

**MIXED RACE AND AFRICAN PARENTS' EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES
AND COPING STRATEGIES REGARDING THE COMING OUT OF THEIR
CHILD AS LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX,
QUEER, QUESTIONING AND A-SEXUAL+: SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL
WORK SUPPORT**

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that the dissertation entitled: "Mixed race and African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies on the coming out of their child as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersexed, queer, questioning and a-sexual+: suggestions for social work support" is my own work and that all the sources that were used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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15 January 2020

M Hobbs-Russell

Date

DEDICATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to the parents, families and friends who lost their lesbian daughters/ friends/loved ones due to hate crimes.

It is also dedicated to my wife, Cheryne, who carried me through the whole process; and to our daughter, Lente, whose peculiar and understanding nature is a delight in our lives.

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ACRONYMS

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder

LGBTIQA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, Intersexed,
Queer, Questioning, A-sexual

PFLAG: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Abstract

Mixed race and African South African parents of children coming out as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer, Questioning and A-Sexual+ have a unique set of challenges within their cultural, religious and social contexts. The problem statement for the study entails that parents have to deal with familial and societal perceptions and reactions to their child coming out, face their own challenges and fears concerning their child's sexual orientation or identity, and find coping strategies to deal with their coming out as LGBTIQ+. During my research in the UNISA library and online I found that there is a paucity of literature on this subject matter, especially within the South African context. The aim of this study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of these mixed race and African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.

The Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, as linked to Hill's Stress Theory and the Strength-based approach, were adopted as related theories within the theoretical framework of this study. A qualitative approach was employed, as I intended to gain insight into the lived experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, as well as to gain advice on social work support. A phenomenological and collective instrumental case study design, together with an explorative, descriptive and contextual strategy of inquiry, were used to explore, describe and contextualise how mixed race and African parents of LGBTIQ+ children experienced their children's coming out, what their challenges were, and the coping strategies they employed to manage the challenges experienced. The sample of participants was selected by utilising purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews, contained in an interview guide, were used to collect the data that was analysed using Tesch's method of analysis (in Creswell, 2014:198). The data were collected by means of individual interviews and presented in a cross-person manner using selected narratives from the participants.

Guba's model, as espoused in Krefting (1991) and Lietz and Zayas (2010), was used and the four aspects of trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, were applied. Ethical considerations were observed. The findings led the researcher to make recommendations regarding social work practice, education and further research into the phenomenon of parental experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. In terms of parental experiences of their child coming out as LGBTIQ+, I found that parents were surprised and unhappy, disappointed, pained and shocked, and fearful for their child's safety when they realised he or she was LGBTIQ+. When it came to their challenges and fears, the parents openly admitted that what the community, church and external family would make of their child being LGBTIQ+ caused stress for them. Lastly, the parents made recommendations to social workers based on their experiences, challenges and coping strategies, indicating that social workers should focus on sharing information and guiding parents; but firstly, social workers must have self-awareness and understand their own attitudes toward LGBTIQ+ matters.

KEY CONCEPTS

Mixed Race South African, African South African, Homosexual (Gay/Lesbian), Bisexual, Transgender/gender dysphoria, Challenges, Coping strategies, Coming out.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

“Every single courageous act of coming out chips away at the curse of homophobia. Most importantly it's destroyed within yourself, and that act creates the potential for its destruction where it exists in friends, family and society” (Venn-Brown, 2004:8)

Informing others of one's sexual orientation, or coming out, or in the case of transsexuality, informing others about one's personal sexual identity is an important development task every lesbian and gay person has to complete in pursuit of an authentic self-identity and psychological and social well-being (LaSala, Jenkins, Wheeler & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2008:48). As such the “coming out” in terms of being LGBTIQ+ often dominates discourses on homosexuality, bisexuality and transsexuality (McCormick, 2015:327; Morrow & Messinger, 2006:54). Homosexuality as a form of sexual orientation has gradually become a reality and acceptable within the legal framework of many countries (Obasola, 2013:78). Homosexuality as such is not a modern-day invention and has been recorded since the earliest times. Although the term “homosexual” was not coined until the end of the nineteenth century, same sex love has been practiced since the beginning of civilization. There are depictions of homosexual acts in art and artefacts since the early days of Ancient Greek culture (Crompton, 2006:1; Obasola, 2013:79).

In a document by the Psychological Association of South Africa it is stated that these professionals prioritise and privilege individual self-determination, including the choice of self-disclosure/coming out of sexual orientation, gender identity or diversity (PsySSA, 2017b:18). In 2012, Psychology South Africa developed guidelines for working with LGBTIQ+ clients, indicating that the LGBTIQ+ acronym should be used as *being inclusive of all gender diverse persons and/or those who define themselves as beyond binary*, as well as being affirmative of the sexual orientation and gender identity of clients (McLachlan, Nel, Pillay & Victor, 2019:315). Rushton,

Gray, Canty and Blanchard (2019:1) state that the term LGBTIQ+ has gained momentum in referring to being all-inclusive and affirmative of gender non-conforming or non-binary persons. In this study, the LGBTIQ+ acronym indicates that I did not set out to only target certain “types” of gender orientation or non-conforming persons in my study, but that the intention was to gain an in-depth knowledge of parents whose children fall under any of the LGBTIQ+ identifications.

The labelling of homosexuality as a mental disorder was removed from the DSM2 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder) in 1973. Two decades later, South Africa decriminalised homosexuality (McCormick, 2015:327) and today the country stands as a strong beacon for gay rights movements all around the world for its legislation banning discrimination based on the grounds of sexual orientation (The Constitution, 1996). In commenting on this state of affairs, McCormick (2015:327) asserts that coming out in the South African context can be seen both as a personal liberation and as a political tool to aid the progress of the LGBTIQ+ movement.

The labels “lesbian”, “gay”, “bisexual” or “homosexual” speak to aspects of sexual orientation, which is defined by Healy (2014:3) as “a person’s physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people”. The American Psychological Association in its *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Clients* (2012:11) describes sexual orientation as “a component of identity that includes a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behaviour and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction”. Being transgendered refers to one’s gender identity. It further implies that the person experiences “gender dysphoria”. Kaltiala-Heino, Bergman, Työläjärvi and Frisén (2018:31) define gender dysphoria as a condition in which a person has incongruence between the gender he/she experiences or wants to express and his/her biological sex at birth.

Coming out, as a gay or lesbian person, means that one allows others to know your sexual attraction and preference to the same sex. Coming out is also described as openly declaring one’s sexual orientation (in this case being LGBTIQ+), or to

openly declare something that was previously kept hidden. Coming out involves interplay between an interpersonal development event and an intrapersonal disclosure of sexuality (Russell & Fish, 2016:11). For Smuts (2011:24), coming out is not just a once-off event where a person openly declares his or her sexuality or gender identity, it involves a process from denial to acceptance, and only thereafter declaring your sexual orientation. Even when a person has declared his or her sexuality, it continues to be a process of disclosure. Coming out in a heterosexual society involves an “identity transformation process” where individuals explore their LGBTIQ+ orientation (Smuts, 2011:24).

On an international level, surveys conducted by the Pew Research Centre show that society as a whole has become more accepting of the LGBTIQ+ community. However, in America, over 45% of the sampled population still regard homosexuality as a sin (Drake 2013:1).

Research conducted by the ¹OUT organisation in South Africa, as part of a 2016 study on crime against LGBTIQ+ persons in the country, reflected the following statistics. Part of the study included the level of “outness” among South Africans regarding their sexual orientation.

TABLE 1.1: Level of outness by race and sexual orientation

Level of ‘outness’	Overall	Black	Mixed race	Indian	White
Sample	2130	817	193	52	1068
	%	%	%	%	%
No one knows	3	3	2	8	1
I am open to some people but not to everyone	40	46	32	41	26

¹ OUT provides direct health services to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, sex workers, and those individuals who are injecting drug users, including HIV testing, counselling, treatment and general lifestyle advice and support.

Completely open	57	51	66	52	74
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(OUT Organisation, 2016)

From the table above it is evident that in all the race groups, most of the respondents were selectively open or completely open about their sexual orientation and identity.

For a person to decide to and to eventually disclose his or her sexual orientation to others can be linked to the concept “sexual identity stress”, in that staying in the closet can contribute to the aforementioned stress, while coming out as homosexual plays an important role in the psycho-social wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ person (Wright & Perry, 2006:81). The American movements of gays and lesbians in the 1970s marked the “coming out story” of homosexuals, which became part of a “modernist tale” of self-discovery for gays and lesbians, and members could no longer hide their identities. “So militant was their demand for acknowledgement that certain rights and privileges had to be conceded to them” (Richardson & Seidman, 2002:6). The idea of “coming out” is however connected to the idea of being “in the closet” and therefore hiding one’s sexuality. Coming out is also linked to support from the ²“out community” (Obasola, 2013:79). Tamashiro (2015:1) describes coming out of the closet as living openly as an LGBTIQ+ person. He refers to it as the person’s first experience of same-sex sexuality, the persons’ experience of self-acceptance and participation in the homosexual community, as well as the person’s disclosure of sexual orientation to others. Most research has focussed on the coming out narratives of lesbian and gay persons. The coming out narratives of transgender people are under-researched. In an article by Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019:2), they affirm that more research is needed on transgender people’s experiences of coming out, adding that transgendered persons fear coming out and are worried about others’ (parents, family, the community) ability to cope with their coming out. In a study by West and Zimmerman (2009:55), they postulate that coming out for transgendered people differs greatly from coming out for gays or

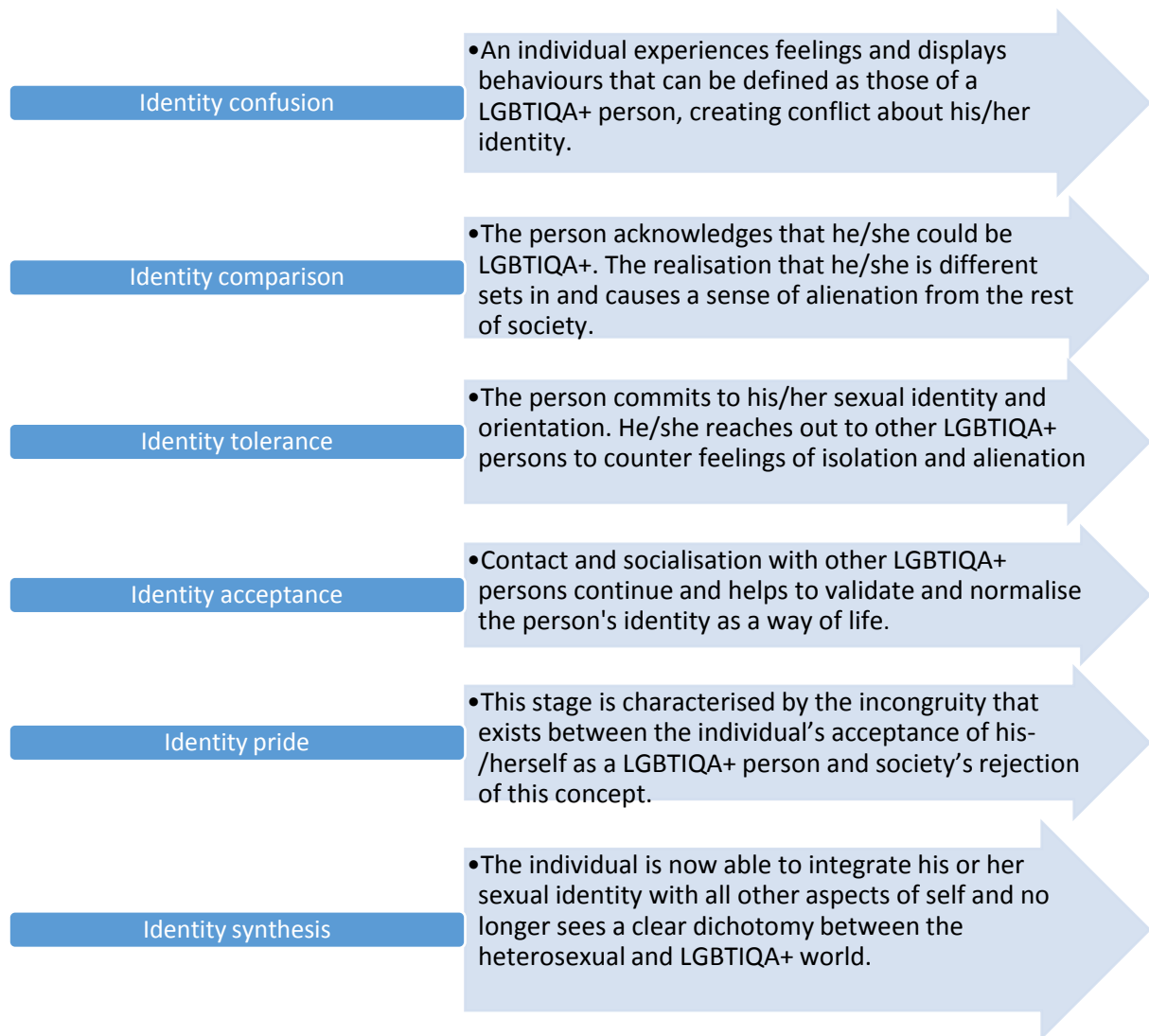
² Out community refers to those friends and community members around a person who have already come out about their LGBTIQ+ status and support the person who has newly come out with advice and guidance.

lesbians. In this study on the transitioning of transgender persons, they assert that there are two processes of coming out for transgender people: prior to transitioning, which can be called a “declaration” of intention, and after transitioning, which can be called “disclosure” of ³transitioning.

Coming out is described as a cumbersome and lifelong process of allowing others to know you for who you are (McDonald & Steinhorn, 1993:37). Cass’s (1984:143-167) developed a “coming out model” describing the process of coming out through different stages. This process starts where the LGBTIQ+ person experiences a time of confusion about his or her sexuality during he or she compares his or her sexual attractions to that of others and finds that he or she is different from the general population. Once he or she accepts this difference from others, he or she starts reaching out to other persons who also are homosexual (this way of behaving also rings true for bisexual or transgendered persons). The contact and validation from other lesbians and gays assists him or her in not just accepting his or her sexuality, but also in feeling pride for whom he or she is and incorporating his or her sexual identity in his or her everyday life. In the figure below the stages in the coming out process are depicted:

³ Transitioning is the process of changing the way you look; it could be medically, through hormone treatment, in dressing or changing your name and chosen pronouns, so that you become the gender you feel on the inside (Jellestad , Jäggi, Corbisiero, Schaefer, Jenewein, Schneeberger, Kuhn & Garcia Nuñez, 2018:1).

FIGURE 1.1: Stages of coming out



(Cass, 1984:143-167)

On the other end of coming out, is the person(s) and/or family members who the LGBTIQ+ person are coming out to. Most parents react to the coming out of a child as LGBTIQ+ by *going into the closet* to process the “shock and guilt of the ‘cause’ of their child’s sexual orientation and embarrassment in relation to reactions of friends and family” (Çamli & Sanders, 2012:457-458). Parents’ experience of children coming out can be traumatic, to the extent that it can be equated to mourning a death (Alpaslan, Johnston & Goliath, 2009:33; Ben-Ari, 1995:92; Johnston, 2003:41). Parents feel the loss of a child who will now not be following the perceived normal process of marrying and having children (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009:33; Denes & Afifi, 2014:4; Johnston, 2003:41). Ben-Ari (1995:92) describes

parental reactions as typically either child-oriented or parent-oriented. Child-oriented reactions include concerns about the child growing old alone, being judged and rejected by society and family, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Parent-oriented reactions include concerns that the biological family line will not be continued, “feeling like a failure” as a parent, and experiencing alienation from their child. Parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+, find themselves to be seen as not-normal and struggle to recover from this loss due to perceptions about them (Fields, 2001:172). Parents who are part of a religious affiliation suffer more in accepting their child being LGBTIQ+ (Kircher & Alijah, 2011:5). In research conducted by Johnston (2003:41) and Alpaslan *et al.* (2009:33) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa focusing on parent’s experiences on the coming out of a gay or lesbian child, one research participant, a father of a gay child who came out stated that it was like the “death of a dream”. A child’s coming out has an influence on the family system and the values the family had, which could change or shift due to the LGBTIQ+ child. Parental expectations of the LGBTIQ+ child also change, as the child will now not fulfil the expected heterosexual role (Willoughby, Malik & Lindahl, 2006:16).

LGBTIQ+ children feel certain pressures not to come out to their parents, which could be due to their race or ethnicity, the family’s religious convictions, or the threat that financial support may be withdrawn (Rasmussen, 2004:146). Parents often regard their child(ren)’s sexual orientation as LGBTIQ+ as a violation of the heterosexual norms of society (Fields, 2001:170). Parents and their children have a unique relationship that could add to the challenges a child experiences in coming out, making it more difficult (D’Amico & Julien, 2012:216). The LGBTIQ+ child’s experience of coming out depends on the parents’ acceptance or rejection, or where they are on the scale between acceptance and rejection (Rodriguez, 2014:4). Adverse reactions from the parents about their child being LGBTIQ+ therefore require careful consideration by children in coming out, forcing them to weigh the positives and negatives of doing so, because parents and society have the power to ostracise, reject, isolate, and even react violently (Savin-Williams, 1989:3).

Coming out in South Africa is further influenced by the South African way of bringing up children, which is described by Francis and Msibi (2011:164) as boys and girls being educated and guided from a young age to fulfil specific gender and societal roles, which put pressure on them to conform to societal norms for sexuality. Boys and girls are taught what the expected male and female roles and behaviours are. Wolf (2013:1) adds, “Homosexuals, bisexuals, and people who do not fit the gender norm, i.e. transgender and bi-gender people upset the dominance of patriarchy”, thereby going against the guided gender norms. Heterosexuality is therefore not just the societal norm, but also the desired and prescribed choice of sexuality that parents prefer for their children (Francis & Msibi, 2011:164).

Social pressures and prejudice against LGBTIQ+ persons are driven by heterosexism in society. Heterosexism is a system “of power, privilege and advantage” that sees being heterosexual as normal and superior to homosexual persons (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007:262). Thus, children who come out as LGBTIQ+ are seen as “abnormal” or inferior to heterosexual children. “South Africa remains a homophobic and heterosexist society, where across cultures, homosexuality is pathologised” (Henderson, 2010:2). Stereotypical viewpoints that consider being LGBTIQ+ as a sickness or being demonic have been perpetuated by the Christian and Moslem doctrines in African countries (Lyonga, 2014:784). While coping with heterosexism in society, LGBTIQ+ persons realise that they are different and that the heterosexist society’s perception is that difference in sexuality and gender identity is wrong. Lee and Lee (2011:28) explain that this realisation of being “wrong” or “abnormal” causes a longing in the LGBTIQ+ person to be “normal”. A conflict then arises between who a person is and who society wants him/her to be. Admitting the difference or coming out can become a coping strategy and bring relief, despite the emotional and physical risks involved (Lee & Lee, 2011:29).

Another aspect that needs to be underscored is the fact that coming out as LGBTIQ+ is culturally and contextually situated and has certain consequences for the person coming out. Howard (2014:3) mentions that “... race, colour, ethnicity works as interlocking systems of oppression for gays and lesbians”. This means that

mixed race or African lesbian and gay individuals experience multilevel discrimination. They are not discriminated against only because of their sexual orientation or identity, but also on the grounds of their race.

Various scholars (Bajaha, 2013:1; Mwikya, 2012:98; Wahab, 2015:2) have reported on the notion held by certain African leaders that homosexuality is “un-African” and a result of Western influence; therefore it is outlawed in African countries, including Zimbabwe, Uganda and Zambia. These scholars concluded that these allegations against homosexuality often were the direct influence of Western and European Christianity, rather than African conviction. The fact that homosexuality is regarded as un-African must however be taken into account when searching for insight into coming out patterns amongst African LGBTIQ+ persons, because as McCormick (2015:331) remarks, “The coming out narrative for individuals will differ according to societal, cultural and political contexts.” The African idea that being homosexual is “un-African” has been perpetuated by statements from former President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and former President Jacob Zuma from South Africa. President Mugabe claimed that homosexuality is “un-African” because it is a disease “coming from so-called developed nations” (Human Rights Watch, 2003:1). This perception that being gay or lesbian is “un-African” is also confirmed by Greene (1997:99-101) when he states that it further complicates the coming out process. President Zuma made a statement that “same sex marriage is a disgrace to the nation and to God”, adding, “When I was growing up unqingili (homosexuals) could not stand in front of me”, meaning he would punch the homosexual person (Robin, 2008:412).

Coming out affects mixed race and African LGBTIQ+ persons interpersonally, psychologically, socially and culturally, leading to apprehension in coming out. Graziano’s (2004:309) study on African gays and lesbians in post-apartheid South Africa found that all participants were forced to go for healing to a ⁴sangoma. One of the reasons is that the sangoma would rid their bodies of “evil spirits”. As much as the approach is that being LGBTIQ+ is abnormal and should not be condoned, Murray and Roscoe (1998:273) argue that the social code in Africa does not require

⁴ A *sangoma* is a traditional healer in African cultures.

an individual to suppress same-sex desires or behaviour, as long as these desires do not take the place of natural procreation. Social pressures on mixed race and African LGBTIQ+ persons mainly focus on maintaining conventional marriage and bearing children.

One of the worst consequences of coming out, specifically as lesbian or being identified as a lesbian in the South African context, is the possibility of experiencing⁵“corrective rape”. According to Koraan and Geduld (2015:1931), in a paper entitled *“Corrective Rape’ Of Lesbians In The Era Of Transformative Constitutionalism In South Africa”*, in the last 15 years there have been more than 31 corrective rapes and murders linked to lesbianism and that an average of ten lesbians are raped weekly in South Africa, because of their sexual preference. These “corrective rapes” are mainly because lesbians challenge men’s ideas of masculinity and heterosexuality and refuse their advances. The term “corrective rape” was first used in South Africa after the rapes and murders of Zoliswa Nkonyana and Eudy Simelane were reported in South African newspapers. Nkonyana was a 19-year-old openly lesbian teenager who was gang-raped and killed in 2006, whereas Simelane was an LGBTIQ+ activist and Banyana Banyana soccer player with a high public profile. The men accused of raping and murdering these women openly admitted to their acts with the idea of correction or reparation of lesbian behaviour in mind, such as wearing pants, being “butch” in their demeanour, or refusing to marry and have children (Van der Schyff, 2018:37-38). Punitive rape or assault of gay men is also a reality (Swarr, 2012:962). These hate crimes are motivated by homophobia, prejudice against sexuality, and heterosexism (Singh & Moss, 2016:402). Theron and Bezuidenhout (1995:2) explain the meaning of the concept “hate crime” as follows: a hate crime is “any behavioural expression (verbal and/or physical) that derives from homophobia, prejudice, discrimination, stigmatisation or heterosexism and is expressed towards homosexual or heterosexual individuals who are erroneously perceived to be gay”. Sexual prejudice in society is clear in the great numbers of these hate crimes, cases of harassment, physical violence, and rape of gays and lesbians. Coming out as gay or lesbian in South African society can be

⁵ "Corrective" rape refers to an instance when a woman is raped in order to "cure" her of her lesbianism (Koraan & Geduld, 2015:1931).

deadly, as seen in numerous newspaper reports (Collison, 2016:1). The coming out process for gays and lesbians, who are mixed race and African South Africans, is therefore complicated and much more serious due to the pressures to maintain a “natural marriage” and produce offspring, as well as the real physical dangers presented when coming out.

Conley (2011:1023) postulates that parents’ rejection of their LGBTIQ+ children or negative reactions are motivated by homophobia and heterosexism. If society in general did not discriminate against and marginalise gays and lesbians due to general attitudes of heterosexism, parents might not have reacted so negatively to such children (Conley, 2011:1024). Borhek (in Savin-Williams, 1989:3) concludes that the most accurate generalisation, which could be made about parents’ reaction upon coming to know about their children’s LGBTIQ+ identity, is that of “unpredictability”.

Parents of children coming out also suffer consequences: they find that they are perceived as more than just parents – they are now the parents of a LGBTIQ+ child (Fields, 2001:165). This could lead to loss of “moral standing”, as popular belief is that a parent should be “implicated” in a child’s sexuality or gender identity (Stewart, 2002:7-8). Conley (2011:1022) identifies three parental concerns/reactions when they hear that their child is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual:

- Concerns about societal perceptions of them as parents;
- Fear of rejection; and
- Concerns for the child’s physical and psychological safety and well-being.

Lesbians and gays’ willingness to come out in South African should be viewed against the backdrop of existing legislation. The present South African Constitution was adopted in 1996 and it includes equal rights for individuals who are LGBTIQ+.

- *Chapter 2, Section 9 of the South African Constitution* (1996:8) states: “It is emphasised that the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly

against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.”

Other legislation and policy documents in South African that include the protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ are:

- *The Employment Equity Act* (Act No 55 of 1998), which ensures that employers may not discriminate against employees based on their sexual orientation.
- *The Civil Union Act* (Act No 17 of 2006), which allows for same-sex marriages.
- *The White Paper on Families* (2012), which allows for same-sex families to be included in the definition of “family”.

Thus, being lesbian or gay is protected in the South African Constitution and same-sex marriages are confirmed under the Civil Union Act (Act No 17 of 2006). These relevant legislative support systems serve as encouragement for LGBTIQ+ persons to come out. However, it is still a difficult process for individuals to move from discovery of their differentness, to accept their sexual orientation as LGBTIQ+, and to reveal it publically (Weeks, 2013:1). In South Africa with its diverse cultural, societal, sexual and economic communities, and where heterosexism and patriarchy still dominates, the tendency remains to oppress the marginalised, the less fortunate, the vulnerable, and minority groups such as LGBTIQ+ persons.

As this study focused on mixed race and African parents’ experiences, challenges and coping strategies on the coming out of their children as LGBTIQ+, these experiences, challenges and coping strategies must be understood against the notions prevalent culturally, racially, societally and religiously within the mixed race or African cultures. Homosexuality within the mixed race and African culture is not new and can be traced back to the earliest Bushmen tribes through rock artwork and homosexual acts between men or between women (Murray & Roscoe,

1998:187). Homosexuality, however, remains complex and controversial, and still is outlawed in many African countries (Bajaha, 2013:1; Mwikya, 2012:98; Wahab, 2015:2;). Adding to this is the aspect of gender inequality. Muller and Hughes (2016:3) make mention of this in their study on the medical health of homosexual women in South African, stating that “although there have been some gains, gender inequality is still apparent due to the patriarchal nature of South African society”. They emphasise that most Southern African countries do not provide any special protection for persons of a different sexual orientation, despite the frequency of homophobic hate crimes.

When turning the focus of the discussion to examining the state of the knowledge on or related to the topic being investigated or related to the investigated, I came to the conclusion that research focused mostly on individuals and the personal experiences and discourses of coming out as LGBTIQ+. I came across the following studies:

- *A qualitative study on the coming out process of LGBTIQ+ youth* by Butler (2000) conducted in Port Elizabeth, South Africa;
- *A phenomenological study of the coming out experiences of LGBTIQ+ among Hmong* conducted in America under the minority group of Hmong lesbians living in Minnesota (Yang, 2008);
- *Coming to terms with coming out: review and recommendations for family systems-focused research* – a study conducted by Heatherington and Lavner (2008) focused on adolescents and youth coming out in determining how families adapt and adjust to a child’s gay or lesbian status;
- *Queering discourses of coming out in South Africa* by McCormick (2015), where she investigates existing literature in terms of using terms such as “gay” or “lesbian”, and what the effect thereof is on society’s homophobia;
- *Stigma and disclosure: implications for coming out the closet* (Corrigan & Mathews, 2009);
- *Changing family dynamics: a sibling comes out*, where the research participants were the brothers and sisters of siblings who came out as gay or lesbian (Jenkins, 2005);

- *Coming-out: narratives across generations* (Dunlap, 2014). The participants in this study were from five different general groups and Dunlap investigated how they experienced coming out at different ages.

Thus, the personal narratives of gays and lesbians when coming out are well documented; however, research on transgender people is limited.

Research, specifically on the experiences of parents when children come out, is mostly conducted internationally. The research includes:

- *Understanding the experiences of parents of children coming out* (Kircher & Ahlajah, 2011: NACSW Convention, North American Association of Christians in Social Work). The research focussed on the parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children from rural areas in North America.
- A study by Waldner and Magruder (2008) titled *Coming Out To Parents: Perceptions Of Family Relations, Perceived Resources, And Identity Expression As Predictors Of Identity Disclosure For Gay And Lesbian Adolescents* researched how strengths in the family affect the coming out process of gay and lesbian youth.
- *Family Dynamics and Changes in Sibling of Origin Relationship After Lesbian and Gay Sexual Orientation Disclosure* (Hilton & Szymanski, 2011). Data analysis of this study produced findings in terms of siblings (participants) having had suspicions that the gay or lesbian sibling was LGBTIQ+, feelings of protectiveness towards the sibling, disappointment in how their parents handled the coming out of the LGBTIQ+ sibling, and increased acceptance of the sexual orientation of the sibling.
- In a study by Fields (2001), *Straight parents respond to children coming out*, she investigates how a child coming out as gay or lesbian affects the esteem of “normal” parenthood to parents. ⁶“Straight” parents are influenced by the values of heteronormative societal standards in terms of the sexuality and gender identity of their children. Once these perceptions of heteronormative

⁶ “Straight” is a slang word to refer to heterosexual persons.

standards are changed, parents find it easier to accept their gay or lesbian child.

- *The voices of accepting and supportive parents of gay sons, a qualitative study* by Lee and Lee (2011) examined parental experiences of accepting their sons, the parents' growth in relationships with their sons, the parents' accounts of their own coming out processes, as well as the eco-systems influencing the parents' coming out processes.
- *Coming out during adolescence: perceived parental reactions and internalized sexual stigma* (Baiocco, Fontanesi, Santamaria, Ioverno, Baumgartner & Laghi, 2016) is a study in which the researchers investigated how parental acceptance or rejection of a child's LGBTIQA+ status influences the child's physical and emotional health.
- Steward (2002) conducted a study, *When parents come out as parents of gay and lesbian children: a transformation of the self*. In this study, he found that parents whose children come out as gay or lesbian redefine themselves due to the children's coming out, and that it is an identity reforming process.

