### **4.4 Addendum to reported interviews with Neels and Miemie**

After all interviews were finalised and the study was about to be closed, the news came to me that Miemie was pregnant! It was a pleasant surprise after all they had gone through. Obviously this new situation called for an update on their views regarding love, marriage and the prospect of having an own child in their lives. The study therefore had to be postponed for some time and was finalised when the baby was eight months old. My last interview with the couple took place a few days before they left for the USA for a period of three years.



themselves enough time until they feel ready to talk about it. It so happened that they wanted to go through the whole pregnancy period and would then express their feelings after the child was born. I visited Neels and Miemie in hospital a day after the little girl was born. Mishkah was her name and she was a healthy, beautiful little baby. Her mother was also well and very happy together with Neels. It was a very emotional moment when I prayed for them and asked the Lord's blessing on them as a family.

I felt part of the new family and shared their joy and gratitude. It was a very rewarding and enriching experience for myself, having had the privilege of contact with Neels and Miemie under very special circumstances from the beginning of this study. After Mishkah's birth, opportunity for an interview with the couple was very limited because of arrangements they made to move to the USA. It involved a lot of studies for Miemie to obtain a permit for working in an USA hospital as a nursing sister. They also visited the USA in that period. The next opportunity we had for an interview was a few days after the baptism of Mishkah, which I attended on 11 March 2001.

I asked them what they experienced the past year since they heard that Miemie was pregnant. They both expressed their gratitude towards the Lord for granting them this wonderful gift. Neels always believed that they would one day have their own child. This corresponds with what he told me during the interviews we had prior to Miemie's pregnancy.

He is obviously delighted with his fatherhood and enjoys it thoroughly in spite of getting less sleep at night! He believes that his view of life has changed a lot. He refers to the fact that for many years they both wanted a child of their own. It was a tiresome process, both physically and emotionally, in trying all possible ways for Miemie to become pregnant. The multitude of medical tests and high financial costs involved, claimed a lot from them as couple. Both of them are very fond of children and they enjoyed their friends' children but the void in their lives remained. All of this has now drastically changed. Neels is more focussed on their new situation and all the adaptations they have to make. Their future plans have



obviously changed to include their child. Both of them experience it as very positive, stimulating and challenging.

Miemie has noticed that she is very protective towards the baby. She suspects that it has something to do with the fact that, after all medical tests failed, she believed that she would never have her own child. She worked hard at accepting this "fact". Neels believes that a person should never surrender or give up on hopes and dreams. Miemie enjoys motherhood and experiences a sense of added meaning to her life. She would have liked to experience motherhood earlier in life but on the other hand she believes that she is now more mature and capable of raising a child. Neels agrees with her. The new baby has brought new dimensions into their life. Their relationship has deepened and they feel more connected because of their child. Neels has always been very involved in the home by helping Miemie with different chores. With the arrival of the baby, Neels has been of immense help to Miemie. When they move to the USA, Neels will be staying at home, looking after Mishkah and keeping most of the household going. This is nothing strange to him because he is used to doing whatever he can in and around the home.

Since they have their own child, they think differently about child education, including sexual education. They have always had their views on this subject. They suspect that their views might change as their child gets older. However, they are certain about the following:

They believe strongly that their Christian faith will be a very important influencing factor in the upbringing of their child. As parents they want to be an example of what Christian living is. They want to live according to the Bible and be obedient children of God.

Neels doubts that publications on sexual education can fulfil a substitute role for the responsibility of parents. He believes that it could be of some help regarding biological facts but the real value of sex education is achieved at home where the child experiences trust, respect, Christian

norms and values through example and talks with him or her. Therefore they believe that sex education involves a lot more than only conveying the biological facts on sexuality.

He believes that an open relationship between parent and child is important. The parents should create an environment for mutual trust, respect, approachability, interest in the child as a unique person, etc.

Neels and Miemie both agree that ethical issues like respect for one's body and privacy are very important to create an environment conducive for sexual education when the time comes.

They both believe that a child should never be in doubt about matters on sexuality, as they were when they were children. The child should be guided in clear terms according to his/her intelligibility as the need arises.

## **Conclusion**

It was a privilege to conduct this study. I appreciate the contribution of every participant and enjoyed working with them during the interviews. They added a very personal dimension to the study and also enriched my life as well as my career as a pastoral counsellor.

I believe that this study could be further developed into a doctoral thesis because of the multidimensional nature of the theme.

If the participants in this study could be placed in the shoes of the umpires (citation page 8), I wish them all the courage to meaningfully call the "balls and strikes" in the context of their unique life stories.

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