One South African study was found that focused on a topic closely related to the one under investigation. It was a study done by Johnston (2003) on the topic of parents' experiences regarding the coming out process of a gay or lesbian child. From this study, Alpaslan *et al.* (2009) published a journal article with the same title. With the exception of two participants who were mixed race, all the other participants in Johnston's study were white. No African participants were included. Johnston (2003:115) recommended in her study that a wider study, including African participants, should be conducted.

Against the background provided and the introductory remarks, the focus of the next discussion will centre on the problem statement of the study.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The formulation of a research problem is the starting point for every research endeavour and encapsulates the focus of the study (Fouché & Delport, 2011:108).

The research problem must therefore be clearly indicated (Creswell, 2014:20). The research problem, culminating in a *problem statement*, is described in simple terms by various scholars (Bryman, 2007:5; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:22) as an issue of interest; an area of concern; conditions that need to be studied and for which an in-depth understanding is required; or a gap in the body of knowledge warranting an investigation.

The following facts are provided to introduce the problem statement of the study: To come out as LGBTIQ+ in the predominately African or mixed race communities in South Africa may lead to the parents of such children being ostracised and rejected by family and friends, losing their “moral standing” in the community, and being implicated as the cause of their child’s sexual orientation (Conley, 2011:1022; Stewart, 2002:7-8). Despite the fact that the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons are protected in pieces of legislation (Constitution, 1996; The Employment Equity Act (Act No 55 of 1998); The Civil Union Act (Act No 17 of 2006); the White Paper on Families, 2012), they still experience discrimination within the family, the community, and in society at large (Butler, 2007:72). Parents of LGBTIQ+ children have concerns for their child’s physical and psychological safety and well-being. Apart from the fact that parents are acutely aware that their LGBTIQ+ offspring are vulnerable to discrimination by family, friends, and the community, they also know that they are susceptible to fall prey to hate crimes such as corrective rape, murder and assaults.

Concerning the state of the knowledge on the topic, various scholars (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009:44; Butler, 2000:549; Meezan & Martin, 2008:6; Johnston, 2003:115) hold the view that social work research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues is still in its “infancy”, as it only surfaced about 50 years ago. Likewise, homegrown social work service, tailor-made to address the needs of these vulnerable groups, is lacking (Saltzburg, 2004:109). Given this, recommendations, specifically for more qualitative research on LGBTIQ+ issues, are proposed (Butler, 2000:549).

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned, the problem statement formulated for this study is: *There appears to be a gap in the home-grown body of knowledge from*

the ambit of social work reporting specifically on mixed race and African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies related to the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+. Coming out causes a transition in the relationship between parent and child which require changes and adaptation in behaviour (Schlossberg, 1981:5), as this event has the propensity to result in reactions, stumbling blocks and methods of coping in the parent of a child who came out.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study, to quote Rojon and Saunders (2012:3), provides the reasons why the study is important in general and specifically to the researcher. These authors (2012) further mention that the rationale is closely related to and supported by a review of the body of knowledge on the topic (as indicated in the previous section) to assist in identifying gaps in the existing body of knowledge and research in order to strengthen the motivation for why the study is necessary. In other words, the rationale provides the justification for embarking on a specific research journey. Bryman (2007:20) concurs with this statement that gaps in existing theory, literature and research might provide the motivation for why a study should be conducted. Dudovskiy (2016:1) describes the rationale for the study as providing “valid arguments” as to why the researcher will undertake the study, as well as what motivates the researcher on a personal level. The rationale can therefore be summarised as the reasons why a researcher chooses a certain topic, backed by gaps in existing research, and based on a personal interest.

I am an “out” lesbian, an activist for LGBTIQ+ rights, and a campaigner for the protection of the vulnerabilities of marginalised groups. I also had a personal journey of coming out to my parents. The fact that “coming out” as lesbian to my parents assisted them over time to embrace my sexual orientation and accept me for who I am piqued my interest in this topic and motivated me to embark on this research journey. When I was employed as a social worker in a rural community on the border of Botswana, I noticed how scared LGBTIQ+ children were to come out to their parents due to a fear of rejection. Those who came out were often scolded and rejected by their parents and family. I found that it was acceptable to behave

homosexual, or conduct homosexual acts, as long as the person did not regard him/herself as openly gay or lesbian. For transgendered clients, the situation was even worse and one of my clients who wanted to transition to male was brutally gang-raped. Parents often felt that the LGBTIQ+ child was a disgrace to the family and caused them shame. Serving further, and on a personal level as motivation for undertaking this research, was the opinion of LaSala *et al.* (2008:61), who asserted that “lesbian and gay investigators who study lesbians and gay men may bring special knowledge and understanding to their research ...”. What further provided justification for this study was that the body of knowledge and research on the topic were lacking, as alluded to under the background and the introduction section, as well as the problem formulation of this study.

The intention with this study was to add to the home-grown body of knowledge on the topic and to forward suggestion for social work support to mixed race and African parents in terms of the experiences and challenges they experience around the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child. The study was also intended to search for suggestions for social workers to strengthen or expand parents’ repertoire of coping strategies in this regard.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a paucity in literature on defining “theoretical framework” and/or “conceptual framework” and the two terms are used interchangeably (Green, 2013:34-38). A theoretical framework can be described as the focus of the study and the lens through which the study can be perceived. It explains and provides understanding of the outcome of the study (Anfara & Mertz, 2008:3; Greene, 2013:34-38;). According to Botma, Van Rensburg, Coetzee and Heyns (2013:499-501), the purpose of this section is to “frame” the research work by locating the study within a larger discipline, thereby anchoring the study in that discipline. The aim of a study therefore includes adding to or enhancing the existing theories and body of literature available. The theoretical framework highlights certain elements pertaining to the study that the researcher wants to focus on. Ngulube and Mathipa (2015:2) state that researchers should have a well thought-out theory in order to apply theory

correctly in the study as the “theory guides the researcher through the research process by providing a ‘lens’ to look at the phenomenon under study” (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:274). The researcher must therefore choose the most relevant and encompassing theory/theories to highlight, explain and ground the study.

A study titled *The Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation* by McCubbin and McCubbin is linked to Hill’s Stress Theory was used as the scope through which to investigate and understand the topic (Weber, 2011:30). This theory and the strength-based theory were adopted as theoretical framework for the study. The resiliency model of family stress, adjustment and adaptation provides assessment methods of family functioning and coping strategies utilised by families during a perceived stressful event/crisis and to what extent the crisis disrupts a family’s functioning (Alianiello, 2005:1; Weber, 2011:3-6). A resilient family is regarded as a one who has the ability to adapt to, bounce back, and strengthen itself after being affected by a stressful social context event (Walsch, 2016:313). In addition, resilience comprises of ingredients inherent to a person (or internal factors), such as character traits and attitude, and external ingredients, such as community and familial support. The ability to develop meaning after this event, be it through faith or otherwise, are often important factors in the development of resilience (Greene *et al.*, 2008:78). With regard to resilience and its linkage to the ⁷Strength-based Theory, Zimmerman (2013:381) states that the Resiliency Theory provides the conceptual framework for applying a strength-based approach to understand how a person or a family unit overcome and grow through stressful events by utilising their strengths.

Walsch (2012:399) describes resilience as “the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges”. There are three key processes, according to Walsch (2012:406-407), in Family Resilience that will influence how the family responds to the crisis:

⁷ This strength-based approach relies on six principles: (a) the focus is on individual strengths, not on “disease”; (b) the community is perceived as a resource; (c) interventions are done through client self-determination; (d) the relationship between social worker and client is seen as foremost and essential; (e) aggressive outreach is utilised as the preferred means of intervention; and (f) people are seen as being able to learn, grow and change (Saint-Jacques, Turcotte & Pouliot, 2009:454).

- ***The family's belief system*** about the event will not only determine how they will react, but how they are going to bounce back. If the parents cannot reconcile themselves with the idea of having a LGBTIQA+ child, as this is against their religious convictions, then they are going to respond in a negative way. In an attempt to establish the equilibrium in the family system, they may go as far as to sever ties with the child.
- ***The flexibility of the family as a system to accommodate change without losing its stability pointing to organisational patterns*** – The question is: Are the parents (family) stable enough to embrace the child's homosexual orientation?
- ***The family's communication and/or problem-solving abilities*** – Is free expression allowed in the family and do they possess collaborative problem-solving skills? Are the family talking to each other or about each other regarding the stressor event?

Coyle (2006:2) confirms Walsch's description of resilience and the key process enabling them to rebound and explains it as a family's ability to adjust to stress. He (2006) postulates that this ability to adjust to the stressor event is a function of

- how vulnerable the family is to stress factors,
- the family's ability to solve problems,
- how the family defines the stressors, and
- what resources are available to the family to handle the stressors.

The coming out of a child can be a very stressful time for both the child and the parents (Ben-Ari, 1995:92; Çamli & Sanders, 2012:457-458). Jenkins (2005:3) found that although siblings often provide support to a brother or sister coming out, there are instances where the coming out event is perceived negatively and puts strain on the sibling relationships, and thereby on the rest of the family unit. Whether the child is an adult or a teenager, coming out still affects the family, and could even affect the extended family (D'Augelli, 2005:117). Parents then have to "come out" as the parents of a gay or lesbian child to their extended family and the community,

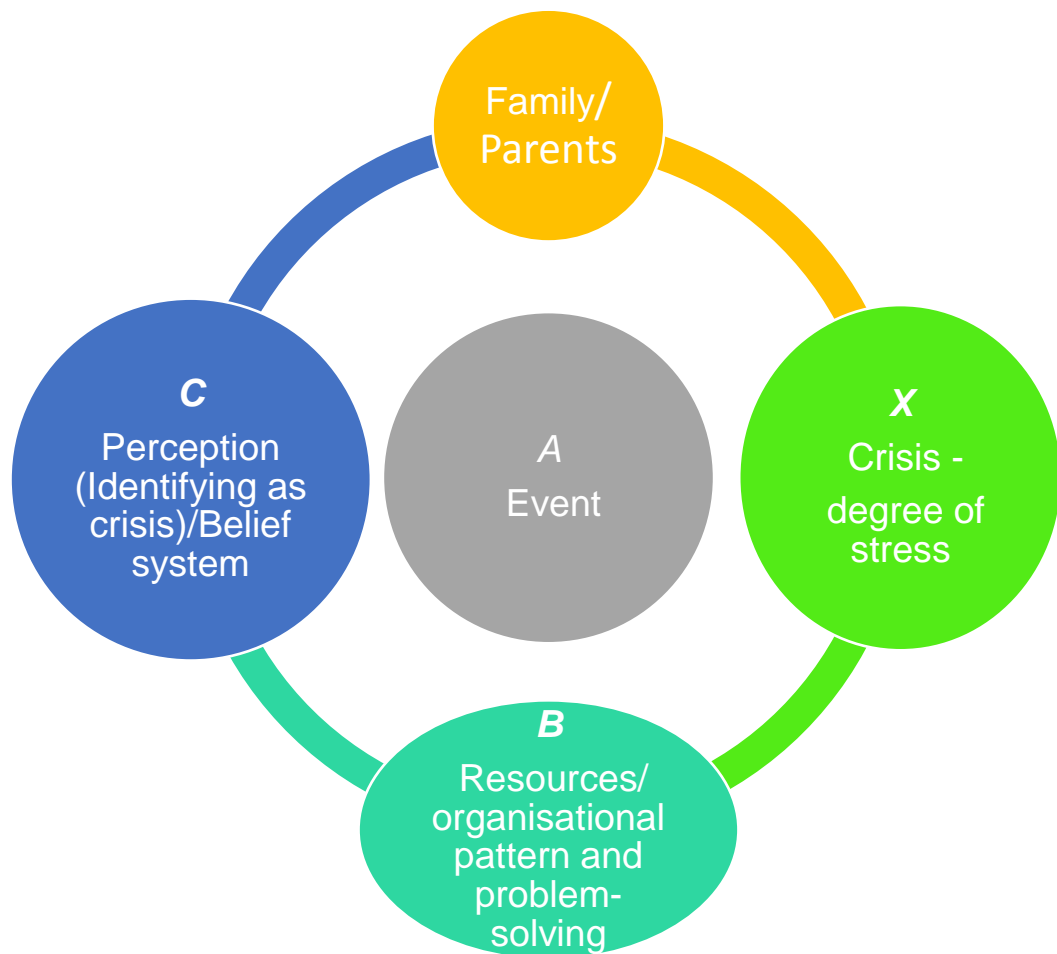
which could cause a stressor event in their lives. In studies by various scholars (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009:33; Johnston, 2003:45; Soldati-Kahimbaara, 2016:117), the parents' first reactions when learning about their child's homosexual orientation were shock, confusion and denial.

The **Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation** provides a theoretical base from which to explain and describe parental experiences in terms of their stress reaction to their child coming out, as well as how they adjusted and adapted to the knowledge of having a LGBTIQ+ child. Reich, Zautra and Hall (2012:35) have identified certain psychosocial factors to explain how a family or an individual regains resilient after a stressor event, including:

- They adopt active coping strategies, such as beliefs and perceptions, the organisation/family structure and family communications.
- They remain positive emotionally.
- They reframe the stressful or crisis event in a positive light.
- They enlist social support from family members, extended family and community members.

Hill's Stress Theory, which also links directly to this study, provides an understanding of how stress/a crisis is identified, defined and responded to. Hill explained his Stress Theory in terms of the Model ABCX, as per Figure 1.2 below:

FIGURE 1.2: ABCX Model



(Walsch, 2012:406-407)

A child's coming out could be regarded as an event that could be experienced as stressful in a family's functioning. How the family narrate the stressor event, indicates how they perceive, organise and make sense of the event (Houston, 2018:19).

Factor A (the event – a child coming out as LGBTIQQA+) causes an upset, a disequilibrium, and may even ignite a crisis in the family's functioning, causing a degree of stress. In order to respond to the crisis and maintain the family's equilibrium, they take stock of their resources (B – coping strategies) to alleviate the crisis caused by the event. If they subjectively conclude that the family's resources (B – coping strategies) are not enough to meet the challenge of the event, they then

define/perceive this event (C) as a crisis, and it becomes a family crisis (X). Applying the ABCX Model as the theoretical framework assisted the researcher to indicate whether the event of the child's coming out as gay or lesbian was perceived as a crisis and also to report on the coping strategies (resources) they employed to manage the event, whether it would be perceived as a crisis or not. If the event (A) was identified as a crisis (X), the family goes through a process of coping with or bouncing back from the event, which relates to the aspect of "resiliency" in the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adaptation and Adjustment.

How families recover or bounce back, according to Weber (2011:30), can place families or relationships within families in one of the following three phases:

- **The Adjustment Phase:**

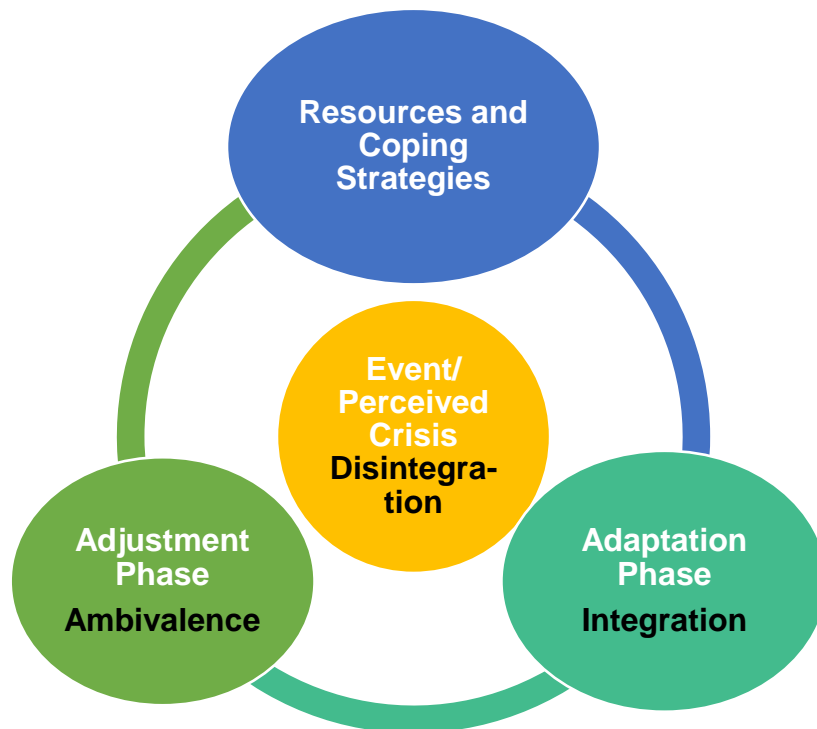
This phase could become "bon-adjustment", meaning that balance and harmony have been restored; or it could be maladjustment, which means that the crisis situation remains. In the context of this study, it could mean that the parent's embrace the child's homosexual identity or refuse to accept it or deny the true and real state of affairs.

- **The Adaptation Phase:**

In this phase, the family has been able to cope with and effectively handle the crisis situation and has adapted to it. New family strengths have been developed. Family adaptation can be described as the degree to which a family adapts its internal systems and functions, such as behaviour, rules, roles and perceptions, in order to adapt the family system to the environmental demands (stress factor/perceived crisis) (Price, Price & McKendry, 2008:14).

The figure below indicates the processes/phases parents go through in adapting to a stressor event/change in the family system:

FIGURE 1.3 Linking theories with parental experiences of children coming out



(D'Augelli, 2005:122; Weber, 2011:30)

In linking the above theories with parental experiences of children coming out, D'Augelli (2005:122) indicates that parents go through the following three stages when hearing that their child is LGBTIQ+:

- ***The disintegration stage***

Parents go through a period of shame and guilt when the family's "secret" is out.

- ***The ambivalent stage***

Parents partly or selectively attempt to include aspects of the disclosed child homosexual orientation in their lives by finding some positive aspects about the child being LGBTIQ+.

- ***The integration stage***

Parents realise they cannot change their child's orientation or gender identity and full integration into the family as a whole takes place.

In conclusion, the Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation Theory developed by McCubbin and McCubbin and Hill's ABCX Model were chosen as the adopted theoretical framework for this study and became the proverbial coat closet (Maxwell, 2013:49). The constructs of this theory, such as the event (A) of the coming out, the reactions of the parents and their coping strategies (resources) (B), determining their perception (C) of whether the event is a crisis (X) will be of guidance in answering the research questions. In addition, and by reflecting on the coping resources and strategies employed by the participants, I would be able to ascertain how family (parents) assimilated the event of their child's coming out as LGBTIQA+. This will be possible by indicating if it led to the disintegration of, or ambivalence in, the family and parent-child relationships, or if the family or the parents integrated the child's orientation or gender nonconformity.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION(S), PRIMARY GOAL(S) AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section presents the research question(s), and the goal and objectives of the study.

1.5.1 Research question(s)

The formulation of research questions, at the outset of a study, is a particularly significant step as it focuses, gives shape, and provides direction in terms of what specific areas the study will address. In addition, research questions also inform and narrow the research aims and objectives (Agee, 2009:431; Creswell, 2012:60; Creswell, 2014:241; Doody & Bailey, 2016:19-20; Fouché, De Vos & Delport, 2011:80;). In summary, the research question is a signpost indicating to the researcher what to examine; it also assists in guiding the researcher in conducting the study.

At the outset of the study, the following questions were formulated to focus the study and to guide me in terms of what to examine about the phenomenon chosen for investigation:

Research questions

What are the experiences of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+?

What are the challenges of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+?

What are the coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents of child(ren) coming out as LGBTIQ+?

How would mixed race and African South African parents like to be supported by social workers in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child?

These research questions informed the goals and objectives of the study presented next.

1.5.2 Research goals

To frame a research project, one has to specify its research goals (Wieringa, 2014:13). The research goal(s) can be described as the “dream” and refers to the description or formulation of what the researcher wishes to attain through the research study (De Vos, Strydom & Delpont, 2011:94). The research goal is the overall purpose of the research study and sets the stage for the objectives. The goal is the overarching outcome that the enquiry aims to achieve (Thomas & Hodges, 2010:38). Maxwell (2013:23) proffers that the goal of the research refers to the reasons and intentions for wanting to conduct the research; therefore, it is the overall aim of what answers the study will arrive at, shaping the enquiry to form attainable objectives.

The research goals formulated for this study were the following:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of mixed race and African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies regarding the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+.
- To proffer suggestions in terms of how social workers support mixed race and African parents with the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+.

Originating from the research questions and the goals, the following objectives were formulated to answer the stated research questions and realise the goals set for the study.

1.5.3 Research objectives

In writing about research objectives, Doody and Bailey (2016:22) state: "Determining the research's aim leads naturally to determining its objectives. Research objectives are more specific than the aim and relate directly to the research question." Fouché *et al.* (2011:94) are of the opinion that the objectives refer to the "steps" the researcher has to take to realise the research goals formulated in respect of the study. Research objectives are therefore the building blocks that must be stacked to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants by setting out to learn how they make sense of their circumstances (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton & Ormston, 2013:4). Furthermore, research objectives are "geared" to better understand behaviours and perceptions (Ben-Elia, Ettema & Boeije, 2011:4).

The following objectives were formulated to aid the process of the realisation of the goals:

- To obtain a sample of mixed race and African South African parents whose child have come out as LGBTIQ+.

- To conduct semi-structured interviews, contained in an interview guide, with a sample of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+.
- To explore the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.
- To sift, sort and analyse data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2014:198) in order to interpret data.
- To describe the findings regarding the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child and how they would like to be supported by social workers in this regard.
- To interpret the data and conduct literature control in order to verify the data.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations about the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of a LGBTIQ+ child and to present suggestions for social work support to parents in this regard.

In the following section, aspects of research methodology, specifically referring to the research approach and the research design proposed for this study, are introduced.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In explaining the concept research methodology, Howell (2012:2) writes that it is “the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research is to be undertaken”. Carter and Little (2007:1318) understand research methodology to refer to the research approach and design adopted for a study. The key question to consider when deciding on a research approach and design is: “What types of methods are best suited for the goals of my research project?” (Taylor, DeVault & Bogdan, 2016:25). This question will be answered in the ensuing discussion.

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH

In my profession as a social worker and in this context as a researcher, I subscribe to a constructivist or interpretivist paradigm, meaning that my ontological assumptions (or beliefs about what constitutes fact or reality) are subjective. How mixed and African parents experience the coming out of a LGBTIQ+ child, what their challenges are in this situation, and how they cope with it – the facts or reality – are multi-layered and are established through discourse (Melinkovas, 2018:35; Moser & Korstjens, 2017:271; Thomas, 2016:123). Elaborating, Melinkovas (2018:35) states, "... thus existing or socially constructed reality may be only researched through social constructions as consciousness or language". Reality is socially constructed and constantly evolving; therefore, knowledge and facts are relative and subjective. As qualitative research is associated with the constructivist paradigm, and it resonates with my ontological belief, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach for this study.

Qualitative research can be defined as research that investigates the experiences and opinions of participants and thereby facilitates the exploration and description of fields of interest (Ben-Elia *et al.*, 2011:4). In following a qualitative research approach, participants are invited through interviewing to share their lived experiences within the context of the research questions. It is assumed that people in general interact in meaningful ways with others and their environment. Ben-Elia *et al.* (2011:4) conclude that these meaningful and meaning-giving ways of interaction between the researcher and the participant frames the research and provides descriptive and rich information that can translate into meaningful findings. According to De Vos, Strydom, Schulze and Patel (2011:5), the qualitative approach is an inductive and naturalistic strategy to examine a problem without a predetermined hypothesis. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:236) provide a short, but powerful, description of qualitative research as "the understanding of a certain phenomenon within the complexity of its natural context."

Creswell (2007:36) states that qualitative research takes place in a natural setting and these investigations provide an interpretive view of the natural world. The

qualitative researcher is deeply aware and intimately involved in the reality and the mentioned “natural context” of the study. This context is provided by the research setting, the participants of the study, and the data collected (Yates & Leggett, 2016:255). Ritchie *et al.* (2013:3) postulate that the qualitative researcher is more concerned about “what” “why” and “how” questions, rather than “how many”. These authors (2013) explain that qualitative studies aim to provide relevance and application to a wider range of cases than the specific sample. They also aim to produce “meaningful evidence” (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013:23). McLeod (2015:196) asserts that whereas quantitative studies have a top-down approach, in qualitative studies the approach is bottom-up, where the voice of the participant or phenomena under study receives preference. The qualitative researcher therefore searches for “subjective” interpretations and meaning-making by participants (Hesse-Biber, 2016:2). To sum up, my understanding is that the qualitative research approach is employed when the researcher is interested in the participants’ lived experiences as they occur in their natural life circumstances/settings in that it allows for exploration and description of these experiences as the participants make sense of the experiences and give meaning to them.

Various scholars (Ben-Elia *et al.*, 2011:4; Creswell, 2007:36; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:5; Hesse-Biber, 2016:2; Moser & Korstjens, 2017:272) highlight the following characteristics as inherent to the qualitative research approach:

- Qualitative researchers study the phenomena in the natural contexts of individuals.
- It searches for underlying meaning and in-depth understanding.
- The participants’ points of view, experiences, recollections and personal insights guide the research process and provide the data for the research.
- The researcher is the “tool” to obtain information.
- The aim is to obtain a rich description of the problem or issue.
- Normally data is collected via personal face-to-face interviews.
- The research design is not fixed, but emerges as the research is conducted.
- It is exploratory in nature. The researcher explores the realities of the problem or phenomenon from the perspective of an insider.

- The approach is holistic and inductive.
- Small purposive samples are used to collect a vast amount of verbal data, which is then analysed to gain insight into the research problem under study.
- Reflexivity is important, with the researcher being aware of and reflecting on personal, cultural and social contexts to ensure that they do not interfere with the outcome of the study.

Considered against the nature and characteristics of qualitative research introduced above, I deemed this approach appropriate for exploring and describing mixed race and African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies regarding the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+ and to elicit suggestions on how social workers could support them and parents like them with the coming out of a child as LGBTIQ+, by means of engaging in semi-structured interviews.

In conclusion, and pointing to the usefulness of qualitative research, Marlow (2010:140,206) reiterates that qualitative research has already made a significant contribution to social work research through the gathering of in-depth data in a certain context. Qualitative research has expanded the existing knowledge base of the social phenomena under study; this added to the motivation for using the qualitative research approach for this study.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is described as the process of systematic planning of the research process in order to permit valid conclusions (Ruane, 2016:40; Smith, 2014:27). Harwell (2011:148) opines that the research design used is determined by the research question. Bless *et al.* (2013:157) concur with this, stating that the research design leads to the answering of the research questions, adding that an appropriate research design will have high internal validity. In qualitative research the idea of an emergent design is propagated and must be regarded as a flexible way of gathering data and a means of adding data to the basis of what was already found (Moser & Korstjens, 2017:272; Taylor *et al.*, 2016:8).

As I adopted a qualitative approach, I was drawn towards employing the classical qualitative research designs, and specifically the phenomenological and case study designs (Creswell, 2014:13; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:277). In addition, and given the fact that the objectives of this research was to explore and describe mixed race and African parent's experiences, challenges and coping strategies as it relates to the context of the coming out of their child as LGBTIQA+, I added the explorative, descriptive and contextual strategies of inquiry to the mentioned designs chosen.

1.8.1 Phenomenological research design

Phenomenological research, as a qualitative research tradition, has its roots in philosophy and psychology, and focuses on exploring the lived experiences of human beings by giving a voice to experience and ascribing meaning to participants' words (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:277). Creswell and Poth (2017:71) confirm that when using the phenomenological approach participants are invited to give detailed accounts of their personal experiences. According to De Chesnay (2014:xv), a phenomenological research design seeks to answer the question: What is the essence of the experience? Thus, it could be said that in a phenomenological research design, the participants share what they experience as the core of the problem or issue under study.

In this study, my intention was to utilise the phenomenological research design to invite the participants to share their experiences and challenges in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQA+ child, and the coping strategies they employed to manage the challenges experienced.

1.8.2 Collective instrumental case study design

Providing a simplistic explanation of what case study research is, Korstjens and Moser (2017:277) state that it is "a research method involving a thorough, in-depth analysis of an individual, group or other social unit's situation". Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Aziz (2011:1) provide a more elaborate explanation, stating that a case study is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted

understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. Where the research questions are focused on the “what”, “why”, and “how” related to a phenomenon, as experienced by participants, a case study design is well suited for this purpose (Yin, 2013:2).

The concept “collective” in a collective case study implies the studying of a phenomenon from the perspectives of multiple cases (Snow, Wolff, Hudspeth & Etheridge, 2009:234-244; Thomas, 2016:172), or in this study, multiple parents. Planning to use the collective case study “instrumentally” means that the researcher uses this design with a specific purpose or aim in mind. One of the instrumental uses of the case study is to gain insight into the topic being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018:98). This purpose matched the aim of the study, which was to develop an in-depth understanding, insight, or a greater appreciation of the phenomenon (Crowe *et al.*, 2011:2), namely, the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed and African parents in relation to the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+. Another instrumental use of a case study is to inform policy or professional practice (Simons in Thomas, 2016:10). This tied in with another of the research aims I had formulated, namely that of proffering suggestions for social worker on how to support mixed race and African parents on the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+.

From the discussion above, it is clear that deciding on the collective instrumental case study design as part of the strategy of inquiry was a sound decision.

1.8.3 Explorative research design

In qualitative research, the explorative research design guides the researcher not to focus on just one aspect of the subject matter, but rather to explore the meanings of the phenomena as they appear during the study (Ruane, 2016:31). Explorative design is used to arrive at answers to certain research questions and is usually employed at the beginning of the research (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014:14). Explorative research is also used when there is limited knowledge or a gap in information on a specific issue or topic. Then the goal is to obtain an in-depth

understanding of the situation, topic or phenomena (Bless *et al.*, 2013:60). Singleton and Straits (2010:107) affirm this by stating that exploratory studies are undertaken where little or no information/knowledge is available on a subject matter or phenomena.

In this study, I foresaw the adoption of an explorative research design as part of the strategy of inquiry as the topic of research was chosen because it was under-researched, and more information on and a broader understanding of LGBTIQ+ issues were required.

1.8.4 Descriptive research design

Description is a type of interpretation, which forms part of the inductive nature of qualitative research (Yin, 2011:209). In employing the descriptive research design, the researcher first invites the participants to put words to their experiences around the phenomenon being investigated; thus, providing for a detailed account of certain phenomena, social settings, or a person's experience, to later be described as research findings (Ruane, 2016:35; Rubin & Babbie, 2005:125). In addition, descriptive research allows for describing a person's position within a certain setting/context and allows the researcher to come to understand participants' daily activities, interpersonal and communal interactions, points of view on the phenomenon being investigated, and how they present themselves (Taylor *et al.*, 2016:87).

I intended to include the descriptive design, as I wanted to provide the participants with an opportunity to describe their experiences, challenges and coping strategies as they related to the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+, but also to describe as findings the aforementioned aspects.

1.8.5 Contextual research design

Contextual research means that the researcher does the study in view of "certain conditions wherein the person lives". This could include society, institutions and the

environment (Yin, 2011:8). The contextual research design aims to understand events against the background of the participants' interrelations with factors in their contexts, thereby ensuring that the whole of the situation is understood (Marlow, 2010:225). Neuman (2014:111) confirms the importance of context, stating that thoughts and actions should be understood within their social context. He further states that the "same events or behaviours may have different meanings in different cultures or historical areas" (Neuman, 2014:111). In summary, one could state that contextual research design takes into account the setting or context in which the data is collected. This could include cultural, religious, economic, historical and social settings.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher expected to frame the research within the societal, cultural, religious, familial and personal contexts of the participants, ensuring that understanding took place within the person-in-environment perspective.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODS

The concept "research method" points to the activities to be executed, the organising of the process, and the tools to be used for reaching participants to conduct the research (Kumar, 2008:5). The research methods involve a description of the specific strategies and methods that were employed in the study to choose a population and sample, and collect data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011:118). Creswell (2009:15) concurs by stating that research methods refer to the ways in which data is collected, analysed and interpreted as proposed by the researcher to utilise in the study.

To sum up: research methods refer to the "how" to recruit participants and how to collect data from the recruited participants. Next, the planning of these activities and how the data was analysed and verified are introduced.

1.9.1 Population, sampling and sampling techniques

In the context of research, Thomas (2017:141) describes “population” as the “total number of all possible individuals relating to a particular topic which *could* (if we had the money and resources) be included in the study”. Other scholars (Neuman, 2014:171, Polit-O’Hara & Beck, 2006:506, Ruane, 2016:40) hold a similar view and refer to the population as the total pool of people sharing a commonality applicable to a study. For Bless *et al.* (2013:161), population is the entire set of cases or persons with specific characteristics from whom the researcher needs to gather data in order to come to conclusions in the study. The population identified for this study originally was intended to be all mixed race and African parents in Tshwane, in the Gauteng Province in South Africa, who had experienced the coming out of a child as LGBTIQA+, but due to a lack of participants, I included the whole of South Africa.

Due to time and money constraints and the advice put forward by Miles *et al.* (in Punch, 2016:82) that, “you cannot study everyone, everywhere doing everything”, I decided to draw a sample from the identified population. In explaining the concept “sampling”, Bless *et al.* (2013:161) state that sampling is the activity of choosing a “group of participants that will accurately represent a much wider group (the population)”. For Moser and Korstjens (2018:10), sampling relates to the search for and selecting of participants who would provide rich data on the phenomenon of interest. In other words, sample refers to a smaller number drawn from the target population for inclusion in the study and from whom data would be collected (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:42; Thomas, 2017:143).

In reflecting on which sampling techniques I would use for the recruitment of participants from the population, I decided to use sampling techniques that are inherent to the qualitative research approach adopted for this study. In qualitative research, the researcher samples deliberately (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:10); for this reason I decided on purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

In **purposive sampling**, the participants are chosen with a specific purpose in mind (Creswell, 2009:198) and in a deliberate manner. Ruane (2016:248) confirms

this by stating, "... a purposive sample utilizes specialized knowledge or insight to select the elements for the sample". I mindfully, and by keeping the study's purpose in mind, set out to find and select participants who have experienced the phenomenon being investigated first-hand; who thus are "information-rich" and able to provide the "most relevant and plentiful data" on the phenomenon of interest (Reybold, Lammert & Stribling, 2012:700; Suri, 2011:65).

In assisting me to deliberately or purposively recruit participants, I developed the following criteria to determine who would be included in the study:

- Mixed race and African parents;
- Males and females who would have gone through the coming out of their child as LGBTIQA+, and who would be able to reflect on their experiences and challenges in this regard, and the coping strategies they employed to address the challenges experienced;
- Participants who would be willing to voluntarily consent and participate in the study; and
- Participants who were fluent in English and Afrikaans, as these are the languages I can converse in.

Participants who would be excluded were those parents of LGBTIQA+ children who were not of African or mixed race; who were not able to communicate fluently in English or Afrikaans; and who were not yet able to talk about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their children came out.

Being aware of the fact that this topic is sensitive, as stated in the introduction of this chapter, that being a parent of a LGBTIQA+ child could lead to losing one's standing in the community and being rejected by family and friends, I also decided to include **snowball sampling** as a method of participant recruitment. Snowball sampling is based on the "interrelationships" between participants and is a participant recruitment method whereby the researcher starts with one case and based on referral or information from that case, identifies another case and repeats the process (Neuman, 2014:13). Taylor *et al.* (2016:47) describe snowball sampling

along similar lines when referring to it as the process whereby the researcher interviews the first participants and asks to be referred to other relevant participants. The researcher could also use their social and professional networks, referred to as a *socially based type of recruitment* (Guest *et al.*, 2013:69). Ruane (2016:293) defines socially based recruitment as *reference sources* from which to obtain participants for a study and in a sense this could be equated with snowball sampling.

My intended participant recruitment plan was to begin with my own circle of friends and acquaintances from social media networks, like the Facebook group, Friends of Open Closet and GenderDynamix. In addition, I intended to contact the organisation, PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians), with the request of possible referrals to African and mixed race South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+ to approach for participation in my study.

My sampling plan included the possibility of negotiating entry to participants through gatekeepers. A gatekeeper is a person who has the power and influence to allow or refuse entry into the research setting (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016:42). According to Fouché and Schurink (2011:325), a gatekeeper allows access to research groups, sites and/or participants and is regarded as someone with authority in terms of the target group. The gatekeepers identified at the outset of the study would be the administrators of the Facebook pages/social networking pages for LGBTIQ+ persons, and I intended to request their permission and access to these platforms to announce the research project and to gain access to parents of LGBTIQ+ persons. I also proposed to do internet searches on LGBTIQ+ organisations that I could approach in view of obtaining possible participants. I envisaged sending out e-mails to these organisations and requesting access to the parents of LGBTIQ+ children.

In terms of sample size, I reminded myself that samples in qualitative studies are normally small (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011:84; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:10) and that the sample size is not determined at the outset of the study, but rather determined by the principle of data saturation. Data saturation is the point in the process of data collection where the information that becomes available seems to

be superfluous and no new fresh or relevant data emerges (Given, 2008:195; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:11).

I proposed to continue to collect data until, in consultation with my supervisor, a state of data saturation would be determined in that the information gathered would be identified as repetitive and when there was no new information coming from the participants. When this stage was reached, the data collection would be terminated.

This concludes the discussion on the sampling plan for the study. The focus of the discussion will now centre on the data collection for this study.

1.10 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to a systematic process during which information is collected about people or phenomena within their natural settings (Elmusharaf, 2012:3). Data collection is directly linked to sampling and data is collected from the participants sampled from the population. It is a method of obtaining information by direct or indirect means. Qualitative data collection provides the context in which information is gained (Whitehead & Lopez, 2012:127). According to Babbie (2007:286), data collection in qualitative research is “used to make sense out of an ongoing process that cannot be predicted in advance”. One can therefore not pre-determine how much data will need to be collected; for instance, how many interviews will need to be conducted.

It is important to find ways to gain access to the participants and attract their attention by showing interest in their challenges and experiences. Therefore, I planned and prepared for the process of data collection, as described below:

1.10.1 Preparation for data collection

Preparing for data collection refers to the steps involved prior to interviewing the participants. According to Bryman (2012:114), a researcher, intending to conduct social research, first needs to secure ethical clearance from all relevant Research

Ethics Committees (RECs) as a measure to ensure that the research will be undertaken with integrity, quality and transparency. I presented my research proposal to the Department of Social Work and UNISA's Social Work Research and Ethics Committee on 27 October 2017, and received my stamped ethical clearance certificate on 4 December 2017 (Addendum I).

Participant preparation, to quote Noonan and Doody (2013:31), involves informing the participants about how the data would be collected and the kind of information they would have to provide. The questions to be posed must be clearly formulated and understandable. The time and place where the interview would be taking place must be indicated and be convenient to the participants and the use of any recording device to record the interview, as well as note-taking, must be negotiated with the participants and their permission must be sought before using these aids. In preparing themselves for the interviews, Noonan and Doody (2013:31) advise researchers to learn the interview questions off by heart, so as not to focus too much on the interview guide during the interview. As part of the preparation for data collection, participants must also be informed of the right to withdraw, the confidentiality of the data, and the protection of their identities. How this will be done needs to be underscored as this will enhance the likelihood of honesty when participants respond (Gill, Steward, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008:292).

I planned to prepare the participants for the data collection by providing them with documents that would also be discussed with them (see Addendum E). Following the advice from Creswell (2014:188-189), the following information would be shared in view of preparing the participants for the activity of data collection:

- The aim, objective and value of the study would be indicated as it is important that the participants understand this fully and comprehensively.
- Why they were chosen to participate and the value of participating would be highlighted.
- Clarification would be provided in terms of how the data would be collected (i.e. semi-structured interviews), and information would be

shared on when and where the interviews would take place, how long the interviews would last, and if there would be any follow-up interviews.

- I would highlight how the results would be used.
- Data collection method. The participant needed to understand exactly how the interview would be structured and conducted; in other words, the process to be followed. Linked to this is the issue of the recording of the data.
- Recording of data. This means that the researcher needs to provide information and expand on the use of recorders, the use of recordings and related elements and, in all of this, the participants' permission would be sought.
- The ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality and the confidential management of data, I propose to observe, would be explained.
- I would inform the participants of the fact that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without repercussions.

1.10.2 Methods of data collection

Observations, structured or unstructured interviews, documents and audio and visual materials, according to Creswell (2014:190), are the customary methods for collecting data in qualitative research studies – with interviewing being the most popular option (Willis, 2007:173; Yates & Leggett, 2016:226). When it comes to types of interviews, a differentiation is made between unstructured (in-depth), semi-structured, and structured interviews. After familiarising myself with the advantages and disadvantages of each of the interview types, I decided on using semi-structured interviews, which would be facilitated by open-ended questions contained in an interview guide, as the data collection method to explore mixed race and African parents experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+.

Turner (2010:756) defines semi-structured interviews as open-ended interviews that use structured wording, but in a flexible and open-ended way (Taylor *et al.*, 2016:102). Participants are asked questions that are composed in such a way that it allows for open-ended answers. For the semi-structured interviews, the data collection questions must be formulated to help answer the research questions initially formulated at the outset of the study (Punch, 2016:51; Whitehead & Lopez, 2012:128). Bless *et al.* (2013:175) refer to semi-structured interviews as “non-scheduled structured interviews”, implying that certain questions are compiled prior to the interview, but provision is made for more probing questions. The participants are also free to describe and express their feelings, thoughts and opinions. Greeff (2011:348) describes semi-structured interviews as interviews organised around domains of specific interest, while still accommodating substantial flexibility in scope and depth. The semi-structured interview therefore provides for a set of questions from which the interviewer can probe and responses can be wider and more open than with a survey or structured interview.

In unpacking the concept “interview guide”, King and Horrocks (2010:35) describe an interview guide as a guide that “outlines the main topics the researcher would like to cover”. Neuman (2014:333) holds a similar view and states that the interview guide comprises of a set of questions covering the salient aspects related to the phenomenon being explored (Neuman, 2014:333). However, the researcher is flexible and makes allowance for the phrasing of the wording of the question to make it more understandable for the participants and the order in which the questions are asked is not strictly followed. This creates opportunities for the participant to lead the interaction in “unanticipated directions” (King & Horrocks, 2010:35). According to Hennink *et al.* (2011:12), the interview guide functions as a memory aid for the researcher, with predetermined or pre-decided questions being applied flexibly so as not to dictate, but rather steer the flow and direction of the interview between the researcher and the participant, as well as enable the engagement of the participant (Greeff, 2011:352). The following questions were developed and contained in the interview guide:

In order to obtain demographical/biographical information of the participants the following questions were asked:

- What is your current age?
- What is your marital status?
- How many children do you have?

After gaining the biographical information from the participants, I planned to ask the following open-ended topical questions to gather information from them:

- What knowledge did you have about being LGBTIQA+ prior to your child's coming out?
- How did your child tell you about his/her LGBTIQA+ status?
- What did you feel when he/she told you about being LGBTIQA+?
- How did you react when he/she told you they were LGBTIQA+?
- What challenges did you experience when you learnt that your child was LGBTIQA+?
- How did you cope with the challenges experienced?
- What do you think will help you to cope better with the situation?
- What are your suggestions to parents of children coming out as LGBTIQA+?
- How can social workers assist parents when finding out that their child is LGBTIQA+?

In conducting the qualitative research interviews, I endeavoured to apply certain skills that have an important influence on the comprehensiveness and complexity of the information that the participants provided. Bless *et al.* (2013:214) identify the following techniques in interviewing, which will ensure rich data:

- The use of open-ended question allows for open-ended, detailed answers.
- Elicit "stories" from participants – engage in narrative. Allow the participant to share their experiences in telling the story thereof.
- Listen attentively and paraphrase the participants' responses.
- Ask follow-up questions on answers.

Neuman (2014:332) describes the interviewer’s skills as follows:

- Start by building rapport with the participant.
- Show interest.
- Allow for self-expression and the telling of anecdotes.
- Keep a specific purpose in mind: learning about the person within his/her circumstances in line with the goal of the study.

The following are some of the interviewing skills the researcher intended to utilise:

Table 1.2 INTERVIEW SKILLS (adapted from Bless *et al.*, 2013:214; Diccico-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:314-321; Neuman, 2014:332;).

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION
Establishing rapport	Make an empathetic connection with the participant.	Create an atmosphere where the participant will feel comfortable to talk; show full interest in and connection to the participant when asking opening questions. There should be a comfortable space and sitting arrangement, choose a quiet space for the interview, and sit close enough to the participant to show interest.
Empathising	Identify feelings and share in feelings, showing concern and understanding.	Identify feelings through restating them for the participant, thereby showing empathy, for example, “I can see that you are upset/angry/happy by what you are telling me”.

Active listening	Fully concentrate on what is being said, communicating active listening through body language and encouraging the person to further communicate.	Make eye contact. Show interest in participants' responses by displaying attentive body language. Remember what is being said and be able to paraphrase and recall during the interviewing process.
Probing	Ask follow-up and clarity-seeking questions, especially when there is ambiguity in the answer received from the participant.	This could include asking: "Could you elaborate on what you described?"; "Could you put feelings to the incident you described?".
Open-mindedness	Allow for the participant to respond in a different manner than expected or allow for the participant to have different opinions and feelings than the researcher	Show non-judgement to the participant by remaining objective. Communicate non-judgement by reflecting what the participant has said without attaching personal values to it.
Respect for cultural differences	Observe cultural expectations and ensure that the researcher understands the cultural expectation when entering the home of the participant.	Greet appropriately and ask the socially acceptable questions prior to entering into the interviewing schedule.

1.11 PILOT TESTING

Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher conducted a pilot test. According to Salkind (2010:1033,) pilot testing refers “to either a trial run of the major research study or a pre-test of a particular research instrument or procedure”. Schade (2015:1) states that pilot testing determines the relevance and applicability of the interview guide (wording) and the time that will be needed to complete an interview. Pilot testing provides the opportunity to the researcher to interrogate and reflect on the interview guide and his or her own contextual baggage (Roulston, 2012:67). Pilot testing can also provide extra data for the research. According to Doody and Doody (2015:1074), “conducting pilot testing provides the researcher with the opportunity to develop and enhance the skills necessary”, prior to applying it to the larger scale study.

The researcher aimed to undertake the pilot test in an attempt to answer the following questions, proposed by Schreiber (in Given, 2008:625):

- How many times will interaction or contact with the participants be needed?
- How long will these interactions take if they run smoothly, or if they do not?
- How many interviews or observations appear to be realistic?
- What are the issues regarding ethics and anonymity in regard to these interactions?
- Are multiple data collectors needed and will they all need to be trained and then be examined to see if they can collect the data properly?

The researcher targeted the pilot testing to form the basis from which the wider research had to take place and it had to provide a platform to determine the effectiveness of the interview guide and planned data collection methods and questions. Pilot testing is meant to pave the way for the larger scale study by providing important aspects surrounding the process of the study as a guideline as to how it will play out when the research is conducted. It is also intended to help to determine any obstacles that can be expected. In this study, the pilot testing aimed

to assist the researcher to refine the interview guide and to test the relevance of the questions.

1.12 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined by Roller and Lavrakas (2015:181) as “the systematic reduction of content, analysed with special attention on the context in which the data were created” in order to attach themes to the data and attach meaning to the analysis of the data. Taylor *et al.* (2016:52) refer to data analysis as an ongoing process of discovery where themes are identified and new concepts developed. During the data analysis process, general ideas and vague thoughts are refined, further developed, reflected upon and recorded, or discarded during the coding process (Ruane, 2016:217). Data analysis ensures that the large amount of information, which previously was random, is made sense of and interpreted. In this study, the researcher made use of coding during data analysis. The coding, which is used mostly in qualitative data analyses, is open coding. Open coding is a process whereby theoretically applicable insight is sought in understanding the phenomena under study. Different types of data can be grouped together under the same codes (Flick *et al.*, 2014:270).

To systematically analyse the collected data, I decided to employ the eight steps of Tesch (in Cresswell, 2014:198). The steps are as follows:

- I planned to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews word-for-word. I would then proceed by reading the transcripts carefully, making notes as I read. I intended to make notes while thoughtfully reading through the transcripts. I would then write down ideas and gain a general sense of the content and meaning of the transcripts.
- I planned to select the shortest interview, put it on top of the pile, and read it. I would ask myself what the interview was about, and write down my thoughts in the margins of the transcript.
- I planned to find the meaning in different transcripts; I would then make a list of themes that became clear from the transcripts. Afterwards, I would start a

list of topics and group similar themes together. Themes would be headed by “major, unique or leftover” themes and be grouped under a specific abbreviation. I would have to find codes for the different topics identified, and place codes next to the topics.

- I planned to identify a fitting abbreviation for each topic identified.
- I planned to find the most descriptive wording for topics and turn them into themes. Topics that related to each other would be grouped together.
- I anticipated to make a final decision on the abbreviations for each theme and arrange the codes alphabetically. Themes were to be worded in the most appropriate, descriptive text, categorising them as identified topics. The abbreviated themes were to be coded and listed in alphabetical order.
- The cut and paste option would be utilised to group topics that belonged together under one theme, dividing the material into themes, and providing the groundwork to do a preliminary analysis of the information.
- Recoding was anticipated by ensuring that the information was correctly categorised. Then, a research report would be formulated based on the coded research findings.

After analysing the collected data, verification of the data would follow.

1.13 METHODS OF DATA VERIFICATION

In qualitative research, verification refers to the strategies employed to check whether the aspects of the research represent what actually occurred; it could further be described as a method to demonstrate the rigour of the study (Ballinger, 2008:2). Data verification refers to the validity of a study or the extent to which research findings correlate with and accurately portray the phenomena that was studied (Yates & Leggett, 2016:227). Data verification in qualitative research is based on qualitative researchers realising that data could be subjective and therefore verifying data to ensure that what results from the data after analysis is in line with the lived experiences of the interviewees (Kozleski, 2017:28).

Terms like “reliability” and “validity” are described as “relative” in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991:21). This author proposes that a different language should be developed to describe concepts of data verification in qualitative research. Guba (in Krefting, 1991:215) developed such a model for the assessment of the trustworthiness of qualitative data. Shenton (2004:63) states that the trustworthiness in qualitative research is often questioned, and, for this very reason, frameworks for ensuring trustworthiness have been in existence for many years.

For the purpose of this study, I will make use of the four-part model of Guba (in Krefting, 1991:215-217; Shenton, 2004:63) for data verification and assessment of the quality of the qualitative inquiry. I will provide an overview on how the data was to be verified by using the following four aspects of trustworthiness.

- **Credibility (truth-value)**

Credibility is described as internal validity; hence, the truth of the study must be apparent or the outcome of the study must “make sense” (Bless *et al.*, 2013:236). The question that the researcher should ask him/herself is whether the findings are as a reflection of reality (Shenton, 2004:63). Credibility has its roots in the intended research goal, and credible research is in line with the research purpose. Credibility also demonstrates that the researcher utilised critical thinking about the research (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016:2).

There are certain aspects of qualitative research that assisted me in ensuring credibility of the findings, as described by Shenton (2004:63) and Bless *et al.* (2013:238):

- Providing an adequate description of the context of the study.
- Offering an adequate description of the sample and method of sampling – describing the criteria planned to be employed.
- Employing data collection and analysis concurrently – the researcher envisaged to analyse data whilst collection took place so that emerging aspects could be identified and followed up.

- Triangulation – this means that the researcher planned to use different methods to collect data with the aim being that the results should be the same. This would show that the outcome was independent of the methodology.
- Methodological verification/peer scrutiny – the researcher planned to gain insight and interpretation from other researchers (existing research) to verify the exactness of the outcome.
- Ensuring data saturation – the researcher planned to gather enough data from a number of interviews to ensure that no new information would emerge from extra collections. The full depth of data had to be reached.
- Participant validation or member checking – the researcher intended to present the findings to the participants to verify whether it was a true reflection.
- Use of verbatim quotations – in writing the research report the researcher anticipated to employ direct quotations, providing the reader with exact information from the participants.

I intended to employ the above-mentioned aspects to ensure credibility in exploring, describing and understanding the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African parents whose children had come out as LGBTIQ+.

- **Applicability/transferability**

Transferability means the extent to which the outcome of the study can be applicable to the broader community or to other contexts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:261). Shenton (2004:70) recommends that a full background to the study should be provided so that limitations and transferability can be noted. Transferability includes understanding the context, within which the study took place, as meaningful in determining whether the findings will be applicable to other studies, thereby indicating the extent to which the outcome of the research is applicable to other contexts (Moon *et al.*, 2016:3).

In order to enable other researchers and readers to conduct a transferability audit in order to determine the applicability of the research findings to other contexts, Anney (2014:277-278) advises the following information to be available for the purpose:

- any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data,
- the number of participants involved in the fieldwork,
- the data collection methods that were employed,
- the number and length of the data collection sessions, and
- the period over which the data was collected.

I intended to provide the information suggested for this purpose.

- **Consistency/dependability**

Consistency involves that researchers follow a precise and clear strategy, and that each step in the research process must be completed thoroughly (Bless *et al.*, 2013:237). It can be described as the coherence of internal processes. Internal consistency means that data is reliable within the context and knowledge of what is known of the situation and the study participants (Neuman, 2014:335). Shenton (2004:71) states that dependability and credibility are linked, and that measures for one include the other; therefore, “rich descriptions” of information are applicable to both. According to Tracy and Hinrich (2017:4), qualitative research entails a rich complexity of descriptions and explanations. Researchers demonstrate rigour through attention to detail, thoroughness in their methodology, and precise evaluations. Based on the suggestions of Tracy and Hinrich (2017:4-6):

- I intended to describe and explain the study’s research plan and the implementation thereof in Chapter one.
- I planned to provide detailed information on how the data was collected, the sampling was done, and the transcription of the interviews took place; including providing sufficient quotations throughout thesis.

- I also made provision to evaluate the process of studying the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+.
- I intended to make use of an independent coder to code the information collected; thereby, adding to the consistency of the data.
- **Neutrality/confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the data and findings of the study being confirmed by other independent researchers as the outcome of the study conducted. In order to reach confirmability it must be indicated that the outcome of the study and the conclusions reached are linked in such a way that the same process can be followed to reach the same results (Moon *et al.*, 2016:4). Therefore, if another researcher should choose the same populations and topic, and replicated the process of the research, the same results should be reached (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121).

Confirmability also means that one could find an internal “agreement” between the research findings and the evidence in reality (Given, 2008:112-113). Confirmability has further been described as the extent to which the study is “shaped” by the participants, and not by researcher bias (Amankwaa, 2016:121).

In the light of the above, the application of this principle of trustworthiness entailed that I aimed not to impose my personal expectations and bias on the participants, but that the data collected from the participants would determine the outcome of the study. Reflexivity has been recognised as an important strategy in gaining insight during qualitative research (Berger, 2015:219; Dodgon, 2019:220). Dodgon (2019:220) defines it as a process during which the researcher clearly describes the intersecting contextual relationships between the participants and him/herself. This description and reflection on the interrelationship increases the credibility of the findings and deepens general understanding of the work. Thus, I anticipated employing reflexivity as a strategy to account for and limit researcher bias.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics are premised on the code of reciprocity, meaning that one treats others as you wish yourself to be treated, and points to the researcher's obligation and limitations when embarking on a research journey (Bless *et al.*, 2013:28; Salkind, 2010:426). Ethical practice enhances the quality of the research and ensures adherence to the key principles of justice, respect, and avoiding harm (Morrow, 2013:21). For Nygård and Saus (2016:670), ethical considerations relate to internal and external ethics. Internal ethics encompass the principle of doing no harm to the individual participant, obtaining his/her informed consent, managing the data obtained from him/her in a confidential manner, and protecting his/her anonymity. External ethics relate to the wider community and include issues of social justice and respect for the community (Nygård & Saus, 2016:670).

Against the backdrop of these introductory remarks, I deemed the following ethical consideration relevant to the study:

1.14.1 Obtaining informed consent

Neuman (2014:7) defines "informed consent" as an agreement from participants to participate voluntarily in a study, once they have been duly informed of the context and purpose of a study. With informed consent, it is implied that enough information has been provided to the prospective participant to make an informed decision regarding participation in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:66; Ruane 2016:225). As an ethical consideration, the focus should be on informed consent, thereby minimising the risks of the study and further ensuring confidentiality and privacy (Taylor *et al.*, 2016:95). The researcher must ensure that the participant has the autonomy, and is mentally able and competent, to give consent (Hewitt, 2007:1155).

In view of obtaining the recruited participants' consent for participating in this research project, I intended to inform the participants verbally and in writing (see Addendum A) about the following:

- The purpose/goal of the study, the method of data collection to be employed, and the fact that the interviews would be digitally recorded, the reason for doing this, and that their permission would be sought in this regard.
- The possible risks involved in participating, such as being emotional in recollecting the experiences and challenges encountered during coming to know about their child's homosexual orientation.
- Informing participants that they may withdraw at any time from the study, the data collected would be managed in a confidential manner, their identity would be protected, and their privacy would be respected.
- Assure them that they could raise any question pertaining to the research in order to obtain clarity.

1.14.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

As researchers might obtain personal, intimate information from the participants during the research interviews, they have a moral and ethical obligation to keep information in confidence; therefore, the participants' names should be disguised (Neuman, 2014:337). Ethical research boils down to the confidential management of personal matters, including the protection of data, ensuring that participants agree to what is in the transcripts, and the provision of grievance procedures should participants not be satisfied with the way in which the research was conducted (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013:243). In a case where a participant's disclosure of information could imply or lead to harm to the self or others, confidentiality may be overruled and information might have to be shared (Hewitt, 2007:1155).

I prepared to keep the participants' personal information in a coded file on a laptop that is password protected and locked in my office. Moreover, the digital recordings would be downloaded on this password-protected computer and the recordings on the digital device would be erased. The identities of the participants would be anonymised on the transcriptions of the interviews and the participants' identities would be protected by allocating each of them a pseudonym, only known to me.

Concerning the aspect of anonymity referred to above, Neuman (2014:337) states that it does not equate to confidentiality, adding that the names of participants should not be disclosed and should be hidden. Vanclay *et al.* (2013:247) state that anonymity is part of the ethical presumption that identity would be protected. Therefore, transcripts must be modified, and should one be able to deduct identity from the context, changes should be made to protect the participant(s).

I intended to keep the following tips in mind, as suggested by Wiles (2006:3), to ensure the participants' anonymity:

- Keep the data separate from the identifying particulars of the participants.
- Keep the codes linked to the participants separate from the data linked to the participants.
- Ensure that those who have access to the identifying particulars keep it in confidence.
- There should be non-disclosure of the interview details, which disclose what an individual has said in an interview.
- Ensure anonymity during the information dissemination of the research.

1.14.3 Beneficence

The principle of beneficence relates to minimising the risks and increasing the benefits to the research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:66). It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the participants are not harmed and that their right to privacy and confidentiality are ensured (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:260).

I intended to steer the research process so that beneficence could be applied through the interview process and data analyses by subscribing to the principles of ethical research behaviour by respecting human dignity, avoiding causing feelings of shame or guilt, and providing counselling through a registered social worker, if necessary (see Addendum F – Request for debriefing services).

1.14.4 Management of information

Whyte and Tedds (2011:1) define research data management as the means of organising data from entry through the research cycle and dissemination to archiving the research results. These authors (2011) further explain that the management of data concerns how the researcher:

- obtains and thereby “creates” data,
- organises and codes data,
- makes it safe, by providing access, storage and back-up, and
- shares with collaborators and more broadly, publishes the results/data.

An independent coder was approached to analyse the data to ensure objectivity and prevent bias. This forms part of ensuring ethical interpretation of the information provided by the participants.

Data management therefore includes making back-ups of data, controlling access to data, storing data and portfolios in a safe place, and deleting or getting rid of data that is no longer relevant (Ingrim, 2016:1). The researcher designed to apply the principles of managing information by following the guidelines of Ingrim (2016:1-2):

- Storing data and the research report in a document where an access pin is needed, in a password-protected document.
- Making back-ups of the information through storing it on a password-protected USB disc.
- Storing files/portfolios with transcripts in a locked cupboard in my office.
- Limiting access to information to my supervisor, the ethics committee, the transcriber and the independent coder.
- The final research report will be made available in hard copy format, as well as soft copy, so that the information does not get lost. The final soft copy will be saved in PDF format and all editable MS Word documents will be destroyed.
- Information on the research report will be compiled in the form of an academic article for submission to an accredited academic journal to ensure access and comparison to other researchers in the academic community

1.14.5 Debriefing of participants

Debriefing is part of ethical practice in research. Debriefing allows research participants to be assisted after the research process if any questions or problems should arise (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:122). Sharpe and Fay (2009:436) are of the opinion that debriefing should provide for means of identifying, addressing and limiting any distress caused by the research. The debriefing process could also provide useful input in the outcome of the study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:159).

I planned for providing debriefing services to the participants, should they request it, by a social worker, Ms D. Sokhela, who confirmed her availability (See Addendum G).

1.14.6 Respecting cultural difference

In terms of cross-cultural research, where the researcher aims to understand human behaviour and social processes, Hennink (2008:21) states that cultural meaning is linked to language as a pertinent tool in interpreting the lived experiences of participants. When conducting cross-cultural research, issues of communication become complex and sometimes interpreters were required. I did not however intend to make use of interpreters and would have to navigate the use of English as a cross-cultural communication tool. It is difficult for a researcher, who is not culturally competent, to capture and portray participants' responses correctly (Arriaza *et al.*, 2015:76). Pelzang and Hutchinson (2018:1) explain that cultural integrity and competence can be reached within the framework of the traditional values of the culture and by following the ethical codes of the research process. Principles such as contextuality, appropriateness, mutual respect and flexibility can lead to cultural competence.

I intended to keep the framework of the cultural differences in mind, and show respect and flexibility during the interviewing and communication processes, contextualising the information gathered for data.

In the next section, I will describe and define some key concepts relevant to the study.

1.15 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts central to the study are defined and their meaning contextualised.

1.15.1 Homosexuality (gay/lesbian)

The terms “homosexual” and “homosexuality” first appeared in medical journals of the 1890s, but were not formally used until 1946. Prior to 1946, homosexuality was termed under the heading of “sexual perversion” (Greenblatt, 2014:214). Hubbard and Griffiths (2019:941) define homosexuality as “having emotional, romantic or sexual attractions to members of one's own sex”. In a framework of sexuality, “heterosexuality” would be described as attraction to the opposite sex and as the heteronormative standard for society in general, whereas “homosexuality” is described as attraction between two people of the same biological gender. This framework places homosexuality as the abject outside of the frame of normative heterosexuality (Meghani & Saeed, 2019:293). Homosexuality is same-sex attraction in terms of men being attracted to men and women being attracted to women; it could be physically, emotionally, or both (Bailey, Vasey, Diamond, Breedlove, Vilain & Epprecht, 2016:45). Therefore, it can be stated that a homosexual person is someone who has emotional, physical and psychological attraction to a person of the same sex and thereby does not conform to heterosexual standards.

1.15.2 Bisexual

Bisexuality has been marginalised due to pressures in favour of monosexuality. Bisexuality means that a person is attracted to both men and women (Goob, 2008:9). Goob (2008:10) further theorise that bisexuals are mutually drawn to each other. Bowes-Catton and Hayfield (2015:49) explain the term ‘bisexual’ as

generally used in Western cultures to describe an individual who has sexual attraction to more than one gender, or whose attractions are based on characteristics other than mere gender, such as physical build or eye colour. Vencil and Israel (2018:1) refer to couples where one person is bisexual as “mixed orientation” couples and indicate that bisexuality in one partner could lead to stress factors in the relationship.

To sum up: bisexuality is when a person is sexually or otherwise attracted to persons of both genders and a bisexual person base their choice of partner on more than having to be with the same or opposite sex/gender.

1.15.3 Transsexual/transgender

Hines (2007:181) in her study on transgendered persons starts off by stating that there has been increased interest in transgender persons, with the question “who are they” in mind. Hines (2007) argues that the transgender person, who differs in *born* gender and *felt* gender, will also have difficulties in societal citizenship and transition to the inner gender on formal documentation. Fraser (2009:126) postulates that the transgendered person’s identity involves a mismatch between mind-body and a feeling that there is a gender variance between the body and the inner self. It could be concluded that a person identifying as transsexual or transgender identifies with a different gender than the one they were born with, or that a transgender or transsexual person has a different internal gender identity than the body they were born with.

1.15.4 Challenges

Challenges or stressful situations in a family can be described as instances that cause change in the family’s consistent state (Price *et al.*, 2008:12). Sheidow *et al.* (2014:1351) suggest that stress exposure is experienced as a family challenge and can influence family functioning, to the extent that it becomes an internalised problem for family members. In order to understand why and how families experience stress and challenges, the challenging situation must be viewed within

the context of the different aspects of the challenge, which could be related to societal, health, education, relationships, economic, and other situations (Jones & Smith, 2017:28). Challenging situations are therefore events that trigger responses from the parents within the context of their lived experiences, when they find that their resources are unable to meet the demands of the event, and this causes change in the stability of the family system..

1.15.5 Coping strategies

Coping refers to how one transacts to deal with and adapt to a stressful situations in one's life (Markova & Nikitskaya, 2014:38; Stern *et al.*, 2010:174) by employing coping strategies, which is described by Sawyer and Burton (2012:27) as ways and means to overcome difficult situations that put strain on one's physical, social and psychological abilities. In the context of this research, coping strategies would refer to how the parents managed the challenges they experienced in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.

1.15.6 Coming out

When a person realises that he/she prefers to have intimate relationships with persons of the same sex, there comes a time when they "come out" by telling other people about it (McDonald & Steinhorn, 1993:37). According to McCormick (2015:327), coming out is an act that authenticates one's sexual identity. Heatherington and Lavner (2008:1) describe coming out as the act of disclosing one's sexual identity to others. In terms of this disclosure, Klein, Holtby, Cook and Travers (2015:297) postulate that coming out should be understood as a social process, rather than just an internal process. A person may choose to disclose his/her homosexual orientation only to some of his/her family members, friends and associates; this is called "selectively coming out". In the context of the research, coming out would mean for the children of the mixed race and African parents to have openly confessed the fact that they are LGBTIQ+ and want to live a LGBTIQ+ lifestyle.

1.15.7 African South African

Race and Ethnicity are multidimensional concepts, frequently used in research studies to describe participants. The term “African” originated from the Romans referring to “the land of the Afri”. The African as reference to where a person originates from is used in scientific writing in terms of race, ethnicity and how a person refers to themselves (Agyemang, Bhopal & Bruijnzeels, 2005:1014).

In this study “African” refers to a person whose heritage/ancestry is from the African continent, specifically South Africa and was previously referred to as “black”.

1.15.8 Mixed Race South African

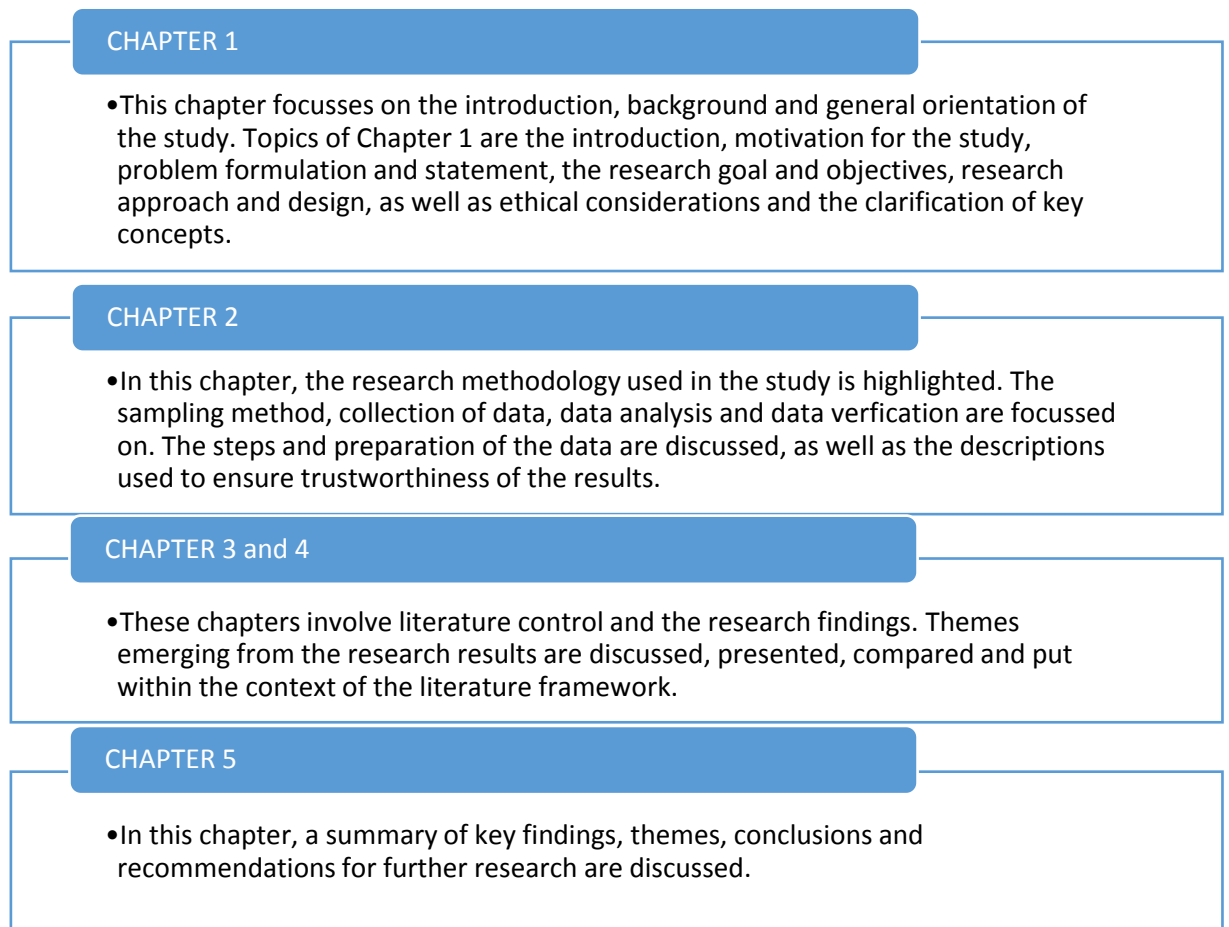
Mixed race describes people whose ancestors are not of a single ethnicity or race (Agyemang, Bhopal & Bruijnzeels, 2005:1018). The current approach to naming people “mixed race” is not always clear, but in the case of this study it is preferred as academic language rather than “coloured person” as was previously the case.

Mixed race therefore refers to a person who identifies themselves as such and grew up in South Africa.

1.16 Outline of the study

The dissertation comprises of five chapters and the figure below provides a brief exposition of the focus of each chapter.

FIGURE 1.4: Chapter layout



1.17 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the scene was set by providing the backdrop to and introducing the topic chosen for investigation. The rationale for warranting this research endeavour was presented. The research questions to be answered through the research project, together with the goals and objectives for the study, were introduced.

The Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaption Theory, plus Hill's Stress Theory, and the related Resiliency Theory and Strength-based approach were introduced to function as a 'lens' to investigate the phenomenon under study.

In further explaining how the study would unfold, I introduced qualitative research as the research approach for this study. Concerning the research design, I mentioned that I have adopted the phenomenological and collective instrumental

case study designs for this study, supported by explorative, descriptive and contextual strategies of inquiry. The research methods, with reference to the population for the study and the participant recruitment techniques to be employed to obtain a sample from the population, and the methods of data collection and analysis, were introduced. I also indicated how the trustworthiness of the study would be ensured and the ethical principles I planned to observe during this research endeavour were made known. The key concepts central to the study were introduced and defined, and their meaning in the context of the study was indicated. The presentation of the chapter-wise format of the research report concluded this chapter.

Chapter 2 will focus on the application of the research methodology, the research approach and the research design. Moreover, it will discuss how the research methods were implemented through population targeting and sampling, data collection and data analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS IMPLEMENTED DURING THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 set the stage to introduce the topic under investigation, stating a problem formulation in order to justify the need for the research study, mentioning the research questions (see Chapter 1, section 1.5), the goal (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.5.1) and objectives (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.5.2).

In this chapter, the proposed research methodology will take centre stage in that I will provide a detailed discussion on how the selected research methodology was applied in executing this research project. Whilst acknowledging the fact that revisiting the already proposed research methodology (see Chapter 1, section 1.6), this chapter may in some instances be labelled as “repetitive”, the researcher deemed it necessary to elaborate on the research methodology previously referred to by way of an introduction. In doing so, the researcher followed the suggestion provided by Strauss and Corbin (in Larsson, 2009:32) who pointed out that a description of the processes followed in the particular research methodology should be documented in detail to substantiate the conclusions and insights that evolved from the study. According to Robinson (2014:31), the researcher should continuously monitor and be responsive to the practical realities of the research project, as collecting in-depth data could lead to challenges that could not be predicted at the onset of the project. This places a responsibility on the researcher to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the research methodology utilised to enable a dependability audit to be conducted in the future, should the need arise.

Fouché and Delport (2011:108) refer to the problem formulation as a point of departure for the study. They are supported by Creswell (2014:20), who states that

the issue of concern that the research focusses on, must be clear, so that the researcher understands from which stance he/she is working, or the different aspects of the study could clutter the research process. In this instance I clarified the reasons for the study in Chapter 1, sub-section 1.2 (Problem Formulation) and sub-section 1.3 (Rationale for Study). These reasons or points of departure were kept in mind throughout the implementation of the study, as described in Chapter 2.

This research is primarily guided by the theoretical framework, which can be described as an “explanation of observations”, which led me to making predictions and gaining understanding of behaviour, as well as giving direction to the research process (Weber, 2011:2). Weber also postulates that theories introduce concepts that represent phenomena in order to explain what was observed. Creswell (2009:15-17) describes the theoretical framework as a support structure of theories that are used in conducting the research study.

Researchers could find themselves in a situation where one theory is too limited to describe and understand the topic under investigation and therefore it is necessary to link two or more theories to ensure that there is a fuller understanding of the topic under study (Althaus, Kop & Grosjean, 2013:82). I employed the theoretical lenses of the Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation Theory, as born from Hill’s Stress Theory, and linked it to the Resiliency Theory, as described by Walsh (2012:401) in terms of family functioning. Resilience means that a person/family experiencing adversity or a crisis has the capacity to rebound from it and be more resourceful and strong afterwards (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012:82). Resilience has also been described as the family unit’s positive ability to adapt after a significant or important disturbance in the status quo of the family (Rose & Steen, 2014:28). I linked the Resiliency Theory to the Strength-based approach as an indication of the family’s use of strengths to overcome crises. There are certain important aspects involved in the Strength-based approach, which must be underscored, in understanding the coping strategies of parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+:

- All people have strengths and capabilities.
- People have the ability to change.
- People change and grow through their strengths and capacities.
- Problems/adversity can cause people not to notice their strengths.
- People have the skills to solve their own problems, as they are experts on their own lives.

In terms of Hill's Stress Theory, the stressor event/adversity (coming out) can be defined as "a life event or transition impacting upon the family unit"; this stressor could lead to the necessary changes in the family system and the family's social functioning (Brown-Baatjies, Fouché & Greeff, 2008:78), so that the family can adapt and adjust to the new situation. Hill's Stress Theory therefore provides the backdrop against which the stressor is understood as something that affects normal family functioning, whereas the Resiliency Theory (and Strength-based approach) provide the concepts of abilities and strengths employed by the family to overcome the adversity. From Hill's Stress Theory, the Minority Stress Theory was formed, which refers to the stress that minority groups experience due to prejudice and negative perceptions. External prejudice plays an important role in the experience of minority stress and refers to any perceived or actual experiences of an LGBTIQ+ individual in terms of either structural or institutional associations (i.e. policy) or related to direct social prejudice, such as hearing hateful language or experiencing physical harm (Dentato, Halkitis & Orwat, 2013:506). This is particularly applicable to this study, as Minority Stress or the fear of prejudice and rejection could cause a child to not disclose his/her identity or to fear rejection from parents.

From the problem formulation and choosing the applicable theories to explain the research, certain research questions were developed. The research questions, as stated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.5.1), were:

- What are mixed race and African South African parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies regarding the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+?
- How can social workers support mixed race and African parents with the coming out of their child as LGBTIQ+?

The research goals of the study were:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.
- To proffer suggestions for how social workers can support mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.

From the research goals, I developed certain task objectives (see Chapter 1, subsection 1.5.3).

In deciding on a research approach that would best meet the objectives of the research study described above. Hence, I chose the qualitative research approach to meet the task objectives. The reason behind my choice is that the qualitative research approach is based on the interpretive or constructivist philosophical paradigm, which states that people construct their own ideas about their lived experiences and therefore also construct their own meanings of these experiences (Adom, Yeboah & Ankrah, 2016:2). Research conducted from an interpretive or constructivist stance is therefore based on the participants' interpretation of their life situations. During investigating the topic under study, I followed the qualitative method of using open-ended questioning so that I could gain meaning or make sense of the related experiences (Tracy, 2013:40). Moreover, it can be said that the goal of the interpretive or constructivist paradigm underlying qualitative research is to "get into the heads of the subjects being studied", whereby the researcher aims to understand and interpret what the participant is experiencing or the meaning that he/she is making of the context of his/her experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33).

In Chapter 2, I will describe how the proposed research unfolded. It includes how I implemented the qualitative research methodology, as contained in the research plan (Chapter 1). Gringeri, Barusch and Cambron (2013:764) state that the credibility and authenticity of the research must be indicated by a comparison between the participants' perspectives and views, and how the researcher

reconstructs and represents it. In Chapter 2, I will thus describe the actions and steps taken in the research process to ensure the credibility, reliability and transferability of the research study (Carcary, 2009:14). The qualitative approach, as indicated above, allows for flexibility during data collection, so that an in-depth understanding can be gained about the participants' experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. Being aware of this, allowed me to interpret the narratives that the participants related about their lived experiences, expecting that unpredictable data could emerge during interviewing (Creswell, 2014:8). I will refer to Chapter 1, where relevant, throughout the discussion.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the theoretical knowledge about the operational steps of the research process; therefore, the research methodology provides guidance on the processes, techniques or tools implemented in order to investigate the phenomena under study (Kumar, 2011:54; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:118). Babbie (2007:4) describes research methodology as the “science of finding out” and the steps taken to arrive there.

Kuada (2012:59) is of the opinion that methodology describes the underlying methods, designs and processes the researcher will employ. Kuada (2012) reiterates that the researcher's “belief” of how he/she will reach the data that he/she is researching will determine the approach he/she will use. An example hereof is that a researcher, who believes that social functioning can only be understood through first-hand lived experiences, will choose a method that focuses on how the participants experience their world. Kumar (2008:33) proffers that a good understanding of research methodology is essential to provide valid answers to the research questions; thereby determining which method the researcher will chose. In summary it can be said that methodology describes the philosophy underlying a researcher's chosen research method(s), including whether he/she is employing qualitative or quantitative methods.

As previously indicated, I chose qualitative research because my intention was to gain an advanced understanding of participants' lived experiences as they narrate it through talking about their thoughts, actions, beliefs, emotions and points of view. This provided me with the data to describe and explain the worlds of the participants as they experience it within the contexts of their daily lives. The participants gave meaning to their experiences as parents of children who came out as LGBTIQA+, allowing me to get an insider view of their meaning making (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:15). Thereafter I set out to use qualitative research to systematically capture information and conduct data analysis in order to answer the research questions (Henning, 2013:33).

The research process did not unfold exactly as planned in Chapter 1 and that is part of why qualitative research is seen as an emergent design that can change as the process continues. The research plan, as set out in Chapter 1, is an example of an emergent plan that could be changed and refined during the process of the research project as change becomes needed (Creswell, 2014:186). Therefore, it is important to keep detailed documentation of any changes and decisions taken along the way. This chapter provides a detailed, rich description that is an audit trail of how the research process unfolded. Schurink *et al.* (2011:422) postulate that the management of the research project and the transparency thereof is an ongoing and systematic process to keep critical track of all decisions made. Transparency implies that someone from outside the research project can assess and review the adequacy and trustworthiness of the research.

In the next section, I will provide a rich, detailed description of how the proposed research plan was implemented.

2.2.1 The research approach

Although the concept of qualitative research was defined and described in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.8), I intend to expand on it in order to provide the application of the research methodology in Chapter 2. As alluded to previously (see Chapter 1.6), I

chose the qualitative approach as the enabling mechanism to investigate the topic. To reiterate and recap the nature of qualitative research, which was also presented by definition in the previous chapter, I provide the following view by Hammersley (2017:2), who states that defining the specific features of qualitative research is far from straightforward. Aspers and Corte (2019:4) declare that historically qualitative, or sometimes interpretative, research has always existed. The authors (2019:10) add that qualitative research in essence investigates relations between categories that are in themselves possible to change during the research process. This is because qualitative researchers are focussed on understanding life as the participants experience and live it, and the interpretation of a life experience can change over time (Babbie, 2007:443).

Qualitative research is characterised by certain goals in relation to understanding facets of participants' lives. The methods employed in qualitative research generate words rather than numbers. Data analysis is therefore done from expressed words gained through interviewing. Interviewing allows the researcher to gain a complex, holistic understanding by analysing words and information provided by the participants (Kahn, 2014:225).

Kuada (2012:94) confirms the relevancy of the qualitative approach by stating that if the researcher wants to explore and gain new insight into phenomena, rather than confirming existing theories, a qualitative approach should be chosen. Creswell (2014:4) concurs that qualitative research focuses on the individuals and the meaning they give to their lived experiences and allows the researcher to acknowledge the complexities of their situations. The researcher used the inductive approach to reach an understanding of the meaning participants give to their lived experiences, by generating themes from the data collected.

In Chapter 1, qualitative research was described as having the following key characteristics (Chapter 1, sub-section 1.8):

- It studies the person/phenomena in its natural setting.

- It searches for underlying meaning and in-depth understanding.
- The participants' points of view, experiences, recollections and personal insights guide the research process and provide the data for the research.
- The researcher is the "tool" to obtain information.
- The aim is to obtain a rich description of the problem or issue.
- Research and data collection are done through personal interviews.
- The research design is not fixed, but emerges as the research process as unfolds.
- It is exploratory in nature. The researcher explores the realities of the problem or phenomenon from the perspective of an insider.
- The approach is holistic and focusses on the process as the study unfolds.
- Qualitative research is inductive.
- Small purposive samples are used to collect a vast amount of verbal data, which is then analysed to gain insight into the research problem under study.
- Reflexivity is important, where the researcher is aware of and reflects on his/her personal, cultural and social contexts to ensure that it does not interfere with the outcome of the study.

In view of the above-mentioned characteristics of qualitative research, I will provide a description in Table 2.1 of how these characteristics were evident, implemented and recorded in this study (Ben-Elia *et al.*, 2011:4; Creswell 2007:36; Creswell, 2014:75; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:5; Hesse-Biber, 2016:2).

TABLE 2.1: CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

CHARACTERISTIC	APPLICATION
Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting	Studying participants in their natural context rather than a controlled situation is part of qualitative research. The participant remains in his/her natural world of choice (Bless <i>et al.</i> , 2016:16). Qualitative research consists of observation skills, listening skills and interpretations of people's perceptions of their experiences. It could be said that the researcher "takes a

	<p>snapshot” of the participants’ views and related narratives in a natural setting (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibben, 2015: 1778).</p> <p>Lechuga (2012:266), however, concludes in his study that "the many qualities that define successful qualitative interviews do not require the interviewer and respondent to be in physical view of each other"; implicating that where face-to-face interviews are not possible, telephonic interviews can be done with as much success.</p> <p>The interviews were conducted at venues and places that suited the participants, such as quiet corners in familiar restaurants as a neutral space, their offices, or when physical closeness was a problem, the interviews were conducted via telephone. Telephonic interviews were only done when the participants indicated that they did not have data, or did not feel comfortable with Skype, and were geographically too far away from the researcher to travel.</p>
<p>Qualitative research focuses on learning the meaning that participants hold on a problem or issue</p>	<p>During the research process, researchers intend to explore the meanings and interpretations of participants’ experiences of situations. The data given in the situation is rich, detailed and contextualised. The researcher therefore values open-ended questions, rather than the verification of a hypothesis; the focus is on the settings in which experiences occur, rather than generalised contexts. The method requires reflexivity from the researcher about their influence on the research results (Levitt, Creswell, Bamberg, Frost, Josselson & Suárez-Orozco, 2017:27-28).</p> <p>Qualitative research interviews are preferable in this study because I intended to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ subjective point of view, rather than generating generalised understandings of large groups of people (McGrath,</p>

	<p>Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019:1002). In such a study, qualitative interviews provide opportunities for voicing the experiences of minorities or groups who may not be heard otherwise (Kuper, Reeves & Levinson, 2008:404-405).</p> <p>I had interviews with ten participants who are mixed race and African parents of children who have come out as LGBTIQA+.</p> <p>The questions in the interview guide provided the opportunity for the participants to relate their own frame of reference and meaning to their children coming out as LGBTIQA+. It prompted them to share about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies as their children came out as LGBTIQA+. It also allowed them to make suggestion in terms of how social workers could assist parents in their situation.</p> <p>In this process, I became aware of the specific context, background and ideas that the participants held regarding their children coming out as LGBTIQA+.</p>
<p>Qualitative researchers are seen as primary instruments for data collection and analysis</p>	<p>Conducting qualitative research through interviewing means making empathic connections with participants. Qualitative research can also be described as the <i>researcher's active involvement</i> in the constructing of meaning in understanding participants (Kim, 2014:538).</p> <p>Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas and Caricativo (2017:426) comment that the researcher is changed through the research process and that the research process can be described as a "journey of learning" for the researcher. The authors (2017) further state that the researcher must be cognisant of his/her influence on the making of meaning or interpreting of data, and the researcher cannot see themselves as "outside of" the topic he/she is studying (Palaganas <i>et al.</i>, 2017:427).</p>

	<p>I was the key role player in the process, which meant that I had to take my responsibilities seriously and plan meticulously for the execution of the process and, in particular, the interviews, whilst being flexible at the same time. This process entailed the obtaining of information that happened through personal interactions with the participants.</p> <p>I made use of a pre-developed semi-structured interview guide that allowed for further probing. In interviewing, I was able to ask follow-up questions and probe where necessary, whilst observing the body language and tone of voice, moments of silence, or thoughtfulness of the participants.</p>
<p>Qualitative research is descriptive</p>	<p>The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. It is interested in the <i>how</i> or <i>why</i> something has happened (Nassaji, 2015:129). Creswell (2013:70) suggests that one collects narratives from participants as a way in which to gain in-depth, rich data. Rich data can be used to provide detailed descriptions of the experiences of the participants. The qualitative descriptive approach results in a summary of everyday stories that facilitates understanding of specific phenomena (Colorafi & Evans, 2016:1).</p> <p>In order for the participant to trust the researcher with these narratives, establishing rapport during the interview is crucial, which enables the participant to feel free and comfortable enough to provide rich descriptions of the experiences of the phenomena under study (McGrath <i>et al.</i>, 2019:1003).</p>
<p>Qualitative research makes use of data collection through interviews</p>	<p>I made use of face-to-face and telephonic interviews, and attempted video-calling interviews, but the participants felt more comfortable with telephonic interviews. I conducted the interviews from a semi-structured interview guide.</p>

	<p>Cormac <i>et al.</i> (2019:1002) state that qualitative interviews allow researchers the opportunity to investigate in-depth matters, which are unique to the experiences of the participants, providing insights into how different phenomena of interest are experienced and perceived. The interview process considers the relationship between the researcher and the participant, with the focus on exploring the human phenomena.</p> <p>I allowed participants to elaborate and go into detail on their emotions and experiences. By using the interviewing skills, as described in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.11.2, Figure 1.1), I probed, encouraged, paraphrased and allowed the participants to share from their personal background within the context of their own lived experiences, so that these experiences could be put in words and be described.</p> <p>In Chapter 3, I will utilise the narratives and storylines of the participants to convey the results of the study.</p>
<p>Qualitative research makes use of inductive data analysis</p>	<p>Qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in a given situation (Levitt, Boston, Motulsky, Wertz, Fordham, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017:8). Inductive data analysis is indicated in cases where the interpretive nature of the research suits the analysis, as well as the complexity of the research study, where the worldview and experiences of the participants are investigated in depth (Liu, 2016:123). Thomas (2006:238) states that inductive analysis refers to approaches that employ the analysis of raw data to come up with concepts and themes through a process of interpretation.</p> <p>I applied this by letting the research findings emerge from themes that came up regularly during interviews or significantly in the analysis of the data. This was achieved by including</p>

questions in the interview guide that prompted input from the participants in regards to their experiences. They were questioned specifically on their feelings and challenges when their children came out as LGBTIQ+. They were also requested to contribute suggestions on how to support other parents whose children came out and on what social workers could do to assist parents whose children came out. In the final instance, they were invited to add anything that they were of the opinion had not been not addressed, or was not clear, or what they simply wanted to comment on. This represented the “bottom-up” or inductive approach, which characterises qualitative research.

I then analysed the collected data, according to Tesch’s model, as cited in Creswell (2014:198). Yi (2018:2) describes data analysis (coding) as the process where the transcripts are broken down into the smallest units from where they can be interpreted into relatable stories. Ziskin (2019:616) comments that once the researcher and independent coder have made notes on the information, codes and certain themes will arise.

The process that was followed is indicated below:

I obtained permission from the participants to collect data using a digital recorder; thereafter the recorded interviews were transcribed. I made use of transcriber services for three interviews, but was not satisfied with the format, and realised that it would be better if I did it myself, also to better understand and gain insight into the participants’ lived experiences. I read and re-read the transcripts in order to identify themes and sub-themes. I shared the transcripts with the supervisor and discussed the themes with her. I paid an independent coder to do the coding and had a consensus discussion with her regarding themes and sub-themes, whereby agreement was

	<p>reached on the main themes and sub-themes. This activity, in cooperation with the deductive process followed by myself and the independent coder, clarified some aspects of the data and led to the emergence of eight main themes and 35 sub-themes.</p>
<p>Qualitative research focuses on the process/the holistic picture of the research</p>	<p>The researcher is considered as an instrument of data collection in the process of the study. A good qualitative researcher asks probing questions, listens, thinks, asks more, and goes into deeper levels of the conversation. The researcher forms part of the process of data collection (Simon, 2013:1-2) The aforementioned is supported by Ormston, Spencer, Barnard and Snape (2014:8), who emphasise that there is a “relationship between the researcher and the researched” in the research process from beginning to end. Results or findings from the research are negotiated between the researcher and the participants, and the researcher is open about his/her assumptions.</p> <p>The process of data collection was flexible and open so that the participants could feel at ease to share experiences, emotions and their frame of reference without any prescriptive direction from me. The process allowed me to be able to reflect and interpret the shared information from the participants.</p>

<p>Qualitative research embraces reflexivity</p>	<p>Palaganas <i>et al.</i> (2017:426) state that the term “reflexivity” represents a new chapter in qualitative research, but it is poorly described and elusive. The authors (2017) state that reflexivity is a process through which researchers acknowledge the changes that are brought about in themselves due to the research process and also how these changes influence the research process. It is a journey of discovery whereby the researcher shapes and is shaped by the research process. The output is an empowering process. As research challenges the personality of the researcher at times, it must be acknowledged as an important part of the research findings.</p> <p>I was constantly aware of my own sexuality and experiences as someone who had to come out to my parents and had experienced minority stress due to my sexuality. I acknowledged that it influenced my questions and probing at times, because I understood which aspects of coming out to parents are important for the LGBTIQ+ child to hear and understand. On the other hand, I was very aware of the fact that my own negative experiences with the church and homosexuality could influence the study and I kept that in mind when interviewing the participants.</p>
<p>Qualitative researchers undertake interpretive inquiry</p>	<p>The interpretive research paradigm is characterised by the need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view of the participant. The researcher analyses data from within the frame of reference of the participant, rather than that of an objective observer. It can also be stated that interpretive inquiry is more specifically focussed on relevance (Ponelis, 2015:538).</p> <p>According to Jankowski and Wester (2015:45), people act and react in terms of the understanding they have or the meaning they give to other people and situations; therefore, the</p>

	<p>interpretive inquiry in qualitative research is based on how people understand their lives and the people around them in terms of the significance thereof. Barnham (2015:841) concludes that the qualitative task of interpretive inquiry aims to account for the participants' experiences of the world <i>from their point of view</i>.</p> <p>As stated in Chapter 1, I set out to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQA+. I also intended to gain suggestions for future social work support of these parents.</p> <p>The interviewing process allowed me to ask appropriate questions to gain this understanding, taking into account that my personal experiences, ideas and judgement could influence the interpretation and therefore ensuring that the focus was on interpreting the participant's meaning and not my own.</p>
<p>Qualitative research involves verification</p>	<p>Verification is a process during which researchers, after data collection and analysis, abstract and theorise inductively to determine if the insights/results of the study can be applied to other cases (Palaganas <i>et al.</i>, 2017:430). Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2018:268) concur, stating that to ensure reliability one should be able to repeat the same research in the same context and come up with the same results. Bless <i>et al.</i> (2016:236) confirm that in qualitative research the quality is determined by its trustworthiness. The authors (2016:237) add that trustworthiness is an accurate reflection of the experiences, viewpoints, insights and thoughts of participants as related during data collection.</p> <p>The method of data analysis can contribute to the validity of the research study's outcome; therefore, the data should be read</p>

	<p>and reread multiple times, and there should be low-inference coding (Ziskin, 2019:609).</p> <p>The real world experience of the participants and the findings of the research were tested against existing research and theory on the subject matter. The independent coder and I analysed the data separately and then sat together to compare the results. It was found that the same themes were identified. The outcome of the data analysis will be discussed in Chapter 3.</p>
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Having linked the characteristics of qualitative research with theory and how it was applied in the study, I now proceed to address the research design.

2.2.2 The research design applied

In Chapter 1 (section 1.9), various definitions of what the concept “research design” means were noted. Five research designs were proposed for this study. To illuminate the meaning of “research design” for the reader, Salkin (2010:1253) describes it as the plan or outline of a logical structure that directs the researcher in answering research problems and questions. Cheek (in Given, 2008:762) concurs with Salkin, elaborating that research design involves the plan on how the research will be conceptualised, conducted and contribute to knowledge in a particular area of study.

I retained the phenomenological research design, as originally planned for in Chapter 1 (section 1.9), and complemented it with an explorative, descriptive and contextual strategy of inquiry, as well as the Collective Instrumental Case Study Design.

2.2.2.1 Phenomenological research design

Although the phenomenological research design was mentioned in Chapter 1 (see sub-section 1.9) by way of introduction, its implementation is now expanded on and

explained. Phenomenologists focus their attention on the “nature of subjective experience from the perspective of research participants themselves” (Harper, 2011:89). In a phenomenological research design, reflection takes place on the lived experiences of participants in order to describe how they are involved with the world through their actions (Paulson & Thøgersen, 2011:33). Phenomenology is also a means of conveying experiences into conscious meaning (Loyd, Sailor & Carney, 2014:443) As stated in Chapter 1, it is about asking: *What is the essence of the experience?*

Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019:91) postulate that, in order to effectively understand phenomenology, the researcher must also understand the philosophies that underpin it. Those philosophies theorise the meaning of human experience. Phenomenology has different types that are each rooted in different schools of philosophy that answer the *what* and *how* of human experiences. In this study, I would like to highlight the transcendental (descriptive) and the hermeneutic (interpretive) approaches to phenomenology, as indicated in the table below.

TABLE 2.2 COMPARISON OF TRANSCENDENTAL AND HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019:92)

	Transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology	Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology
Philosophical Underpinning	Husserl Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher, introduced the concept of the “lifeworld,” one that is not readily accessible because it constitutes what is taken for granted (Fochtman, 2008:186).	Heidegger Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) developed his own tradition in phenomenology, referred to as “existential or interpretive phenomenology” (Fochtman, 2008:187).

Ontological assumptions	Reality is internal to the knower/participant and exists in what appears in his/her consciousness.	Lived experience is an interpretive process situated in an individual's lifeworld.
Epistemological assumptions	The observer must be bias-free and understand phenomena by descriptive means .	The observer is part of the world and not bias-free; he/she understands the phenomenon by interpretive means.
Researcher role in data collection	Bracket the researcher subjectivity during data collection and analysis.	Reflects on the essential themes of the participant's experience with the phenomenon, while simultaneously reflecting on own experience .
Researcher role in data analysis/writing	Consider phenomena from different perspectives, identify units of meaning, and cluster them into themes to form a textural description (the <i>what</i> of the phenomenon). Use imaginative variation to create structural (the <i>how</i>) description. Combine these descriptions to form the essence of the phenomenon.	Iterative cycles of capturing and writing reflections towards a robust and nuanced analysis; consider how the data (or parts) contributed to evolving understanding of the phenomena (whole).

Descriptive phenomenology focuses the researcher's attention on concentrating on the participant, being open and ready to listen to in-depth descriptions of his/her lived experiences, and writing down what he/she described. There is an emphasis on exploring, analysing and describing the phenomena under study through being in direct contact with it through the participants. What Husserl means with bracketing is that the researcher seeks to step away from prior knowledge and personal bias

that could influence the outcome of the study (Tuohy, Cooley, Dowling, Murphy & Sixsmith, 2013:18).

Hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology indicates that a person cannot be in isolation of his/her cultural, social and/or historical contexts. Neubauer *et al.* (2019:93) postulate that hermeneutic phenomenology means that individuals' experiences of reality are invariably influenced by the world they live in.

The phenomenological research design steered me to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants to gain an understanding of their lived experiences and add meaning to the feelings, thoughts and experiences on what their experiences, challenges and coping strategies were as the parents of LGBTIQ+ children. The questions also involved asking the participants' insight on how they thought the social work profession could be of assistance to them. Thereafter, I gained new insights and understanding of the phenomena under study and obtained information that could help form a perspective on the existing information. I specifically employed the *descriptive phenomenological design*, as it allowed for describing the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of parents whose children came out. Using phenomenological design further provided me with information so that I could add or adjust the information I already had on the topic, so that the gained information could be verified within the participants' different contexts.

In proceeding, the explorative research design and its application in the study will be discussed.

2.2.2.2 Collective Instrumental Case Study Design

In Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.7) the collective instrumental case study design was discussed and defined. I now proceed to illustrate how it was applied in the research process and how it relates to the contextual research design, discussed in sub-section 2.2.2.4.

Collective instrumental case study design is linked to contextual design, as in this paraphrasing of the words of Chanan, Vigneswaran and Kandasamy (2012:100),

where the authors state that the collective instrumental case study method provides *context-dependent knowledge*; meaning that the information gained is from participants in the same situation/context. This is supported by Rose, Spinks and Canhoto (2015:1), when they postulate that collective cases are influenced by their contexts, but they also influence their own contexts. Hancock and Algozzine (2011:15) agree by defining collective instrumental case studies as focussing the research on a single person (*case*), or *group representation*, or phenomena to study it in its natural context. Cases further occur naturally and are not manipulated, as in experimental settings. Collective instrumental case study research design provides a means to gain a comprehensive understanding of different participants' complexities within their contexts, by gaining rich data from a collective source about the same topic (Jónasdóttir, Hand, Misener & Polgar, 2018:393).

The collective instrumental case study design demands that data has depth, breadth and rigour. The data analysis must provide the evidence that supports the conclusions reached (Rose *et al.*, 2015:2). In employing collective instrumental case study design, I not only studied the individual participants, but also the group as a whole in order to come to general results/themes of their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. The data analysis of individual cases were compared with the data of the group so that conclusions reached in terms of analysis were supported by the different participants' results. In the context of this study, the participants were selected according to specific criteria, and the selected participants/cases depicted the problem or phenomenon very well as individuals, and as a group.

2.2.2.3 Explorative research design

Some introductory remarks were made about explorative research in Chapter 1 (see sub-section 1.9). Given that the topic of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African parents in South Africa in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+ was found to be under-researched in South Africa during the initial literature review, prior to commencing with this research, I decided on, and implemented, an exploratory design. Bradley (2013:29) states that

explorative research design explores these under-researched topics with varying levels of depth. He (2013) adds that exploratory research design is also known for collecting data in an unstructured or informal format.

In this study, I employed semi-structured (face-to-face and telephone) interviews to explore the yet unknown meanings, feelings, opinions and thoughts that participants had in terms of their children coming out as LGBTIQ+. I explored where there were silences between the words to hear what was unsaid and interpreted the meaning thereof, through studying body language, listening to the tone of voice, and noticing the possible reasons for avoiding certain aspects of the topic. I asked follow-up and clarity-seeking questions, where needed. This exploratory approach produced information-rich data, which allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents whose children came out as LGBTIQ+, as well as obtain suggestions for social worker support.

2.2.2.4 Descriptive research design

In Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.9), the concept of descriptive research design was defined and introduced as one of the proposed strategies of inquiry for the study. Further elaboration on the concept will be provided next, as well as how the descriptive research design was applied in the study.

The descriptive research design is primarily aimed at “accurately and systematically describing a population, situation or phenomenon. It can answer *what, when, where* and *how* questions” (McCombes, 2015:1). Descriptive research further intends to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. Such a research study’s focus is more concerned with “what happened” than “why” something happened (Nassaji, 2015:129). The author (2015:130) further indicates that in descriptive research design, data is collected through field notes, classroom settings, focus groups and/or individual interviews. In this instance, I made use of in-depth individual interviews with the participants, as it suited the sensitivity of the topic.

Bulbulia, Wildman, Schjoedt and Sosis (2019:220) in their paper, *In praise of description*, argue that theories and descriptions are interdependent. The theories and results from research are grounded in described observations and/or collected data that explored an unknown or little known topic, which in its turn generated a new understanding of the topic under study. With regard to the descriptive research design, I intended to collect information on social and current issues or problems through a data collection method that assisted me to describe the situation in-depth and in a more complete way than it would have been with another design. This became clear when I utilised interviews as a means of data collection that allowed the participants to express feelings and thoughts, and relate facts and information freely; thereby providing me with a vast amount of information to work with (Bless, *et al.*, 2016:6)

One of the research objectives set out in Chapter 1 (section 1.5) was to describe the findings regarding the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child and how they would like to be supported by social workers in this regard. The inclusion and utilisation of the descriptive research design as an integral part of the research strategy, allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of, and insight into the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out, including the suggestions they had for social work support. A descriptive research design, therefore, provided a good fit with the research question and objectives. It could be said that descriptive research design intends to put words to meanings within the context they are experienced. The descriptive research design was therefore chosen to complement the explorative research design in this study and to inform the researcher's choice regarding the methods of data collection and data analysis.

2.2.2.5 Contextual research design

Contextual research design was discussed in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.7). The researcher now proceeds to expound on the previous information and illustrates how the contextual research design was implemented/applied in the study.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013:8), qualitative research has contextual interest in the research participants and topics; therefore, the research questions determine the research practice, from where the methodology and research design of the research process are chosen. Creswell (2014:185) postulates that qualitative researchers focus specifically on the context of the participants' lived experiences so that the researcher can understand related storylines of incidents within the natural and concrete contexts they occur. Contextual research design is therefore indicated when the researcher intends to gain an in-depth understanding of and explore the lived experiences of the participants (McGrath *et al.*, 2019:1003). Meerwald (2013:45) elaborates by stating that in order for the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' stories, he/she must contextualise the narrative. Yin (2011:8) sums up that contextual research design means that the participants are experiencing their emotions, actions, thoughts and interactions within a certain context, which could be their home environment, their society or their cultural background, and the researcher should consider these contexts when conducting the research.

Long (2014:248) refers to explorative research design as research where participants' private experiences are investigated and knowledge is gained through the participants' subjective and personal experiences within their frame of reference (context). The participants are seen as the insiders/experts of their context. The researcher then sets out to interpret these personal experiences within a unique social context. This would mean that the researcher takes into account that contexts can be broad and the participants' background, culture, setting, belief system and social contexts must be considered when compiling the results of the study. The researcher should understand the participants' social meaning-making and the significance they give to events within the numerous contexts where they lived

experiences take place (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011:288-290; Neuman, 2006:158).

In Chapter 1, I described my intention to employ a contextual research design and thereafter, in Chapter 3 and 4, I set out to indicate that the participants were studied within the contexts of their real world and how these religious, cultural and social contexts influenced their reaction to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+. I furthermore contextualised the findings and recommendations to assist social workers in supporting African and mixed race parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.

2.3 THE RESEARCH METHOD APPLIED

The concept “research methods”, as explained in Chapter 1 (see section 1.8), refers to the strategies, procedures, techniques, sampling of participants, processes of data collection and data analysis, as well as the final reporting of the results and verification of the research (Neuman, 2010:250). Stating it in simpler terms, Whittaker (2012:130) defines research methods as the practical ways that researchers collect data. As indicated in Chapter 1, the research method determines the various steps taken by the researcher in order to study his/her research problem (Kumar 2008:5).

In the following discussion, the proposed research methods as per the planning in Chapter 1, are revisited, elaborated on and described in terms of how they were implemented in the study. Any changes to the initial plan relating to the chosen research methods, and/or addition or adopting of any other research methods will be indicated and justified.

2.3.1 Population, sampling and sampling techniques

Although the term “population” was introduced in Chapter 1 (see sub-section 1.8.1), elaborating on it is deemed necessary to further set the scene for its application in the research process. Polit and Beck (2008:337) state that a **population** comprises

of the whole group of cases that a researcher is interested in and that have something in common to study, whereas Whittaker (2012:75) defines population as the total possible group of people who could be studied. Robinson (2014:26) refers to population as the “sample universe”, meaning the entire group of possible cases that may legitimately be interviewed/studied in the research. In this study, the population was all the mixed race and African parents in South Africa whose children had come out as LGBTIQ+.

Sampling involves the selection of certain cases that will be studied carefully to gain understanding that will be applicable to broader cases (Neuman, 2014:166). Erba, Ternes, Bobkowski, Logan and Liu (2017:42) concur that sampling methods and the sample population should ensure the validity of the study, so that conclusions can be drawn in terms of the whole population from studying the sample. In sampling, I therefore chose those participants who could represent the larger population of mixed race and African South Africans whose children had come out as LGBTIQ+.

Guest *et al.* (2013:44) opine that the researcher chooses who to include in his/her study based on those individuals who can best answer the research objectives or questions; thus, those people who have extensive knowledge about the research topic. The inclusion criteria, as stated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.10.1), were as follows:

- Both male and female participants who were able to reflect upon their experiences and coping strategies as parents of children who have come out as LGBTIQ+, and who could make suggestions for social work support.
- Participants were included who were willing to voluntarily consent and participate in the study.
- Participants had to be fluent in English or Afrikaans, as the researcher did not plan to make use of interpreters.

Exclusion criteria:

- Parents whose children did not come out as LGBTIQ+
- Parents who are unable to speak either English or Afrikaans understandably.

Participants complying with these criteria were identified and included in both the pilot study and the research.

In order to obtain the sample for my study, I utilised **purposive sampling** as one of my sampling techniques. In purposive sampling, the sample is chosen based on characteristics, as determined by the research topic. There is therefore a specific reason why the said sample is selected (Dudley, 2011:145). Purposive sampling is done when the researcher is seeking participants who can share their unique “slice of reality” related to the topic under study (Elmusharaf, 2012:2). Emmel (2013:7) postulates that the researcher makes decisions regarding the sample population in the study from the planning to the completion stage of the research, indicating that it is part of the process of recruiting participants. The author (2017) adds that the sample group must be picked with the purpose that they will provide rich and in-depth data on the topic under study. I therefore recruited the participants based on the data they could provide and their applicability to add to the topic under study. The sample group had the attributes of and represented the larger population of mixed race and African parents in South Africa whose children had come out as LGBTIQ+.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the difficulty to find participants, I also made use of snowball sampling. Hence, I asked the participants to refer me to other possible participants for the study who they knew or were aware of (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010:141). Snowball sampling is often used to find those hard-to-reach participants who the researcher would not have found through other methods (Waters, 2014:367). As the participants could experience the interview process first-hand, they could reach out to parents in the same position and bring them in contact with me.

In order to gain access to the participants, I acknowledged and negotiated with gatekeepers within organisations by making them aware of the study and the

specifically foreseen positive outcomes of the study. First, I accessed the ⁸OUT Organisation to request permission to contact parents of children who had come out, indicating the ethical considerations of the study and the aim thereof, as well as the value for the participants. I also contacted the administrators of social media sites (⁹Friends of Open Closet and ¹⁰GenderDynamix) for LGBTIQ+ persons who had come out to request permission to contact these individuals in an effort to access their parents. With the application of the snowball sampling in this study, I initially approached African gay and lesbian friends to request access to their parents; from there I connected with LGBTIQ+ organisations for referral of participants. I utilised snowball sampling by asking participants if they knew of other persons who would be relevant to the study, and by following up on referrals. I then implemented snowball sampling by asking those who agreed to participate to further assist me in identifying other parents of children who had come out as LGBTIQ+.

Sample size in qualitative research cannot be determined prior to the end of the study, but is rather determined at the point of saturation of data (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield & Kingston, 2018:619). Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot (2015:11) indicate that the sample size should be justifiable. Saturation implies that the researcher can be reasonably certain that further interviewing will bring forth the same information, and confirms emerging themes and results (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017:1). Ceasing information gathering is therefore dependent on the “redundancy” of information, or “saturation”. Redundancy happens during a process of sequential interviewing when the researcher notices that concepts are repeating and no new themes or concepts are emerging (Trotter, 2012:399).

I had conducted ten interviews when I gradually realised that information was becoming repetitive and that different participants were sharing the same

⁸ OUT provides direct health services to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, sex workers and injecting drug users, including HIV testing, counselling, treatment and general lifestyle advice and support.

⁹ Friends of Open Closet is a Facebook page for mostly African and mixed race lesbians, which discusses topics of interest to gender nonconforming persons.

¹⁰ Gender Dynamix seeks to be a key role-player towards the realisation of all human rights of transgender and gender nonconforming people within and beyond the borders of South Africa.

information. I then sent the interviews to the independent coder. After the independent coder studied the transcribed interviews, she confirmed that data saturation had been reached and that we could proceed with data analysis. Cleary, Horsfall and Hayte (2014:2) recommend that data collection be terminated at this stage; for this reason, I ceased conducting the interviews.

2.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION APPLIED

In the section below the process of preparation for data collection, how participants were prepared, the actual collection of data, and how it was analysed and verified will be discussed. I followed, but also diverted from, the original plan (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.10) where individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were planned. Moser and Korstjens (2018:1,9) state that the most utilised data collection methods in qualitative research are in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus groups and case studies. These authors (2018) further state that interviews can be done face-to-face, via telephone or online, whichever method suits the participant and researcher best.

The reason for choosing semi-structured individual interviews as the method of data collection was informed by the fact that one of the research objectives was to explore the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. I also requested the participants to provide possible suggestions for social work support. As a researcher, I was guided by Bless *et al.* (2016:197), who stated that these kinds of interviews would afford the researcher the opportunity to comprehensively explore the topic under study.

Although the initial plan was to only conduct face-to-face interviews, it was not always possible for either myself or the participants to reach each other in a physical setting, as they were not always in the same proximity and the research budget did not include travelling costs. I therefore followed the suggestion by Moser and Korstjens (2018:9) and Lechuga (2012:266) and conducted telephonic interviews

where no options for face-to-face or Skype interviews existed. I found that the information gathered through telephonic interviews had the same depth and richness as the data collected during face-to-face interviews.

2.4.1 The preparation for data collection, processing of data collection, analysis and presenting findings

The data selection section includes discussions related to the recruitment of participants, the preparation for data collection, the pilot study, the methods and interviewing skills applied in collecting data, as well as the results of the data analysis.

2.4.1.1 Recruitment

In order to gain access to participants, I had to go through a process of negotiating with gatekeepers. Neuman (2012:296) describes gatekeepers as those people in the community who are informed persons or organisations who can provide access to possible participants. Gatekeepers also form part of the ethics of the research process as they seek to protect participants from possible harm, which might be caused by the research (Kay, 2019:1). Kay (2019:2) postulates that gatekeepers could have both a positive and negative effect on research, by providing access or preventing access, but they also contribute to the principles of beneficence and no-harm.

The gatekeepers the researcher contacted were:

- PFLAG
- OUT
- Friends of Open Closet
- Facebook pages, such as Cape Town Lesbians and Same Love Support Group

The only organisation willing to assist me was PFLAG. The other web pages and OUT feared that I would ¹¹“out” children to their parents, despite the fact that I explained that the research would only be done with parents whose children already had come out as LGBTIQ+. It soon became clear to me that it was taboo to reach out to parents, even if the children were grown-up and living “out”. In most cases it was the adult children themselves who did not want the researcher to interview their parents on their experiences of their child coming out as LGBTIQ+. PFLAG, however, provided me with a list of names of African parents who indicated their willingness to open up and speak about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+.

Herewith a table indicating how specific participants were recruited:

TABLE 2.3: Recruitment Process

RECRUITMENT METHOD	¹² PARTICIPANT(S)
<p>INFORMAL CONTACT THROUGH FRIENDS/ PERSONAL LGBTIQ+ NETWORK</p> <p>A friend who has a gay cousin connected me with her aunt</p> <p>A lesbian friend connected me with a colleague who is the father of a lesbian daughter</p>	<p>*Dorcas</p> <p>*Hami</p>
<p>INTERNET / SOCIAL MEDIA</p> <p>Responding to the Facebook request/post</p>	<p>*Lorinda</p> <p>*Gerty</p>
<p>PFLAG</p> <p>A gatekeeper organisation provided a list of names of persons in the organisation who had agreed to be interviewed.</p>	<p>*Ayanda</p> <p>*Simon</p> <p>*Pamela</p>

¹¹ When one “outs” a LGBTIQ+ person, you disclose their sexual orientation or identity to others, without their permission.

¹² Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of participants.

	*Ntabiseng
SNOWBALL SAMPLING Gerty, a participant, referred me to other possible participants, as she is an active ally of LGBTIQ+ persons	*Ivy *Joanna

After the participants were recruited and screened for suitability for the study (through the methods indicated above), I began the process of data collection, which included the preparation for data collection, which will be illustrated next. It is, however, important to note that the data collection entailed cross-cultural interviews conducted by a white Afrikaans-speaking researcher with African indigenous language speakers, as well as mixed race participants. The researcher and the participants were therefore not from the same cultural backgrounds. Hence, a short discussion on cross-cultural research will follow.

- **Cross-cultural research**

In Chapter 1, I described “respecting cultural difference” as one of the ethical considerations that should be taken into account when doing cross-cultural research (sub-section 1.14.6). Pelzang and Hutchinson (2018:1) emphasise the importance of establishing cultural integrity in cross-cultural research. The authors (2018) also argue that in qualitative research it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the findings are credible and can be meaningful in application. In order to obtain rigour and trustworthiness, the interview must be of such a nature that the socio-cultural and political context are understood by the researcher and acknowledged through in-depth interviews and appropriate interviewing skills. The researcher must therefore make use of his/her interviewing skills to ensure that the difference in culture does not become an obstacle in gaining credible data (Pelzang *et al.*, 2018:2). Kuzu (2010:18) observed that an interpretive and flexible approach is needed in cross-cultural interviewing, as the focus of qualitative research is to gain meaning and understanding, to and interpret the words of the participants’ lived experiences. The author (2010) makes a valid point that qualitative inquiry provides the setting for the researcher to hear, understand and interpret, *the silenced*,

oppressed or marginalised voices of people who are often “othered” by society. Questioning cross-culturally should therefore focus on allowing the participant to explain the how, why and what, and the significance of his/her experiences within his/her cultural context.

I allowed the participants to speak from their experiences within their communities, church, cultural background and beliefs, and did not make judgements or negatively questioned their responses. Two of the mixed race (¹³*Ivy and *Gertie) participants asked if their interviews could be conducted in Afrikaans; the researcher allowed it, and later translated and transcribed the interviews into English.

2.4.1.2 Preparation for data collection

I followed the following steps as part of preparing the participants and adhering to ethical principles, as advised by Bless *et al.* (2016:32), which is described as follows:

- I contacted the participants telephonically, introduced myself, and explained the research topic. I assured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality and that participation was voluntary. I explained that they had the right to withdraw from the research process at any time. I also explained the benefits of the study to the larger community of parents whose children have come out. Finally, I made them aware of the possible risks of the research.
- The participants were e-mailed the informed consent letter (Addendum A & Addendum B).
- The participants received the semi-structured interview guide as an example of the questions that would be asked (Addendum E).
- The participants were informed that the interviews would be digitally recorded and they had to agree to the recording; a letter of consent for using the recordings was sent to them via e-mail (Addendum D).
- Lastly, I allowed the participants to ask clarity-seeking questions and express their fears in connection with what the data gathering process would entail.

¹³ Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identity and anonymity.

In preparing possible participants during the recruitment process, I provided comprehensive information on the research topic to the manager of PFLAG, including that the intent of the research was to proffer suggestions for social work support for parents of children who have come out as LGBTIQA+. The manager then contacted members of her support groups and *Ayanda, *Simon, *Pamela and *Ntabiseng agreed to the study after the manager provided them with the basic idea of the study, so that they could make an informed decision. Participants *Flora, *Dorcas and *Hami, who were referred to me by friends or through snowball sampling, also already had a basic idea what the study was about, as the person who referred them provided them with the document. Those who reacted to social media also knew what the topic was beforehand (*Lorinda and *Joanna), as the details were posted on Facebook, with a request for participation.

After the participants were informed of the basic idea/topic of the study and showed interest, I contacted them telephonically to introduce myself and explain my interest in the topic, and to thank them for their willingness to participate. I then obtained their e-mail addresses so that I could send them the ethical consent forms, a written invitation, as well as the interview guide containing a list of the basic question that would be asked.

2.4.1.3 The pilot test

Pilot testing, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.11), can be described as a “dress rehearsal” for the actual research interviews. It provides the researcher with a test of what can be expected during the research and indicates any problems with the questions; it also provides insight into questions that should be added to the interview guide (Lavrakas, 2008:584).

A pilot study is one of the essential steps in research. It is a small study that tests the research process, the data collection instruments (such as interview guides), the participant sample, and the research techniques that will be utilised in the main study. The feasibility of the research project is therefore tested by the pilot study (Fouché & Delport, 2011:73). The pilot test also allows the researcher to assess

how the participants respond to and understand the questions. If necessary, the guide can be revised thereafter (Hennink *et al.*, 2011:120).

I conducted two pilot interviews with participants from the same sample group that would be used for the main research project. The face-to-face interviews were with *Dorcas and *Simon. The interviews allowed me to understand the possible difficulties that I would experience with further interviews, such as language and cultural barriers. The interviews were useful in the sense that I could test the questions and allow these participants to speak freely. After transcribing the interviews, I discussed it with my supervisor, and concluded that the interview guide could remain as it was, but that I should ask more open-ended questions, as indicated by Royse (2011:171). These questions would allow the participants to elaborate more on their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQA+.

- **Motivation for including pilot tests in main study**

Thabane, Chu, Cheng and Rios (2010:9) state that pilot studies can be used to generate data for the main study. Their study reveals the benefits of qualitative pilot studies in developing the main study. Ismael, Kinshin and Edwards (2017:4), in their study on pilot studies, ask the question: *What benefit might there be in the pilot study for the whole of the study?* These authors (2017) add that in qualitative research where the available participants are limited, the researcher could include the pilot study results in the main study, but this is only advisable if there was no or little changes to the interview guide after the first pilot studies – as was the case in this study (Ismael *et al.*, 2017:5).

I had great difficulties finding participants, due to a variety of reasons. Some possible participants would make appointments and cancel three times before deciding not to go through with the interview. Other possible participants indicated that they did not want to be digitally recorded and would also not allow the taking of notes. Some initially willing participants eventually decided that they would rather not be part of the study. As it became clear that the population group, who formed part of the specific topic under study, was hesitant to discuss such a sensitive topic,

I, in consultation with my supervisor decided to add the two pilot tests to the main study, so that the study would have enough credible data. The pilot test had the same questions as the main study; therefore, comparable information was gathered during the two pilot interviews (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:2)

I did not have to make changes to the interview guide after the pilot studies. I also realised that the information gathered during the pilot studies would be essential to ensure that the main study had sufficient participants, and it made a positive contribution to the existing data. I did not go back to the original pilot studies to ask the questions again because that could have contaminated the process, but I did use the existing two transcribed interviews.

Pilot testing laid the groundwork for the greater task. It prepared me for the project ahead, testing my interviewing skills. It also assisted in assessing the feasibility of the study, and had the advantage of generating data for the study.

2.4.1.4 Collecting the data

In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted, where possible, utilising a semi-structured interview guide and open-ended questions (see Addendum E). The interview guide provided structure to the interviewing process, while allowing flexibility. Bonevski, Randell and Paul (2014:42) describe a semi-structured interview as a process where the researcher starts with open-ended questions directly related to the topic under study, inviting the participant to talk freely. The questions are prepared/structured in such a fashion that it encourages the participants to share personal experiences, emotions, opinion and thoughts about a specific topic or event. Bonevski *et al.* (2014:42) add that the researcher seeks as much information/data as possible; thus, there will be follow-up questions and probing. The semi-structured interview guide is therefore a list of questions related to the topic under study, which allows the researcher to prompt or probe, or even make use of short periods of silence to encourage more sharing by the participant. The interview guide consisted of certain questions that guided me in the interview process by providing the basic topical questions to work from and then expand on

through probing, paraphrasing, empathising and encouraging the participants to share.

As indicated above, McIntosh and Morse (2015:2) identified further characteristics of the semi-structured interview, stating that all participants are asked the same questions in the same order from the interview guide; therefore, their answers/data is comparable. The authors (2015) expand on existing definitions of a semi-structured interview by stating that it allows the researcher more freedom to diverge from the guide by including follow-up, probing and prompting questions.

The interviews were conducted as per the table below:

TABLE 2.4: Interview Dates and Venue

¹⁴ PARTICIPANT(S)	VENUE	DATE	HOME TOWN/ PROVINCE
Ntabiseng Simon Dorcas	Quiet corner in restaurants of her choice Face-to-face Face-to-face	11/10/18 11/10/18 09/10/18	Surrounding Johannesburg, Daveyton and Benoni
Hami	Office Face-to-face	17/06/19	Pretoria
Ayanda Lorinda	Video call, followed-up with telephone calls	23/04/19 14/05/19	Soweto, Johannesburg Harrismith, Free State
Gerty Ivy	Tried Skype/video calling, but it did not work due to bad connections.	15/05/19 19/06/19	Western Cape, Stellenbosch

¹⁴ PSEUDONYMS were used through-out the dissertation to protect the identity of participants.

	Switched over to telephone calls.		Western Cape, Boland
Joanna Pamela	Telephonic interviews at times that suited them best.	05/06/19 10/04/18	Rural Eastern Cape
Gerty Ivy	Switched over to telephone calls.	15/05/19 19/06/19	Western Cape: Stellenbosch Boland

- **Motivation for the use of telephone interviews:**

Using telephonic interviews to conduct qualitative interviews has generally been considered as an inferior method to face-to-face interviews (Novick, 2008:391). Common concerns against using telephones for data collection are establishing rapport, and reading body language and context (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker & Korcha, 2016:118); thereby affecting the depth of the data. However, some scholars have indicated that on an ethical basis, regarding the power relationship between researcher and participant, telephonic interviews, compared to in-person interviews, are less intrusive and confer greater control to participants in terms of negotiating interview times and “places”(Saura & Balsas, 2014: 2615). Moser and Korstjens (2017:12) affirm that it is general practice in qualitative research to apply more than one data collection method in a study. Data collection in qualitative research is flexible and allows for adaptability to the needs of the participants and the research process. Trier-Bieniek (2012:642) found that telephonic interviews are often preferable when interviewing participants about personal and painful experiences, as they are being interviewed in familiar and comfortable settings, where they dictate the direction of the interview. In the case of this study, where parents had to open up about a sensitive and personal topic, I found this author’s conclusion to be valid.

Studies on qualitative research have pointed to “logistical conveniences and other practical advantages of telephone interviews”, including that a wider geographical participation can be reached, costs are reduced, the researcher’s safety is

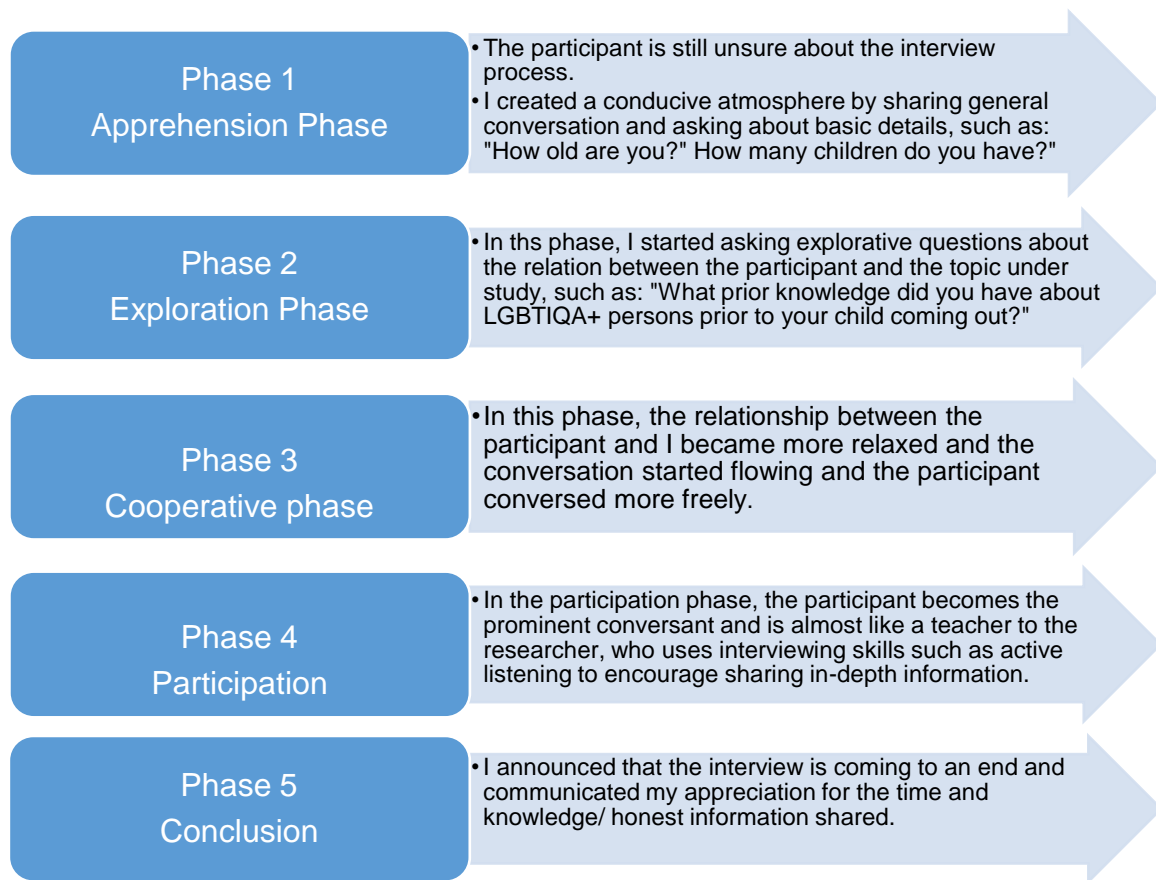
guaranteed, and there is more flexibility in scheduling the appointment for the interview (Cachia & Milward, 2011:266). I was able to reach participants from the Western Cape (Bellville and Stellenbosch), the Free State (Harrismith), rural Eastern Cape and Gauteng (outlying townships). As I had difficulties reaching possible participants outside of my immediate area (Gauteng, Pretoria), the telephonic interview option ensured that I could reach participants more easily and from a wider geographical area. I was therefore able to recruit from a greater geographical area, without concern for traveling or other costs. In final defence of telephonic interviews, Neuman (2014:216) sums up that these interviews have most of the strengths of a face-to-face interview, but at a much lower cost.

During the actual telephonic interviews, I found that exchanging pleasantries at the beginning of the interview, built rapport with the participants and I was able to move onto the scheduled questions with ease. This is confirmed by Drabble *et al.* (2016:120), from research conducted on telephonic interviews. The authors (206) state that basic small talk assists in building a productive research relationship with the participant and helps in making him/her feel comfortable. Finally, in justifying the use of telephonic interviews, Volg (2013:177) concluded in his study that there was no difference in the length, depth or type of information/responses gained via telephonic interviews compared to the data gained from in-person interviews.

I did both in-person and telephonic interviews. I found that the telephonic interviews went just as smooth as the face-to-face interviews. Even though I could not physically see the participants, I was able to listen to their tone of voice and use my interviewing skills to encourage free and in-depth conversation of the topic under study. Under sub-section 2.4.4, I illustrate the flow and strategies used in the telephonic and the in-person interviews.

I followed the phases of interviewing, as described by Whiting (2008:36-38), to obtain in-depth data from the participants. Below is a summarised self-developed figure of the phases:

FIGURE 2.1: Phases of the Interview Process



In order to demonstrate the interviewing skills implemented during the telephonic interviews, I refer to the study by Drabble *et al.* (2016:7-9) on telephonic interviewing.

TABLE 2.5: Strategies Employed for Collecting Data during Telephonic Interviews

THEME	STRATEGIES
Establishing rapport and maintaining connection	Informal exchanges (small talk) Orientating statements that help the participant to know what to expect in the interview process Sharing reciprocal information (personal exchanges)

Demonstrate responsiveness to participant's narrative	Active listening (e.g. summary statements and asking follow-up questions) Validation and clarification (checking whether the researcher correctly understood the information shared by the participant)
Communicating regard for participant's contribution	Indicating closure of interview Asking the participant if there is anything else they would like to share/add Statement of appreciation for the contribution

(Drabble *et al.*, 2016:122)

As seen above, the processes followed in interviewing in person or in telephonic interviewing have the same pattern. When studying the interviews, the telephonic interviews resulted in the same depth of information.

2.5 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS APPLIED

The concept “data analysis”, as introduced in Chapter 1 (see sub-section 1.10), can further be described as a process giving meaning to data through a continuous process of analytical reflection (Creswell, 2016:183). Royse (2011:42) concurs, adding that data analysis is the organising of collected information/data into groups or themes. Data analysis involves ordering “raw data” into structured, systematic and comparable themes. Words expressed during interviews (raw data) are analysed to come to certain conclusions during the data analysis (Bricki & Green, 2007:4). Bless *et al.* (2016:341) assert that data analysis begins during data collection, where the researcher is able to note certain themes emerging and recurring. The authors (2016) explain that coding is the process whereby the transcripts of interviews are broken into fragments, which share a common theme.

Data for the study was collected during interviews, recorded on a digital recorder. Thereafter, the interviews were transcribed *verbatim*. The transcription was formatted in the correct style for coding and data analysis. Additionally, the transcribed interviews were printed out and kept safely. I then followed the steps of

qualitative data analysis, as proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2014:198). These steps appear on the surface to be in a linear form, but Creswell (2014:196) asserts that the process of data analysis is cyclical in nature. In agreement with Bless *et al.* (2016:341), as stated above, he proffers that data analysis is an interactive process and develops during the process of qualitative research. Hennink *et al.* (2011:234) concur that data analysis is a cyclical process, involving the description, comparison, categorising and conceptualisation of the raw data. In the next section, I will indicate how this process of organising and preparing raw data for analysis was conducted.

- **Organising and preparing the raw data for analysis**

I recorded the data and transcribed the raw data as soon as possible after the interviews. During the interviews, I made use of a note pad and pencil to write down possible probing questions or note down certain issues that I wanted to return to in the interview (Moser *et al.*, 2018:15). These authors (2018) are also of the opinion that the researcher should not postpone or wait with the data analysis process, as emerging designs are at the centre of qualitative research, and this entails a process of moving back and forth between sampling, data collection and analysis. Emerging issues/themes should be noted and followed up during the process of interviewing. Moser *et al.* (2018:16) further indicate that this process guides subsequent sampling decisions. During the interviews, I also made notes of matters that came across as of high importance to the participants. In this way, I started ordering the data early on in the process, and started analysing it informally.

At first I made use of a transcriber, but soon realised the value of doing the transcription myself, as it allowed me to gain more meaning and insight in the information gathered. Only two interviews were transcribed by an outside transcriber. Thereafter, I did all the transcribing myself. I found that transcribing formed part of the process of early analysis of the data. After each transcribed interview, I read through the transcription and made notes on emerging patterns or themes. I made unique abbreviations to identify certain emerging topics as part of coding the data, as indicated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.11.4).

Once all the interviews had been conducted, I gained a holistic sense of the data collected by reading through each transcribed interview, making notes in the margins, and clustering information together. All ideas/thoughts that came to the fore were noted. I then compiled a draft table where I indicated the emerging themes based on the questions asked in the interview guide and indicated sub-themes next to them. The following process assisted me in conducting the data analysis:

FIGURE 2.2: PROCESS FLOW OF DATA ANALYSIS

I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews conducted word-for-word. I proceeded to read the transcripts carefully, making notes as I read. I then wrote down ideas and gained a general sense of the content and meaning of the transcripts.



I took the first transcript and reread it carefully, asking myself: *What is this about? What is the essence of the information?* The purpose was to gain a holistic sense of the interview. I made notes on implied messages and themes that I picked up in the interview and read thoroughly through the transcript.



I repeated this process with the remaining transcripts. In executing this step, I revisited and sorted the topics and then grouped similar topics. For example, “parents’ previous knowledge of LGBTIQ+ matters prior to their child coming out” and then categorised sub-themes, such as “parents had no previous knowledge” or “parents had previous experience/knowledge of LGBTIQ+ matters”.



Following the categorising of the topics, I started allocating an abbreviation and finding descriptive words for each of the identified topics. I then returned with the list of topics and their accompanying abbreviations to the data sets and placed the abbreviations next to the segments of data corresponding to the respective topics.



I utilised the cut and paste option to group topics that belonged together under one theme, dividing the material into themes and providing the groundwork to do a preliminary analysis of the information.



When I was satisfied with the categorising and coding of the topics, a final decision was made about the wording of each topic. Each one had to be specific and clear, and then was adopted and/or reworded as a theme.



A final decision was made regarding which themes (topics) and sub-themes should be included (in consultation with the independent coder). The two diagrams in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 indicate the themes and sub-themes that were eventually deduced and verified at the consensus discussion.



Finally, the existing data were recorded and discussed, as found in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. During the process of presenting my findings and substantiating my findings with relevant research, I revisited the data several times to check on its correct presentation.

(Tesch, in Creswell, 2014:198)

An independent coder and I followed the same steps, as indicated above. Following the analysis, my supervisor, the independent coder and I held a discussion panel on 31 October 2019 to finalise the themes and sub-themes that answered the research questions. We found that we, in most instances, had identified the same themes and sub-themes. We agreed on the themes and sub-themes that would be used in the research findings.

In addition, I took note of the verification of the qualitative data to ensure the validity of this study. The aspects that were considered will be discussed in the next section.

2.6 PRESENTING THE DATA

Anderson (2010:141) reminds the reader that qualitative research involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of data that cannot easily be reduced to numbers. Qualitative data is collected from the social world, its concepts, and the behaviour of people in it. Sutton and Austin (2015:226) describe the role of the researcher in data collection in terms of accessing the thoughts and feelings of participants, which could mean asking people to talk about experiences that they might find personal and difficult to talk about. Sutton and Austen (2015:227) further state that once qualitative interviews are conducted, the data must be presented in such a way that all ethical considerations for the participants are adhered to, but the best possible reporting of results still takes place. Reporting on data in qualitative research refers to the reporting of the interpretation of the meaning of participants' responses (Neuman, 2010:178). Neuman (2014:374) further states that it is more difficult to present qualitative data, as the data are in the form of words; therefore, detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of participants will help readers better understand the participants' subjective worldview and social context. The data collected will be presented in the form of themes and sub-themes, as supported by the individual narratives/storylines of the participants, and confirmed by the literature. Relating the storylines provided rich, comprehensive descriptions that added value to the validity of the research report.

I chose to use a “cross-person” presentation of data, as explained by Valdés (in Yin, 2010:240). The data gathered/stories of the participants were presented in relation to the themes that were identified in the analysis, rather than an in-depth individual presentation. As advised by Anderson (2010:4), storylines that could provide rich descriptions of the themes were utilised and linked to the pseudonyms of the participants who related it. The data analysis and results are presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

2.7 DATA VERIFICATION

As indicated in Chapter 1 (see sub-section 11.1.5), data verification has much to do with the quality of the study. Verification of data concerns the final part of the data analysis. Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2018:253-254) speak of the *internal validity* of qualitative research, by indicating that the explanation of an event or the investigation of a topic of research must be sustained by the data collected and the research process. This can only happen if there is accuracy and correctness (which is relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research) in the results. Cohen *et al.* (2018) further state that *external validity* means that the results of the study can be generalised to a wider population or situation.

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I consulted various journal articles and literature sources on strategies, and implemented these strategies to ensure validity and trustworthiness. The strategies I employed to ensure data verification and trustworthiness are presented below, and they are supported by Bless *et al.* (2013:238-239), who define the tools for testing trustworthiness. These authors (2013) state that there must be adequate description of sampling; data collection and analysis should run concurrent with the data collection process; and data saturation must be ensured. Bless *et al.* (2013:239) further assert that the researcher should make use of triangulation, peer review, and participant validation, and use sufficient verbatim quotations from the interviews.

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The researcher has now drawn conclusions, and interpreted and coded the data. The next step is to ensure that the data, as analysed (the results), can be verified and trusted. Roller and Lavrakas (2015:276) state that data verification enables the

researcher to find the truth-value of the research. From the beginning of the data analysis, the researcher is constantly looking for meaning, and noting regularities and patterns in the data. The researcher has to verify the trustworthiness and plausibility of these assumptions and claims within a real world context (Miles & Huberman, 2009:11). When data is properly verified, it maximises the validity of the data and ensures that the results of the study can be applied and are useful (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:274).

Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-22) was applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. According to Guba's model, although all research must have "truth value", "applicability", "consistency" and "neutrality" to be worthwhile, these aspects of trustworthiness and the nature of the knowledge gained will differ between quantitative and qualitative research. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bless, *et al.*, 2013:236-237). Guba sets four criteria for trustworthiness, which were applied in this study. They will be discussed, as follows:

- **Truth value/credibility** refers to the extent that the data analysis reflects the reality of the event or how things really happened. It determines how sure the researcher is of the truth of the research results, based on the research design, participants and context (Krefting, 1991:215). I availed the transcribed interviews to the participants to confirm that they were a true reflection of the actual interviews.

In trying to achieve and maintain credibility, I utilised and applied the following commonly used and accepted strategies, which will be discussed and clarified as follows:

- **Triangulation of data sources.** Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe and Neville (2014:545) define triangulation in research as using multiple data sources to reach an understanding of the phenomena under study. Rhodes (2018:23) states that more methods should be used to triangulate sources by using two or more theories, more data sources, and more than one investigation or

method to collect data. I ensured credibility by conducting ten interviews with participants from different backgrounds and different perspectives. I also used different methods of obtaining data, for example, face-to-face interviews and telephonic interviews, as contained in a semi-structured interview guide. The results from these methods were comparable (see sub-section 2.4.1.1). Further triangulation was done through observing the body language and tone of voice of the participants.

- **Peer examination/review** is another important method of ensuring credibility. It is based on the principle that the researcher checks the research process and findings with colleagues and peer reviewers who are experts in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991:219). This means that the researcher should seek the perception and insight of his/her peers in coming to conclusions regarding the research (Anney, 2014:277). I was in constant contact with my supervisor, checking my understanding and interpretation of the data. I also had several scheduled supervision sessions for feedback from my supervisor. In addition, I connected with colleagues from other universities in order to gain a different, objective perspective on my analysis of the data. Peer review ensures that the researcher is not misled by his/her own perceptions, bias and assumptions. I ensured that only pseudonyms were used and no identifying data was made available to peer reviewers.
- **Reflexivity**: It can be described as a process during which the researcher critically views and reflects on his/her own values and perceptions that could influence the data collection and the interpretation of the data (Polit & Beck, 2012:589). To ensure that my background, perceptions and personal interests did not influence the reliability of the data, I practised reflexivity throughout the research process, and remained self-critical. Reflexivity further refers to the analytical attention given to the researcher's role in the research study (Palaganas *et al.*, 2017:427).

- The final aspect of credibility is the ***authority of the researcher***. Miles and Huberman (in Krefting, 1991:218) identified four character aspects that are important for a researcher in order to be considered credible and trustworthy:
 - Some sense of familiarity with the phenomenon and setting of the study.
 - A strong interest in conceptual and theoretical knowledge, and a conceptualising ability,
 - The ability to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach,
 - Good investigative skills developed through mechanisms such as a literature review and experience.

Ali and Yusof (2011:63) refer to this as an ***“unique authority”*** that the researcher possesses and, in order to verify it, it is best to include the researcher’s background, qualifications and experience in terms of personal and professional knowledge of the topic under study. The researcher’s unique qualities are therefore important elements in enhancing the credibility of the study. In terms of this researcher’s own qualities, the following can be highlighted:

I am a registered social worker who has 20 years’ experience in the field of social work, where I dealt with the LGBTIQA+ community and their parents in the past. In these cases, I practiced ¹⁵Affirmative Therapy without realising it. I form part of the LGBTIQA+ community, and can empathise with the sensitivity of LGBTIQA+ issues. I personally came out to my parents and I have gained a personal understanding of coming out and parental reactions. Hence, I have lived experiences of the topic under study, but I also have

¹⁵ Affirmative therapeutic interventions involve a therapist accepting, supporting and understanding the LGBTIQA+ client, and facilitating of the client’s active coping skills, social support, and identity exploration and development, without imposing a specific sexual orientation identity outcome (American Psychological Association, 2009:v).

training, an open mind, and I pay attention to detail. These are all elements that give credibility to qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:260).

- **Transferability/Applicability** refers to the extent to which the research results can be generalised to other contexts (Trochim, 2006:2; Cohen *et al.*, 2018:254). Transferability or generalisability of a study means one judges the extent to which the findings in one study can be generalised to another study by similarities between the time, place, people and other social contexts of both studies (Leung, 2015:326).

According to Leung, Lincoln and Guba (1990:57), transferability can be explained as follows: in transferability the context of “A” can only be applicable to the context of “B” if thick descriptions are available, which entails different levels of meaning coming from the data analysis, and in which case “A” and “B” are significantly similar. In short: Shenton (2004:69-70) defines it as the degree to which the research results of the study can be applied to other contexts, settings or groups. I therefore aimed to gain thick descriptions of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents whose children had come out as LGBTIQ+, so that the richness of the information can be applied or transferred to other studies of the same nature. However, I kept in mind that the idea is not to state that this is true for all such cases, but rather to acknowledge that results could be different for each different context and that qualitative results are multi-layered.

- **Consistency/dependability**

Following the inter-connectedness of the principles mentioned before, Shenton (2004:71) is of the view that once credibility is achieved, dependability is also obtained. Consistency means that, should the exact same study be repeated, with the same methods and participants, exactly the same results would be reached. It refers to the researcher’s objectivity during the research process and data analysis. It also means that the process can be repeated and the results will be replicated (Moon *et al.*, 2016:3). The researcher must be able to indicate that he/she followed each step of the research process thoroughly and

meticulously; thereby describing in detail how the data was collected, how the data analysis was conducted, and providing narratives with rich descriptions on the results (Bless *et al.*, 2013:237).

I stayed in regular contact with my supervisor – reporting and verifying progress and conclusions. I kept a notebook (an audit trail) with dates, actions and processes that I followed during the research project, so that I would be able to relate in detail how the process unfolded. In addition to the strategy/ies depicted above, dependability was further enhanced by utilising an independent coder who is an expert in independent coding and qualitative research.

- **Neutrality/Confirmability**

In research, the term “neutrality” implies that the research is separated from the researcher's conditioning circumstances. It means that the results provide an unbiased and truthful view of the phenomena under study (Given, 2008:555). This means that the researcher does not manipulate results or data to arrive at a predetermined idea. Confirmability is the strategy implemented to ensure that information gathered is neutral; it also refers to the objectivity of the data and that two or more independent people will come to the same accuracy and meaning of the data (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs, 2014:3,5).

I was constantly aware of my perceptions regarding the phenomena under investigation and used reflexivity to ensure that I did not become biased. Mechanisms to ensure confirmability include reflexivity (Krefting, 1991:217). Palaganas *et al.* (2017:427-428) confirm that fieldwork is intensely personal and our positionality, for instance, class, sex, ethnicity or religious convictions, play a role in the research project and influences the final text (report). I engaged in a continuous reflective process throughout the research process by using a research notebook and by being in continuous consultation with my supervisor. In compiling Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, regarding the results, I consulted various theoretical perspectives and previous research to support the findings and curb the effect of researcher bias (Shenton, 2004:72). I also exercised self-awareness

and reflexivity by being aware of my own standing as a lesbian who had to come out to my parents, and also by being aware of my personal opinions about religion, ethics and the LGBTIQ+ community. In order to ensure that I was unbiased, I checked my interpretations against that of the independent coder. In Chapter 1 (sub-section 11.1.5), I concluded that I intended to use reflexivity as a strategy to account for and limit my personal biases.

2.8 ETHICS

The concept “ethics” was introduced in Chapter 1 (see section 1.13). In reflecting on the research process, I considered whether these ethical considerations had been adhered to in the research study. In highlighting the significance of observing the ethical principles of qualitative research, Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012:64) remarks that certain elements in qualitative research necessitate focus on the interconnectedness between researcher and participants. A critical view of these ethical matters where a researcher and the participants’ worlds meet is necessary to design ethical research. Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi and Cheraghi (2014:14) state, in referring to ethical qualitative research, that in qualitative studies it is often necessary for researchers to clarify their role in the research process. In the process of qualitative research the researcher is involved in all the stages of the study, from defining a concept to design, interviews, transcriptions, analysis, verification and reporting the concepts and themes. This means that whatever part of research is being undertaken, it involves a human being as an integral part of the process, and this causes ethical concerns. Sanjari *et al.* (2014:16) conclude that the researcher must endeavour to minimise the possibility of intruding on the independence of the study participants.

I followed UNISA’s policies and guidelines and sought obligatory ethical clearance for the study from UNISA’s Social Work Departmental Research and Ethics Committee (SRC/SWREC) prior to commencing with my study. Ethical clearance was received on Thereby, I vouched to comply with the

ethical principles adopted in the original approved plan/proposal for this study. An account of how the ethical principles were applied is presented next.

2.8.1 Obtaining informed consent

Informed consent (Addendum A) implies more than just a once-off agreement, but requires ongoing negotiations of the agreement between the researcher and the participant during the progress of the study. It also implies that participants could withdraw from the study at any stage, should they feel uncomfortable with the process (Hoeyer, Dahlager & Lynøe, 2005:1741).

Obtaining informed consent from referrals was done via the organisation (PFLAG) who contacted the individual prospective participants and determined whether they will be interested in the study. Thereafter telephone numbers were provided to me and I personally mailed the informed consent forms to each participant prior to interviews. The same principle was applied with snowball sampling participants.

2.8.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anonymity is the protection of identity or obscuring thereof, whereas confidentiality refers to the management of private information (Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011:198). Kaiser (2009:1631) postulates that confidentiality in qualitative research poses a problem when rich, in-depth descriptions are used, which could lead to identifying the participants. She (2009:1635) advises researchers to work with a “clean data set”, which means that identifying particulars should be removed. Anonymity and confidentiality in research is a process whereby the researcher properly safeguards information to protect the privacy and identity of participants. The participants should be guaranteed that they can trust that their privacy will be protected (Lichtman, 2014:54). I removed all identifying details from the transcripts, such as the names of the participants and places they were from, as indicated in the interviews, were changed. The participants were given pseudonyms and files were stored under

these pseudonyms. In addition, only the researcher listened to the recorded interviews. Original recordings were deleted from the recorder and the recordings were encrypted and stored on my laptop. The information with the consent forms of all the participants were stored separately in a place that only I could access. The identifying details of the participants were removed from the documents. The findings were only discussed with the academic supervisor and the independent coder.

2.8.3 Beneficence

Participants should not be exposed or subjected to situations causing stress, embarrassment, loss of self-esteem, or discomfort. Should such an incident be possible, the risk must be discussed with the participant and debriefing made available to the participant (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:78). Running the risk of harm can come in a variety of forms; it could be social or psychological, feeling unease or embarrassment, or danger to home, family or work. It is of utmost importance that the researcher ensures that the risk or extent of negativity experienced is not more or greater than what the participant would experience in their daily life (Babbie & Mouton, 2015:522).

Participants were met at times and places of their choice where they felt comfortable and not exposed. Skype and telephone interviews were also determined by the participants.

Townsend, Cox and Li (2010:617) suggest employing the process of *reflexivity* as a way to foster ethical rigour in qualitative research and, ultimately, to minimise risks/harm. Reflexivity entails self-awareness and awareness of one's actions and interactions during the research process. In order to minimise risk, I attended to the participants' priorities, respected their experiences, contextualised their narratives within their daily lives, and built relationships based on mutual respect.

2.8.4 Management of information

After data collection and transcription, the information needs to be managed in a secure way to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The data may only be used for research outputs, while still protecting identities and confidentiality (Thomas, 2016:46). Data must be stored in such a way that it will be available, in a good condition and easily accessible, for five years after the completion of the research project (Creswell, 2009:91).

The easiest, simplest and most effective method of ensuring that data remains anonymous is by assigning numbers, utilising codes, or an alias/pseudonym to protect the identity of the participant (Bless *et al.*, 2016:33). I had a name list with the details of the participants so that interviews and follow-ups could be scheduled, but it was kept separate from the transcribed interviews. The transcribed interviews were alphabetically ordered and did not contain the names of the participants. After using the alphabet to identify the participants, I changed the letters and linked pseudonyms to the participants, and kept the information separately.

Regarding the transcriptions, I understood that technology could fail one, even if precautions were taken. I printed out the transcriptions and kept them in a file at home which only I had access to, ensuring *confidentiality*. The only individuals who had access to the transcripts were me, my supervisor, and the independent coder. However, the independent coder did not have access to the real names of the participants.

I also edited the documentation so that information, such as the area from where the participants were, was left out, ensuring *anonymity*. The voice recordings were stored on a separate file on a password-protected computer and deleted from the voice recorder.

To ensure that information, as it unfolded during the study, did not get lost, I stored it under a password-protected document in Word, as well as on a flash drive. As a further back up, I emailed the information to my password-protected Gmail account.

2.8.5 Debriefing of participants

Risks regarding the psychological stress that the participants could experience were explained to them and they were informed about access to a counsellor should they feel that they needed debriefing after the interview (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.13.5). None of the participants indicated the need for a counsellor, but a number of them indicated that they would benefit from a support group for parents of LGBTIQ+ children. I referred these participants to PFLAG, who could inform them of meetings in their respective areas.

2.8.6 Respecting cultural differences

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.13.6) and Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.4.1.2), the participants and I were from different cultural backgrounds and histories, even though we were all from the same country. Benton, Androff, Barr and Taylor (2011:246) comment that even though researchers are sensitive to keeping data and participants' information confidential and anonymous, there should be an awareness of giving "a voice to the voiceless" or giving a voice to those who previously have not been heard. Part of giving a voice to the voiceless is employing respect and listening skills, and realising that you, as the researcher, have gaps in your knowledge of other cultures. South Africa has a multitude of cultures and therefore there are various voices, speaking from the experiences of different cultures or ethnic groups. I respected the cultural aspects and differences between myself and the participants, thereby acknowledging, showing understanding and valuing the participants and their lived experiences, without discriminating or violating their rights (Bless *et al.*, 2016:3; Struwig & Stead, 2016:68).

In respecting the cultural differences between myself and the participants, I firstly did not make assumptions about their feelings and opinions about matters that were discussed. I furthermore acknowledged that we are from different cultural backgrounds and I would appreciate it if they could help me understand their lived experiences.

2.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are those occurrences during the research study that are out of the control of the researcher and affect the progress of the study (Strydom in De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011:126). A number of challenges and limitations were experienced during the study. They are discussed below:

- **Recruiting:**

Finding participants was difficult as LGBTIQ+ matters are sensitive and people are not openly LGBTIQ+. Where people were openly LGBTIQ+, they often were not willing to allow the researcher to talk to their parents to ask permission for an interview.

Some participants would make appointments and cancel them. It was clear that they had difficulty deciding whether they were willing to share their experiences or not. One participant cancelled four times before she eventually agreed to an interview.

- **Snowball Sampling**

Snowball sampling is a commonly employed sampling method in qualitative research where a method of referral is used to obtain participants for the study. However, the diversity of samples generated has been questioned by researchers.

- **Cultural and language obstacles**

I am of a different culture and/or language than the population group for the study. It took a while for me to establish rapport with the participants. I also had to understand that talking about the subject matter is often taboo in African and mixed race cultures.

The interviews were conducted in English, which often was the participants' second or even third or fourth language. The participants could not express

themselves as well in English as they would have been able to do in their mother tongue. Although it did not have a general negative effect on the outcome of the study, it did at times limit the depth of information gained.

- **Gender of participants:**

Most of the participants were female and it was indicative of mothers being more willing to open up about the topic. It is also indicative of the home situations, where fathers are often absent. The results could therefore not be representative of the genders' experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 reported on the implementation and application of the qualitative research approach, as discussed in Chapter 1. It also provided a detailed discussion of how the research process unfolded from the start to the end, with specific attention on how the characteristics inherent to qualitative research were interpreted and applied.

Subsequent to the discourse on the characteristics of qualitative research, I provided more detail on the research design, focusing on the phenomenological, descriptive, explorative, contextual and collective instrumental case study designs. The study aimed to describe the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. Furthermore, it explored the unknown in-depth information about the subject matter and placed the research within the cultural, social, religious and other relevant contexts of the participants. It showed how the topic was studied as a phenomena and how the group of participants were used as a collective instrumental joint case study.

I continued to provide detailed descriptions of the research method applied. This discussion kicked off with the identification of the population, sampling and sampling

methods, together with an overview of the selection and recruitment of the participants, the negotiation of access to them, and their preparation for the data collection. A narrative of the data collection process by means of semi-structured interviews with the parents of children who had come out as LGBTIQ+ were then given, which included details of a pilot test that was utilised.

Tesch's eight steps of data analysis (in Creswell 2014:198) were discussed in detail, resulting in the development of themes and sub-themes. The process of data verification and ethical issues pertaining to qualitative research were discussed at length. This included attending to the participants' priorities, respecting the participants' experiences, contextualising their narratives within their daily lives, and building relationships based on mutual respect, including protecting their identities and ensuring confidentiality, providing a social worker for debriefing, and focussing on ensuring the autonomy of the participants. Lastly, I discussed the limitations I experienced during the process of the research.

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the research findings from transcripts of the data collection will be described in terms of the data analysis and the interpretation into themes and sub-themes. The results will also be compared to the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: PART ONE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study was to explore, describe and contextualise the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, so that I could proffer suggestions for social work support to parents.

This chapter will focus on presenting the first part of the research findings (themes one to four); obtained through individual, in-depth face-to-face, telephonic and video calling interviews. Interviews were held with ten participants regarding their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+, in order to make suggestions for social work support. As stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, I made use of the qualitative research approach with a phenomenological strategy of inquiry, employing explorative, descriptive, contextual and collective instrumental case study research design. The participants were purposively selected, according to certain criteria, as stated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.9). Data collection through the narratives of the participants provided rich data from their lived experiences and perspectives. The data obtained was thematically analysed utilising Tesch's (in Creswell, 2014:198) eight steps of data analysis. An independent coder was used and the coder's analysis was compared to my analysis of the data. This act of comparing increased the credibility of the analysis.

The results pertain to the findings in relation to the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+, including suggestions for social work support. In order to provide context to the elaboration and subsequent discussion, I firstly will present the participants' demographic details. This will be followed by an account of the themes, sub-themes and categories in tabular form, which emanated from the data analysis process. Storylines from the participants' interview transcripts will be

provided and used to inform the research findings presented in the aforementioned section. In addition to the quoted storylines, a literature control will be utilised for correlation purposes. I will present the findings in two chapters so as to avoid overloading the chapters with information, and to ensure clarity of themes and a systematic flow.

3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

In this section, I will present the demographic information of the participants. Bless *et al.* (2016:162) state that a research population consists of specific common characteristics that the researcher is interested in (see stipulations in Chapter 1, sub-section 1.8.1). In this section, more information on the participants is shared in a table format.

Tuncel and Atan (2013:17) state that in order to prevent the reader from getting bored while reading an article or thesis, it is wise to express some data in visual format such as graphics and figures. The authors comment that peer-reviewers frequently look at tables, and figures. According to the authors, high quality tables and figures increase the chance of acceptance of an article or thesis for publication. It is therefore advisable to report on facts in a visual manner.

The demographic details of the participants are presented in Table 3.1 below:

TABLE 3.1: Biographical Information

¹⁶ PARTICIPANT	AGE	RACE	GENDER	RELATION	No of children/siblings	MARITAL STATUS
DORCAS	59	African	Female	Mother to a gay son	Three children	Married

¹⁶ I made use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

NTHABISENG	63	African	Female	Mother of a lesbian daughter	Husband – three Wife – two Plus two children together	Married
SIMON	72	African	Male	Father of a lesbian daughter	Five children	Married
PAMELA	42	African	Female	Mother of a lesbian daughter	Two children	Married
AYANDA	52	African	Female	Maternal aunt (mother figure) of a gay son	Two children	Divorced
LORINDA	43	Mixed race	Female	Mother of a lesbian daughter	Two children	Divorced
GERTIE	52	Mixed race	Female	Mother of a transgender daughter	Two children	Married
JOANNA	41	African	Female	Mother of a lesbian daughter	One child	Divorced
HAMI	45	African	Male	Father of a lesbian daughter	Five children	Divorced

IVY	53	Mixed race	Female	Mother to a bisexual daughter and a gay son	Three children	Married
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RACIAL GROUPS

Reflecting on the race of the participants, seven of the participants were African and three were mixed race. After I tried to recruit only African participants, I came to a standstill in my recruitment process and requested the Social Work Research and Ethics Committee to allow me to also recruit mixed race participants. The Committee gave permission and I was able to proceed by recruiting three mixed race participants.

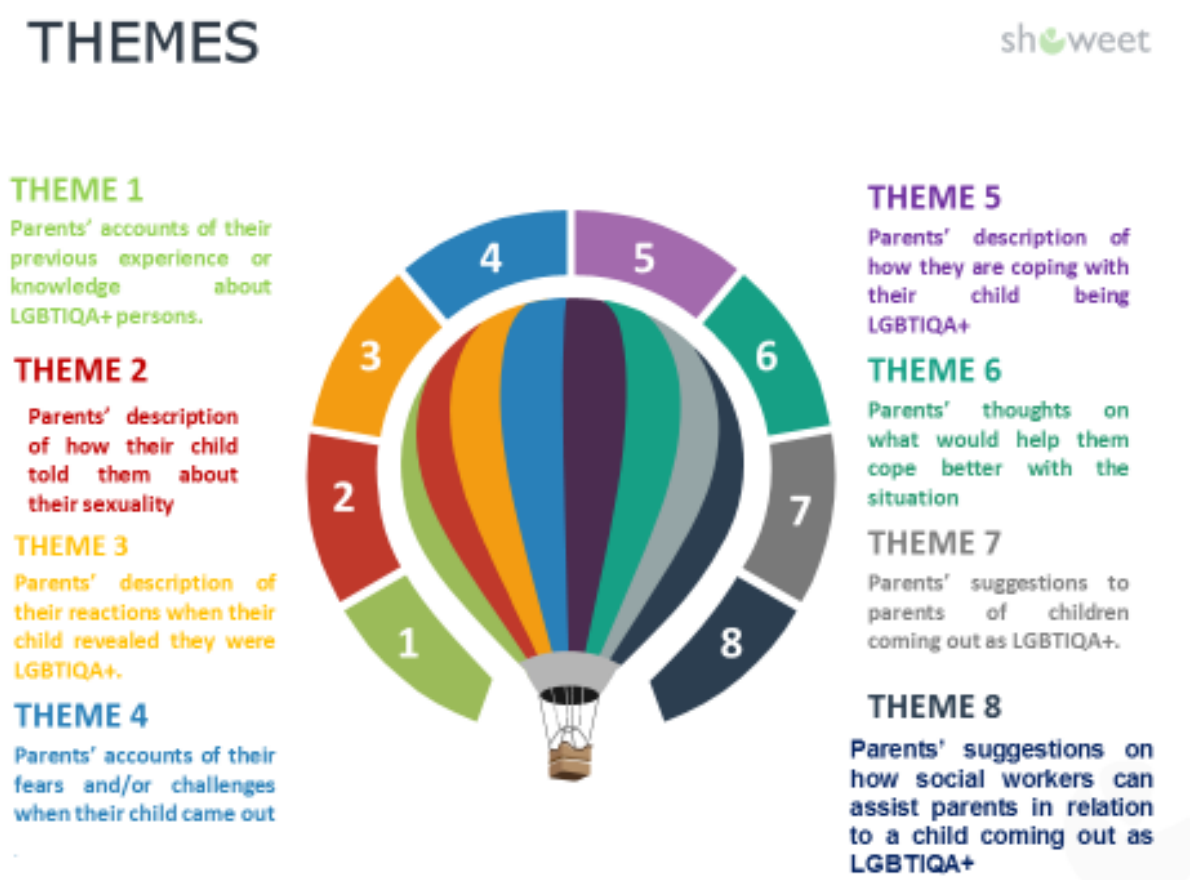
3.3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

In order to obtain data from the perspectives of the participants on the research topic under investigation, the participants were asked to share their narratives on their experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their children came out as LGBTIQ+. They were also requested to proffer suggestions for social worker support. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with the signed permission of the participants. The data was analysed by myself and an independent coder and eight themes with 35 sub-themes emerged. The themes will be presented using verbatim quotations from the participants and each theme and sub-theme will be compared to, contrasted, and confirmed by other research findings and relevant literature on the subject matter. I will make use of the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation throughout to provide a lens to give perspective on the research findings. In addition, as indicated in Chapter 1 (section 1.4), Hill's Stress Theory and the Strength-based approach were also adopted as part of the theoretical framework to support and explain the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African parents in

relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+ and their suggestions for social work support.

Figure 3.1 below provides an overview of the themes that emerged related to the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+, including suggestions for social work support.

FIGURE 3.1



Following the main themes, I will now indicate and discuss the themes and sub-themes from the data analysis:

TABLE 3.2: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Themes	Subthemes
THEME 1: Parents' accounts of their previous experience or knowledge of LGBTIQA+ persons	Sub-theme 1.1: Had no prior knowledge or experience
	Sub-theme 1.2: Had previous knowledge or experience
	Sub-theme 1.3: Knew from name-calling and behaviour
	Sub-theme 1.4: Parent is a lesbian
THEME 2: Parents' description of how their child told them about their sexuality	Sub-theme 2.1: Child did not disclose to parents
	Sub-theme 2.2: Child told parents
	Sub-theme 2.3: Parent asked child
THEME 3: Parents' description of their reactions when their child revealed they were LGBTIQA+	Sub-theme 3.1: Surprised and unhappy
	Sub-theme 3.2: Disappointed
	Sub-theme 3.3: Pained or shocked
	Sub-theme 3.4 Discriminated against or rejected
	Sub-theme 3.5: Fearful
	Sub-theme 3.6: Accepted
THEME 4: Parents' accounts of their fears and/or	Sub-theme 4.1.1: Safety
	Sub-theme 4.1.2 Family will not accept

challenges when their child came out (Fears)	Sub-theme 4.1.3 What others will say
(Challenges)	Sub-theme 4.2.2 Difficult to find a job
	Sub-theme 4.2.3: Bullying at school

Evolving from this table, I will continue in due course to present the accompanying sub-themes, where applicable. Themes 1 to 4 will be dealt with in this chapter, while Themes 5 to 8 will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.3.1 THEME 1: PARENTS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OR KNOWLEDGE OF LGBTIQA+ PRIOR TO THEIR CHILD COMING OUT

During times when the West were exploring and discussing sex and sexuality, South Africa's apartheid government instituted strict rules and prohibitions regarding sex, including ruling that homosexuality was against the law. In general, sex was seen as a "private matter", not to be discussed publicly (Posel, 2004:54). According to Okechi (2018:1), there is a general understanding in African societies of sexual relationships as sacrosanct to the image of the larger group; therefore, the entire group must adhere to the rules regulating sexual relationships between individuals in the group. The sexual acts between two individuals are therefore guided by the rules of the group. If the group does not condone being LGBTIQA+, there will be pressure on the individuals to change or hide their behaviour.

Coming out means that a person is no longer hiding his/her sexual identity. They are declaring to their family, friends, community or the world at large that they are LGBTIQA+. Heatherington and Lavner (2008:329) found that telling one or both parents about one's sexual orientation as LGBTIQA+ carries deep psychological importance and is perceived as an obstacle, due to a variety of societal and familial

pressures. Children often fear negative consequences from their parents, especially if the parents are conservative or not knowledgeable about LGBTIQ+ persons or matters. In general, parents have specific ideas about gender, also called “gender belief systems” whereby specific roles are assigned to men and women (Bailey, Kim, Hills & Linsenmeier, 1997:2). According to Janssen and Scheepers (2018:8), the typical gender belief system place men as masculine and women as feminine at opposite ends of each other and this is how most conservative or non-knowledgeable people view gender and sexuality. The “knowledge” that these persons thus have of gender constructs is that there are basically only male and female identities, which are heterosexual.

Mucherah, Owino and McCoy (2016:254) argue that having an understanding of the concept and construct of homosexuality or exposure to diversity or even a form of education or training about issues of sexuality can play a huge role in a person’s attitude towards LGBTIQ+ persons. It is with this in mind that I posed the question to find out what prior knowledge the parents had about LGBTIQ+ issues.

In light of the abovementioned background information on LGBTIQ+ knowledge in the South African context, Theme 1 is discussed below. Theme 1 emerged from the information provided by the participants to the question as to their **previous experience or knowledge about LGBTIQ+ persons prior to their child coming out.**

The parents’ accounts are provided in four sub-themes:

3.3.1.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Had no previous knowledge or experience

There are several scholars who claim that homosexuality in Africa is non-existent, despite evidence to the contrary (Dlamini, 2006:128). This could cause African parents not to “see” or deduct from behaviour that someone is LGBTIQ+, merely because it is believed that “such people” do not exist within the culture. Mkasi (2016:1) provides another perspective on why African parents/people could be unaware of LGBTIQ+ persons. She (2016) states that developing knowledge of

same-sex sexuality in African communities needs a complex narrative that includes indigenous knowledge and culture. Mkasi (2016) explains that South Africa has gone through many changes and new knowledge is generated daily, but knowledge must be contextualised and analysed through the eyes of indigenous societies (including mixed race and other culture). She (2016) concludes that the issue of same-sex sexuality has never been properly talked about or investigated and knowledge thereof within the cultural context is therefore lacking. Riddinger (1995) and Summers (1995 in Dlamini, 2006:4) assert that within the context of the African culture a person would rather define the *emotion and act*, than to categorise the person as “homosexual”. As homosexual men and women have been actively persecuted and discriminated against in African and mixed race societies, they have had to hide their sexual identities; thereby, community members would not take note of their sexuality and therefore stay unaware of homosexuality in their community (Amory, 1997:5).

During the interviews for this study, a number of the parents recounted how they had had no previous knowledge or experience whatsoever prior to their child coming out. And the following storylines reflect this:

In this regard, **Dorcas** said: *“I didn’t have any knowledge because it was in 1971 when he was a child and gay and lesbians were not out as they are now. So it was a shock in the family”* [**Dorcas 13-15**].

Ayanda confirmed that she had no or very little knowledge and experience, but with hindsight she recounts: *“We as people did not think it was the right thing, due to the lack of knowledge, we thought it was a choice. Actually, you know, those people, they were there, they were there when we were growing up. I remember I grew up in Lesotho and I attended a Roman-Catholic School. And there was this lady, we could see, she was wearing dresses, she was a lady, but she was muscular. She was not married and she had a female friend and nobody visited her except that lady. Nobody went to her house. There was sometimes when she would disappear. They would tell us, now she has gone to Maseru and when she is in Maseru she is called a male name. As I grew up and see what is happening around us, I understand now what was happening to that lady. That lady was a lesbian”* [**Ayanda**

20-35]. She added: *“Even where I am now there are people like that, older people, people who grew up that way, who never got to marry. This thing people never talked about it, they kept quiet...That is what we never talked about”* **[Ayanda 37-41]**.

Ivy responded as follows: *“I knew nothing, it was like a new field opening to me and I did not have knowledge about it. In our culture (mixed race) we don’t speak about it...So, that was that, I never had to deal with gay people, except when it came over my path, I started reading up about it and started gaining knowledge about it and I hardened myself to the fact that there is nothing I can do about it”* **[Ivy 28-48]**.

The above narratives relate to talking about the subject of LGBTIQ+ persons’ sexuality as being taboo within the African and mixed race context; therefore, it could lead to the participants’ apparent ignorance of its existence. It also relates to the fact that it is not spoken of, or referred to, in societal conversations, as **Ivy** stated, *“In our culture we don’t speak about it.”*

3.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Had previous knowledge or experience

On the other hand, some of the parents recounted that they had had previous knowledge or experience of LGBTIQ+ persons prior to their child coming out. In post-apartheid South Africa, issues of sexual practice, sexual identity, gender-based violence, and a variety of topics on desire and eroticism have become part of wider conversations on the democratic rights of people. This contributed to normalising talking about sex and sexuality in general conversations. There has also been more focus on how legislation and the courts protect LGBTIQ+ persons’ rights (Posel, 2004:55.). As urbanisation increased and societal values changed, same-sex practices started to become more visible to outsiders, encouraging more open conversations about it (Gibbs, 2010:76). It is thus clear that the taboo subject became more accessible to acknowledge and talk about.

Nthabiseng was one of the parents who had knowledge of LGBTIQ+ persons. She related: *“For me, LGBTI is not a new thing. I knew about it from the time I grew up, in the community where I lived in Katlehong, in my workplace, and as we grew up as young people. You know we had lesbians and gays, but there wasn’t much knowledge about it. Therefore, to me it is nothing new”* [**Nthabiseng 14-18**].

Hami, as a social worker, had prior knowledge, as well as experience: *“My professional training exposed me to LGBTI issues...as a social worker. I trained from 1993 to 1999. That and my interest in the issue; around that time I also find myself establishing friendships with people within the LGBTI community”* [**Hami 20-26**].

Gertie also had had previous knowledge and experience: *“When I was young, my first, my very first experience with such a person was: as children, we did not have our own home, we therefore lived in with a family whose son...you must remember, this was a time when you were not allowed to be gay or anything like that...in the seventies and eighties. It was very difficult for these people to show or admit that they are gay. I lived with this boy, we grew up in the same house and was the same age; he was like a brother to me. We went to school together and at the end of the day, he confided in me and started talking to me and I realised he is not just an ordinary boy, he is now taking me into his confidence, and he did some things with me that one would think only a girl or woman would do. When we played “school-school”, he would pick to be the teacher (female)”* [**Gertie 13-28**].

The above storylines indicate that, although not much information was available to the parents about the LGBTIQ+ community, some parents had experienced LGBTIQ+ persons during their everyday lives and as children, thereby creating awareness in them about the possibility that a person could be LGBTIQ+. **Hami**, for instance, had the opportunity to learn about LGBTIQ+ issues during his studies as a social worker. **Ntabiseng** and **Gertie**, on the other hand, experienced it within their communities and with close friends.

3.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Knew from name-calling and behaviour

The following narratives indicate how name-calling towards LGBTIQ+ persons made the participants aware of the existence of such persons. What should be mentioned here is that name-calling is negative and therefore the reference to the existence of these people is not merely being made aware of them, but being made aware that a person who is called these names is of less value.

As **Simon** narrates below, communities were aware of the same-sex, male-to-male “marriages” on the gold mines in South Africa. This forms part of South Africa’s apartheid history, where men had to leave their families (and wives) in the homelands to earn a living in the mines. Some scholars state that the same-sex relationships that were born from this, were not necessarily homosexuality, but rather due to a need that had to be met (Spurlin, 2006:34).

Simon explained: *“It was just about the people were called names, like here in the Transvaal, In Gauteng I heard, mostly in the Cape they are moffies...that is when I knew, even with the people that were with me who were on the mines...they will tell us that somebody is cooking for them, washing their washing for them as a man, some of them they are called women, also from prison, some of them are meant to be women and others are men, yes”* [**Simon 12-21**].

Pamela recounted: *“... there were these other people, that they were discriminating them. If it is a guy they will say ‘Oh, he is a moffie’ and if it is a girl ‘she wants to be a guy’, they will teach her a lesson or something”* [**Pamela 22-25**]. The use of slang words such as ¹⁷“moffie” to refer to a gay person is derogatory and hurtful. It is also a means of ¹⁸“outing” a LGBTIQ+ person of whom there is the *suspicion* that they may be LGBTIQ+. The variable here is not whether the person is actually LGBTIQ+, but rather how they are *perceived by the bullies* who call them names (Evan & Chapman, 2014:646).

¹⁷ Afrikaans slang word to refer to a male homosexual person or a perceived homosexual man.

¹⁸ “Outing” an LGBTIQ+ person means to disclose their sexual orientation or identity without their permission.

Part of acknowledging someone as LGBTIQ+ is how gender is perceived in South Africa (Helman & Ratele, 2016:1). It is both a means of identifying a LGBTIQ+ person, and also a matter for concern, where the specific roles of male and female are constructed and reconstructed within families in a particularly negative way. The name-calling that some participants referred to is often when a person acts in a way that is perceived to be belonging to the opposite sex. Numerous studies in South Africa have investigated the ways in which gender is constructed unequally and how society polices gender roles and the boundaries between genders (Helman & Ratele, 2016:2). Muller (2013:2), in her study on how health professionals treat LGBTIQ+ persons, indicated that heteronormativity makes LGBTIQ+ persons invisible and their lived real life experiences are not reflected in mainstream narratives, as they often feel the need to hide their sexual orientation or identity. She (2013) continues that research in South Africa highlights how LGBTIQ+ persons face discrimination, therefore, feeling forced to not come out with their LGBTIQ+ status. Lane, Mogale, Struthers, McIntyre and Kegeles (2008:432) found in their study that all the participants (gay men) who visited clinics experienced name-calling and ridiculing. *The authors (2008) further stated that the attitudes of professionals were rooted in the attitude of the society they came from.* I could not find such information in terms of the attitude of social workers in South Africa leading to LGBTIQ+ persons rather hiding their sexual identity than being discriminated against because there is a gap in the literature in this regard, and the participants did not reach out to social workers for assistance.

The participants' narratives of how they knew about someone's sexual identity through discrimination and name-calling forms part of societal attitudes about LGBTIQ+ persons. Some of the parents thus did not have in-depth knowledge, but they heard the children being called names and saw their behaviour. A person who is called names can be referred to as stigmatised on the basis of a personal trait/aspect of who they are (e.g. race, sexuality). In this case, the reference to name-calling is on the basis of their sexuality and sexual orientation (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998:504). These authors (1998) explain that stigmatisation means that a person is devaluated within social and other contexts due to a trait they possess.

Discrimination, stigmatisation and persecution of the LGBTIQ+ community in South Africa is well documented and often occurs (Abavera & Cisheb, 2018:61).

3.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Parent is a lesbian

Two of the mothers explained that they were in a somewhat different situation than the other parents as they were lesbian themselves; therefore, they already had knowledge about LGBTIQ+ persons and issues by the time their children came out. They were also able to identify their daughters as lesbians and ask them about it.

Joanna did not know about LGBTIQ+ persons in her community during her childhood. She explained: *“The thing is: I am lesbian myself. She (her daughter) identifies as lesbian so that was quite easy” [Joanna 25]*. When asked about her experiences as a child, **Joanna** said: *“There was actually nobody at all. Later there was an uncle of mine that I got to know about. When I was growing up there was no room for thought of what is going on, like I within myself, I couldn’t put a name on it. Like having sexual encounters with women or friends like that, but we never had a name for what we are doing...Never, never, they never spoke about it...But later, when I was 25 years old, my mom and I was watching television and there was this guy who was gay, and then my mom made a remark that the world is coming to an end, but I made no comment...At that time, I already had some sort of knowledge about gay people and this is something they say to a black child, it is spoken of in church and gay people don’t even want to go to church anymore. If you are a lesbian or homosexual you are living a life of sin” [Joanna 27-50]*.

Lorinda had the same experience as **Joanna**, where she also had sexual encounters (“fooled around”) with girls, but did not have a name for it, or did not identify as lesbian at the time. Lorinda also explained how one did not talk about these things: *“I think my story would be a bit different, seeing as I identify myself as lesbian as well...what happened is in 1989 I used to fool around with girls, I used to do that, but you know in those years those were things that you never talked about, right... In 2010, I got involved in a relationship with another woman, but ja, and then I got divorced from my ex-husband” [Lorinda 13-29]*.

These two parents are lesbians, who did not know much about LGBTIQ+ persons or issues as they were growing up and discovering their own sexuality, although later on, it helped them identify their daughters' sexuality. From their narratives, it is clear that it was also a taboo subject for them, even though they had same-sex sexual encounters.

3.3.2 THEME 2: PARENTS' DESCRIPTIONS OF HOW THEIR CHILDREN TOLD THEM ABOUT THEIR SEXUALITY

The second question posed to parents was to ask them how their child told them about their sexuality. Their responses to this question are given in three sub-themes.

Disclosing one's sexual identity can lead to violence and discrimination, and children often anticipate disapproval from significant others, such as their parents. Therefore, they often conceal their identity from their family (Watson, Wheldon & Russell, 2015:385). On the other hand, Graftsky (2014:37) in her study on children's disclosure of their sexuality to parents, found that, despite these feelings of fear, coming out as LGBTIQ+ to one's family is an important stepping stone in a LGBTIQ+ person's sexual development and integration of his/her sexual identity. It is also part of the steps ¹⁹to live an "out" life, thereby normalising their sexuality. LGBTIQ+ persons may decide at any time during their lifespan, as a youth or early adulthood or even later in life, to disclose their sexual identity to family. Disclosure may happen through actively, verbally informing parents of their sexual identity, through a crisis like a violent attack, or by passive non-denial of their sexuality (White, Sandfort, Morgan, Carpenter & Pierre, 2017:309).

In the sub-themes I describe the ways in which the participants found out that their children were LGBTIQ+.

¹⁹ To live an "out" live means that the LGBTIQ+ person is completely open about their sexual orientation and/or identity.

3.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Child did not disclose to parents

Some of the participants explained how their children did not disclose their sexuality to them, but their behaviour revealed their sexuality. The reasons why a child would possibly not be willing to disclose his/her sexuality is indicated in section 3.3.2 of this chapter.

Studies by Kircher and Ahlijah (2011:5,10) indicate that children who do not fit the heteronormative expectations of society have often led parents to suspect that their child is LGBTIQA+, and the parents who had such suspicions were better able to cope with adjusting and adapting to their child being LGBTIQA+. The authors (2011) also found that children, who from a very young age displayed the opposite gender's roles or behaviour, such as boys wanting to wear dresses or play with dolls, caused parents to better understand and accept their gender identity later in life, even though parents still go through a stage of denial at first.

Gertie explained how her transgendered child did not disclose to her, but his behaviour from an early age actually disclosed his gender dysphoria to her: *“He never said anything – this child, even before he could walk, we could see, his father and I, his dad would buy him little cars to play with, but he did not want to, but he would play with the teddy bear that his dad bought me for Valentine’s Day. So there we started realising, if I am sitting in front of the mirror putting on make-up, the child would like that and not playing with a ball. Even when people came to visit with their children, we saw that our child would rather play with the girls than the boys ...What worried us, was that he refused to wear underpants, when he started potty training and because at that stage it would have been very awkward for me to buy panties for a boy-child. So, he walked around naked under his pants. We didn’t buy clothes with zips to prevent it from hurting him. All these things happened spontaneously. There was no need for a moment when child had to come and tell us, we grew into it with him as he grew up...but when it came to school or church or going to places or people, we knew what they would say, for these places child stayed ‘boy’ on the outside. But at home we do not mind if child grabs my sari and puts it on. It was*

never a problem at home, clothes did not matter to us. If child wants to put a towel around his head to pretend it is long hair, then we did not mind at home. But there was a rule that when you go to school or outside, be yourself, be a boy, because that is what the world expects of you and so it went on. Then he went to high school as a boy. To us at home he was a girl, because we knew it at home. And then the first incident at high school, there was a dance, a sokkiejol, and child decided to wear a dress that night. We took child aside and said to him, we don't mind if you put on a dress or go out in a dress, but you must remember what the people are going to say will hurt you terribly. Because it was a school event, we preferred him to wear pants and a top or a blouse. At that stage the child's cupboard was already filling up with women's clothes. Child got clothes from the female friends he had at school and therefore son's cupboard started transforming. By grade 9, standard 7, it happened that child was bullied too much by other kids during the teenage phase and it was a very vulnerable age and time for child. It was the most difficult time for us, because, look child is now sitting with the sexual awakening when his female friends were getting boyfriends and stuff happens, and like any other child, our child falls in love, but he cannot express it and it must stay a secret. This did not happen with his female friends and this was very difficult for us as a family. There was an incident where his female friends, like friends do started joking with him about eyeing another boy and this came out at school and the boy he was in love with went to the principal at the school to complain and it ended in a disciplinary hearing against our child at school, this thing broke us...and this all because of the girls joking about stuff. Our child was charged with sexual harassment. We went to the school and we had to accept what they said and left it at that, but for me, it was typical teenager behaviour" [Gertie 33-90].

Pamela figured it out for herself: "She didn't (tell me), I just figured it out...she was still young, she was ten I think, yes, she was ten, so I think she was afraid to tell me, but I could see and I could tell. She never had a friend who was a girl, unless it was family, but around where we were staying, she never played with girls, she was playing with boys all the time" [Pamela 29-35].

Ayanda, the aunt of a homosexual child, explained how her son told her about her nephew's sexuality: *"...it was between the years 2008 and 2009, my son and nephew went to Rhodes University to study. Then the following year, he (son) came back...he said 'Mom, there is something I want to tell you. And please promise me, you are never going to tell anyone...Mom did you know that X (cousin) is gay?' It was such a shock. It was painful. He said: 'I found out when I go to school with him. When my friends heard that I am his cousin, they said: Oh, You are the cousin of that gay guy. I was also shocked, because I didn't know he was that. I didn't push about it, to find out, until I confronted him, he said: 'Yes, I am, I am gay'. He said to me, you can tell my aunt, who is your mama, I am not crazy. So my son said, X hasn't told his own mom yet, please this is between the son and the mom, so I kept that promise and I never acknowledge to my sister...So, one day in 2009, there was a gathering at home and I was not there. X came out to the family and he even said: 'Please, don't tell Ma Maruti, the pastor's wife'. He didn't know I already knew. I even discriminated because I didn't even show there is something I know about it. So because of our faith as Christians, how we treat this LGBTI people as Christians, that was the reason I was excluded in that meeting, because he had that fear that I was the Christian who will discriminate against him...Then this thing continues and even my sister don't tell me"* **[Ayanda 44-78]**.

Joanna explained how her daughter did not tell her she was gay, but she realised it herself: *"Actually, in the way that she is and the way that she dresses, you will know. My daughter is very masculine. But she never says she is gay; she says she does not want to be labelled. She does not want to be boxed. She is just living her life. She feels being labelled says that you are not a person if you are going to be put into these categories. So, she does not want to be called anything...but even so, she dates women...She brought one of her girlfriend's home. How I grew up with my parents, we never spoke about anything; so with my daughter I was different, we speak about sex, we speak about alcohol, anything. There is never a thing that is a taboo. In my family, you are not allowed to 'speak out of turn' and that means that you voice out anything that could hurt them. You can't even tell your mother something like I've got a boil in my vagina; oh, never, you may not use the word 'vagina' in the house"* **[Joanna 53-74]**.

As heard in the narratives of **Gertie, Pamela** and **Joanna**, they realised by themselves that their children fell under the LGBTIQA+ umbrella through the behaviour of their children. Being “forewarned” due to their children’s behaviour, assisted them in accepting their children’s sexual orientation and identity. This links with Hill’s Stress Theory, wherein what *one makes of the event/meaning* determines whether you experience it as a crisis. As indicated in Figure 1.2, in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.4), the theory consists of (A) the event that could cause stress, (B) the resources available to a family, (C) the family’s *perceptions of the stressor/event*, and (X) the likelihood of crisis. The perception of the event (child’s sexuality disclosure) was formed before the child came out and the parents had time to digest the possibility of a LGBTIQA+ child; thereby finding it easier to accept his/her LGBTIQA+ status (Rosino, 2016:1)

Joanna’s daughter does not want to be categorised as “lesbian” due to the possible negative responses from society. These negative responses or *fears* will be discussed under Sub-theme 4.1. This can be referred to as **Minority Stress**, which is a theory developed from **Hill’s Stress Theory**, indicating that minority groups experience stress due to negative perceptions and reactions in terms of a personal attribute. Meyer (2003:274) explains that stigma, prejudice and discrimination create stressful social environments that could causes psychological problems. The Minority Stress model describes these stress processes, as well experiences of prejudice, expectations of rejection, hiding and concealing one’s sexual orientation or identity, internalised homophobia, and the coping processes involved in dealing with minority stress.

In **Ayanda’s** case, her son revealed the sexual identity of her nephew to her. Her nephew did not want to disclose to her as his mother figure, because he feared rejection on the basis of religiosity (a form of Minority Stress). Janssen and Scheepers (2018:2) state that most religions refer to homosexuality as something impure or unnatural, and that a person’s moral perceptions are shaped through “socializing agents”, such as churches.

To sum up: The reasons why a child would hesitate or fear to disclose his/her LGBTIQ+ status are many and varied, and carry with them a certain amount of stress and internal conflict. As seen above, fear of rejection on the basis of societal, cultural or religious grounds could prevent a child from disclosing his/her identity; leaving the parent to figure it out for themselves or to be kept in the dark about their child's LGBTIQ+ status.

3.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Child told parents

As indicated in Chapter 1 (Figure 1 - the stages of coming out), disclosing one's sexuality is a process from identity confusion to identity integration/synthesis. During this process, the LGBTIQ+ individual arrives at a point where he/she makes a decision to open up about his/her sexuality. Coming out is also described as a lifelong process where a person comes out to different people during different stages of their lifespan (McDonald & Steinhorn, 1993:37). LGBTIQ+ individuals describe coming out to parents as the most difficult disclosure that one will make; therefore, parents are usually not the first to know about their child's LGBTIQ+ status, but children usually do tell their parents at some or other stage (Carnelley, Hepper, Hicks & Turner, 2011:218). In the present study, there were instances where children did come out to their parents. The parents relate the incidents as follows:

Ntabiseng's daughter wrote a letter to her mother: *"...she wrote me a letter...In the letter she said to me that she has always been a lesbian and the reason why she has been. After she was finished with school she went to India for six months to do volunteer work. From India she got a job in Thailand. From Thailand she went to the UK for two or three years. The reason why she always went away was because she did not want to get me into trouble with my family, which is very traditional, and also because of my church. So she decided she will live a (homosexual) life out there, away from home. She thought that others would not accept her, I will not accept her. That for me was very painful because I almost lost my child; she could have gone forever because she was scared of us...Not knowing that our daughter was one of*

them (lesbian), because she does not have any sign, you could not tell...Not like other girls who would be [butch]. She was not a child that would grow up playing with cars or playing soccer...there was nothing that I could pick up that I could tell in her body...There was never a time that I suspected anything and now when I look back, the way she was active in organising and participating in the (LGBTIQA+) community and now, looking back, I realised that she was part of them. She wrote me a letter and explained that; she was over 30" [Ntabiseng 69-94].

Ivy explained how her son came out by sending his father a WhatsApp: "...my son, he was 20; but I saw it, when he was a little boy still, that thing where he had the older sister four years older than him and he just wanted to play with her toys, but as a parent is, I always told him to leave the dolls and play with cars. Then, when he went to study, after school, he went to Stellenbosch to study and in his first year, actually second year, he went away to Rustenburg where he got an internship and there he lived with a man. I took it that this man was just a friend of his, but next thing I saw it was this friend...and at 22 he came out. He wrote us a letter...It was actually a WhatsApp to his dad and he wrote that he is gay and that he knows it isn't the norm, but he also said...because he did not know what to expect from me, because our background is Christian, we were brought up in Christian homes, with all those conservative lifestyles we had. You are either a man or a woman and the man marries the woman. So, he Whatsapped his dad and told him. Surprisingly his dad immediately accepted him. His dad actually felt bad that he did not feel free to tell us earlier on already, because we missed out on a lot of his life...because he knew he was gay he decided to move far away to Rustenburg. And he built a life for himself there...the first time I started having suspicions that he was gay...when he was at university and one day I went onto the home computer's search history and found that he was looking up information on whether being gay is a sin and so on ...he sent this WhatsApp to his dad...and he asked his Dad must tell me; but I felt he must tell me himself when he was ready to do it...and eventually he phoned me when he got engaged and then he told me that he was now engaged and that was it" [Ivy 51-96].

Simon explained how his wife, his daughter's mother, was told: *"I only found out when my wife told me...She told her, and then she told me. But I accept it, there is nothing, there is no problem with me, I suspected it, but I don't have a problem with it. She also does not have a problem with me as such, and the mother is not a problem...There is not a problem between us at all, that she is a lesbian...but we don't talk about it, because we know, that's all"* [Simon 27-35].

In summary, Carnelley *et al.* (2011:219) are of the opinion that it is complex and difficult to come out to one's parent(s); the disclosure process can be linked to the quality of the relationship between the parent(s) and the child prior to the child coming out, thereby influencing the decision whether to come out, and also influencing the reaction from the parent(s). On the other hand, parental reactions could be rejection versus acceptance; and/or trying to control the child's sexuality versus encouraging independence in him/her living an "out" life. If a parent rejects the LGBTIQ+ child, the parent would also want to control the child's sexual behaviour and who they are friends with, where they go, and possibly force them to go to church as a means of correcting the LGBTIQ+ behaviour (Carnelley *et al.*, 2011:220).

In these instances, the quality of parent-child relationships and communication in the home are strengths that link to the resiliency of the family. The child had a sense of trust that it would be safe to declare his/her LGBTIQ+ status due to certain family characteristics, such as the family's belief system regarding LGBTIQ+ issues, the family's flexibility to change, the family's communication skills, and the family's ability to solve problems (Walsch, 2012:407).

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In the next sub-theme the researcher will describe how some of the parents took the initiative to ask their child about his/her LGBTIQ+ status and how the child responded.

3.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Parents asked child

Some parents described how they asked their child about his/her sexuality, because they had a feeling or could see that their child was different and possibly LGBTIQ+. This was the case, particularly where the parent was homosexual him/herself.

There is a belief in the homosexual community that a LGBTIQ+ person possesses a special ability to tell if someone else is also from the LGBTIQ+ community. In “gay culture”, this discernment has been referred to as ²⁰“gay-dar,” which means that the person has a kind of sixth sense in recognising another person’s sexuality. This could also be true for heterosexual persons who are exposed to the LGBTIQ+ community (Bronski, Pellegrini & D’Amico, 2013:7). Studies on “gay-dar” indicate that a person with “gay-dar” can make inferences about sexuality, based on the way another person dresses, acts (e.g. a woman could act manly and will be perceived as “butch”), facial expressions, or the people they mingle with; but it basically relies on certain stereotypes that are linked to LGBTIQ+ persons (Cox, Devine, Bischmann & Hyde, 2016:159). The following storylines were related:

Hami recounts: *So, my daughter, I think around the time she became expressive of her sexual orientation; around that issue, she had already met some of my friends and I told her that those friends were lesbians. She later on discovered that I also have gay friends. So that itself opened the door for her to be frank with me around such issues. So, of course, issues of sexual orientation, discussing them with your parent, especially earlier on, that thing that you wouldn’t know if you would be accepted or you would be shunned away or you would be chastised. But, I think, at that time that she realised that I am exposed, it became easier for me also to ask when I looked and observed certain things like the friends she would keep, and the manner in which they were interacting. Then we just talked about it and I asked: ‘Am I reading this wrong or is this your girlfriend?’...and actually I also realised that she has been trying to also talk about it. Me being myself and frank, as I say I am, I just took it that she was on a discovery phase” [Hami 29-43].*

²⁰ LGBTIQ+ language to refer to the instinctive ability to recognise another person as also being LGBTIQ+.

Joanna explained how her daughter did not tell her as she did not want to be labelled or *put in a box*: “...at first I had to ask, because of the choice of clothes she picked, the way she dressed...so, I continuously asked, because I wanted her to specify it, whether she is lesbian or gay or whatever and then at some point she said: ‘Ah, Mma, I don’t want to be boxed, you know, because I know you see it as something like 1-2-3-4, you put yourself in a box as a lesbian.’ So some of her friends who are gay were kicked out of their houses, because they were gay and she did not want to be boxed because of the things that were happening to lesbians. Then later we had a chat and spoke about: at some point you need to know who you are...you need to know who you are in order for you to continue with whatever live you want to live...So, even if it means you have to box yourself. And because you are my daughter, the daughter of an activist, you know better” **[Joanna 98-118]**.

Pamela also asked her child about her sexuality: “...when she was 15 or 16 I asked her and I said ‘Are you a lesbian?’ and then she smiled and she said ‘Ja, ma’ and then I said ‘Okay, is that what you want?’ and she said ‘Ja, that is what I want’ and then I leave it like that. She knows I have no problems with that; I call her my girl...” **[Pamela 43-46]**.

From the above section it is clear that the parents who were lesbian or exposed to the LGBTIQ+ community utilised their “gay-dar” to detect their children’s sexuality; therefore, felt they could ask them about it. The indications that their children gave about themselves, led them to ask the children whether they were LGBTIQ+.

In terms of the Strength-based approach, the family had the type of open communication that allowed the parent(s) the sense of freedom to ask their child openly about their LGBTIQ+ status. The parent(s) also did not perceive the possibility of their child being LGBTIQ+ as a crisis (Hill’s Stress Theory) and therefore did not fear to open the communication lines about it. As indicated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.4), good communication is a family strength in coping with a possible perceived crisis that the family could experience.

I will now discuss Theme 3 on how parents' described their reactions to their children's disclosure of their LGBTIQ+ status:

3.3.3 THEME 3: PARENTS' DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR REACTIONS WHEN THEIR CHILD REVEALED THEY WERE LGBTIQ+

The researcher asked the participating parents to describe their reactions when their child revealed they were LGBTIQ+. Their responses are given in six categories, ranging from surprised and unhappy, to acceptance.

A variety of studies have shown that the coming out of LGBTIQ+ children to their parents almost certainly will challenge family relationships and interactions (Wisniewski, Robinson & Deluty, 2009:164). The Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adaptation and Adjustment suggests that family cohesion, the ability to adapt to change, and problem-solving skills may affect the reactions from parents when their children come out as LGBTIQ+ (Willoughby, Doty & Malik, 2008:80). The perception of a rejection-acceptance relationship between parents and children is an important function in a healthy relationship with the parent. This is even truer for LGBTIQ+ children who plan to disclose their sexuality to their parents (Rohner, 2008:5). The presence of parental acceptance greatly influences the resiliency of the family and the LGBTIQ+ child in recovering and sustaining positive relationships and psychological health (Fuller & Rutter, 2018:317).

Hill's Stress Theory and the Family Stress, Adaptation and Adjustment Theory, as described by Willoughby *et al.* (2008:74) in Chapter 1 (Figure 2.1), assist in describing parental reactions by referring to the following factors influencing the parents' reactions:

- (a) Family resources,
- (b) The meaning placed on the child's sexual identity, and
- (c) The pile-up of stressors in the parent's life.

Conley (2011:1022) found in her study on parental reactions that the concerns that parents have are focussed mostly on the following three factors:

- (a) What will society think of them now that they have a LGBTIQ+ child(ren)?
- (b) Will they now be rejected by loved ones (friends/family members)?
- (c) Concerns for their child's physical and psychological well-being.

Most theories regarding parental reactions in terms of acceptance or rejection of a child's LGBTIQ+ status indicate that all children, especially LGBTIQ+ persons, have a longing and biologically-based need for positive responses from their parents or the significant others in their lives. Positive responses would include support, care, concern and/or nurturing (Rohner, 2004:832). The Family Stress, Adaptation and Adjustment Model specifically refers to either the individual or the family's ability to overcome the challenge; thereby, adapting and adjusting to the child coming out as LGBTIQ+ (Masten, 2018:14).

3.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Surprised and unhappy

Some parents were surprised and unhappy when their child revealed their sexuality.

Dorcias explained her response, and that of her family, as **surprised and unhappy**: *"The first time we were so surprised and then we didn't take it easy, especially the father and the uncles and the brothers. They were not happy. But later we as parents, we did understand, especially it is okay if you are educated, sometimes you can read about it and ask advice from the doctors; yes, it is where we have found help" [Dorcias 24-28].*

Ivy was surprised, because her daughter did not "appear" homosexual. This is how she related her reaction: *"I just couldn't handle it...you know, she was a real girly-girl as a child...She was a ballerina, she competed in beauty pageants and all those things, so to me it was a bigger shock that my daughter was dating a woman than when my son came out...My relationship with my daughter had a total breakdown. I told her that I didn't want to know or hear about it."*

As previously indicated, in relation to Hill's Stress Theory, Minority Stress is that which is experienced by minority groups, such as LGBTIQ+ persons. When these persons come out to their parents, it causes psychological stress for them, but it also causes internal stress to the family system. There is a difference in the extent of stress experienced in terms of the family strengths, communication patterns and, for instance, the geographical area and culture from which the parents and children originate. The influence of certain cultural beliefs can directly determine the parents' rejection or acceptance of the child being LGBTIQ+ (D'Augelli, 2005:117). Intra-family stressor events usually push family members apart and cause discord, meaning stressors that occur within the family; while external stressors usually pull family members closer together, because it is perceived that one cannot do anything about an external stressor, but that the family should be able to control the internal stressor. This leads to feelings of distress and negative reactions, making the internal stress event even more stressful (Weber, 2011:3). In the light of Hill's Stress Theory, it is therefore understandable that a child coming out is considered as an internal stress factor in the family and challenges the family's ability to adjust and adapt to the new knowledge of and perspective on their child; thereby causing negative or unpleasant responses. D'Augelli (2005:117) concurs that a child coming out places stress on the family and that could lead to negative reactions.

In summary, Katz-Wise, Rosario and Tsappis (2016:1015) postulate that most children who do not fit the heteronormative standards for gender and sexuality are born from heterosexual parents. These parents usually do not possess negative attitudes towards gender nonconforming persons, but they usually expect their child to be heterosexual. Therefore, these parents are often surprised when their children come out as LGBTIQ+ and therefore display negative reactions due to the unexpectedness of their child being LGBTIQ+.

3.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Disappointed

Disappointment was another emotion that parents experienced when their child came out. A study by Jadwin-Cakmak, Pingel, Harper and Bauermeister (2014:279)

on a son coming out to his father found that one of the issues causing disappointment was the fear that the father would not have grandchildren. The same disappointment about not having a wife and children is expressed in **Dorcas'** storyline below when she refers to a "makoti" (a daughter-in-law).

In this regard, **Dorcas** said: *"First thing we were disappointed, because he is a boy and we thought one day we would have makotis (daughter-in-law); you know us Africans... And now it would not happen; but at the end of the day we just accepted that he is our child, yes..."* [**Dorcas 49-55**].

Pamela recounts how she felt: *"I was disappointed because she was my only girl, but she was my first-born and I had a lot of clothes for girls and now I had to start over; I had to look into buying shorts and pants and I was just for that scared because she always wanted to wear clothes for boys, I just thought to myself if she is a lesbian there is nothing I can do...I call her my girl because she is my girl, she is not a boy. She does not come to my house with boyfriends, she comes with girls"* [**Pamela 38-48**].

Reczek (2016:648) found that when the homosexual (LGBTIQA+) child is not heterosexual, as expected, the parents felt disappointment, disapproval, and sometimes even disgust and guilt. **Dorcas** wanted a daughter-in-law and **Pamela** wanted her daughter to be more feminine. Both had to adjust and adapt to their children not succeeding in fulfilling the heteronormative roles expected of them.

3.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Pained or shocked

Many of the parents described their pain and shock when they learnt of their child's sexuality. Herewith the reactions from the participants who felt emotional distress and shock at realising their child is LGBTIQA+:

Ntabiseng explained: *"I cried, not because she said she is lesbian, but because she lived a double life because of me. She was scared of me; that is the painful part.*

She lived half her life painful, because of me...in order to please me...that was painful” [Ntabiseng 97-100].

Ayanda described her shock, but she did not show her son how she felt: *“In that moment, it was a shock to me. I felt like I need to pray for him. I thought maybe my prayer will change him, because I wasn’t yet educated that you can’t change him, even if you pray. God has made him from the beginning, you know. And I did pray ...I did not show any reaction to him, it was between me and my God. I was arguing with my God for change” [Ayanda 133-141].*

Lorinda explained how she reacted: *“I was a bit shocked, obviously. I was shocked, but I also had that feeling that I knew it was coming” [Lorinda 65-66].*

Ivy was definitely shocked and pained, as she explained: *“I took it very hard, it was tough for me, I just couldn’t handle it, although I realised that I was in denial, because by that time I had already started reading up about this. He also...well, the first time I started having suspicions that he was gay...when he was at university and one day I went onto the home computer’s search history and found that he was looking up information on whether being gay is a sin and so on...” [Ivy 71-79].*

When asked how she reacted, **Ivy** said: *“Sjoe, it is indescribable. I went ice cold and I kept it to myself, I didn’t even tell his dad...that was during his first year at university. I kept it to myself, but I one day I did get the courage to confront him and asked him why he was looking up such stuff. But he still did not want to admit to it (being gay) and he said he just looked it up for interest sake...But then I knew and he had not had up till that point ever had a girlfriend...” [Ivy 80-87].* When her son eventually revealed his sexuality to his mother and said he was engaged to a man, **Ivy** reported her reaction as follows, and then explained her reaction when her daughter also came out as a lesbian: *“I told him I don’t accept it. I said: ‘No, please!’ And I started shouting that I didn’t accept it. But the interesting part of the whole story was that my daughter was married to a man, but it only lasted a year and when they divorced she started going out with a woman...So, what I am saying here, the reason why I am mentioning this, is when she also came out and told me...it felt like the earth was giving way beneath me, I just couldn’t handle that as well. But, he*

then said: 'Mommy, this is the way it is, and this man is the person I care about, and this thing didn't just happen quickly'. This whole thing shook me...to the extent that I had to get psychological treatment...And I was also admitted to a clinic...I just couldn't handle it...you know, she was a real girly-girl as a child...She was a ballerina, she competed in beauty pageants and all those things, so to me it was a bigger shock that my daughter was dating a woman than when my son came out ...My relationship with my daughter had a total breakdown. I told her that I didn't want to know or hear about it...she just told me that this was the way it was and she started organising for a wedding...she then wrote a letter to us, admitting that she met this woman and that they were planning on getting married. It was very tough for me that at the same time – two of my children came out" [Ivy 104 -138].

The storylines above indicate how the participants were shocked and felt emotional pain when they learned that their children were LGBTIQ+. For **Ivy**, there was a double shock, as both her son and daughter came out as homosexual. Even though **Lorinda**, as a lesbian herself, had suspicions that her daughter might be lesbian, she still felt shock. **Ayanda's** response to the shock was to immediately pray that God would change her son.

Grafsky (2014:37) indicates that there is relatively little research available on why parents react the way they do to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, but available research indicates that negative reactions often are due to misinformation, religious convictions, or homophobia. Roe (2017:59) found that parental initial "gut" reactions, such as denial, pain and shock, are not necessarily determining in how the parents' reaction will be once they have overcome the initial emotions and had time to rethink the disclosure of their child as LGBTIQ+. Pain and shock is, however, a common reaction from parents upon learning that an offspring is LGBTIQ+ (Nordqvist, 2015:486).

Nordqvist (2015:486) found in her study that parents are often shocked and disappointed when their children come out as LGBTIQ+ and it could lead to a temporary or permanent breakdown in the parent-child relationship. Several studies found that parents often are shocked (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009:32; Nguyen, Bandeen-152

Roch, Masyn, German, Vu & Knowlton, 2015:486; Kirsher & Ahlijah, 2011:4). On the other hand, Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett and Saltzburg (2009:191) found that, although shock is sometimes a reaction of parents to children coming out, it cannot be stated as a general reaction.

The Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation describes that the trauma or crisis that happens is felt as a shock that destabilises the family. The resiliency of the family, such as coping mechanisms, will help the family to overcome the crisis/shock to adjust and adapt to the crisis factor (Weber, 2011:3). Over time, these participants were able to gain new meaning and interpretations of their children's LGBTIQA+ status and accept it through "bouncing back" (resiliency, adjustment and adaptation) from the shock.

3.3.3.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Rejected or discriminated against

Some of the participants spoke of rejecting or discriminating against their child, and being influenced by their religion in doing this. In South Africa, the most recent census enquiring about religion in 2001 found that 79,6% of the population identify as Christian (Stobie, 2014:2). The Christian belief system was introduced to Africa during the colonial period, and missionaries, when encountering different sexual behaviours, condemned these behaviours as deviant, immoral, perverted and unchristian. This caused homophobia and heterosexism in societies. The negative influence of this colonial legacy of judgemental and punitive homophobia is still at play in Africa, and also South Africa, despite the country's progressive Constitution (Stobie, 2014:5). Christian parents tend to experience cognitive dissonance when their children come out, between what their belief system as Christians teach them about LGBTIQA+ persons and their love and/or acceptance of their child, leading to difficulties in the relationship with the LGBTIQA+ child (Campbell, Zaporozhets & Yarhouse, 2017:337)

The participants related how their religion influenced their reactions:

Ayanda recounts her reaction in this respect: *“...we are all Christian, but I am the one who attend the church, I am the mother of all. So now, I ask: what is even happening there, because in our church there are lots of topics we preach about, but not the gays. We are even discriminating against them. So, one day in 2009, there was a gathering at home and I was not there. X came out to the family and he even said: ‘Please, don’t tell Ma Maruti, the pastor’s wife’. He didn’t know I already knew. I even discriminated, because I didn’t even show there is something I know about it. So because of our faith as Christians, how we treat this LGBTI people as Christians, that was the reason I was excluded in that meeting, because he had that fear that I was the Christian who will discriminate against him”* [Ayanda 61-72].

Ivy admitted that she had an inner struggle regarding her religious beliefs and her children being LGBTIQA+. She related her immediate reaction as: *“What will the people say? What will the church say?”*

In the words of Van den Akker, Van der Ploeg and Scheepers (2013:85), exposure to socialising agents such as church, culture and community affects a person’s social norms and attitudes in relation to rejection of an LGBTIQA+ person. Therefore, the attitude of church or community can lead to discrimination against LGBTIQA+ persons.

3.3.3.5 Sub-theme 3.5: Fearful

Lesbians in South Africa, and specifically black lesbians, do not feel safe in public spaces; they experience these spaces as places of violence, hate crimes, and corrective rape (Thomas, 2013). Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy and Moletsane (2010:26) focus on how terms such as “hate crime” and “corrective” or “curative” rape began to circulate, because radical feminists and African lesbian-led organisations began drawing attention to these rapes and killings of lesbians. A further aspect of these rapes is to humiliate the lesbian for her love of other women. Thomas (2013:5)

describes these corrective or curative rapes as “a violent form of policing the social order”.

One participant spoke of being fearful for her daughter’s safety when she revealed her sexuality. **Joanna** recounts her reaction, *“I was actually very frightened for her, because she is masculine...with all these lesbian killings and things that are happening in black communities. That is the one thing that I was afraid of, you know ...I would drop her off and pick her up. In the township, in Johannesburg, it is dangerous, but now she is older; I just needed talk to her about what is going on and you must always try to be safe. Go to safe places. Just take precautions – don’t come home after six. Six o clock was our cut-off time to get home. If she was going to come home later than that, she must call. Thank God we could uber or taxi. We had this rule – if you are going to be late you must uber”* [**Joanna 77-88**].

Parental fears and challenges regarding their children coming out will be discussed in detail under Theme 4, where the narratives of other participants will be included.

3.3.3.6 Sub-theme 3.6: Accepted

Some of the parents’ reaction was to accept the news and the child. In the narratives below, the participants explain how they reacted with acceptance.

Within the South African context, acceptance from a parent is rare due to the nature and context of past legalised discrimination (Posel, 2004:54); therefore, parental acceptance is indicative of the family’s coping strategies, leading to adjustment and adaptation (Weber, 2011:6). Roe (2017:55) concurs that family acceptance becomes a buffer against a host of possible stressors in the LGBTIQ+ person’s life.

Simon was one such parent, as he explained: *“...I accept it, there is nothing, there is no problem with me, I suspected it, but I don’t have a problem with it. She also does not have a problem with me as such, and the mother is not a problem...There is not a problem between us at all that she is a lesbian. She is a lesbian, but we*

don't talk about it, because we know, that's all... I thought... to myself; I said that if we knew if we could see the signs that she was a lesbian, even if we accept it, we could have done it, but she was in the cupboard (closet)...I was accepting, as I said, it is just to say, it is my child, it is her child, and because I am with her it is my child also, she respects me in everything, and then I also have to respect what she is..."

[Simon 28-52]. **Simon** confirmed this later when he said: *"As a father I would like to say that my daughter is somebody's daughter. She didn't change, she is still the same, she still does the same things that a daughter would do in the house; she did not change. To me she did not change, to her mom, she did not change or her sisters, she did not change, unless we tell someone that she is this, she is normal..."*

[Simon 87-92].

Gertie relates their acceptance: *"From the start there were no...he wanted to wear women's clothes from the start. We grew into it. Nothing came as a shock to us. We never felt we had to go sit and do this or that about it. It was just very difficult to explain to our child how the world is and the community. Nobody would be like us in the house. It was a situation where we had to prepare our child for what was awaiting him outside the house. It was also a process where we told the child that others must also be informed about what was happening. But with us it was okay. There wasn't really a first time when we realised"* **[Gertie 120-128].**

Hami was not surprised, as he explained: *"It didn't take me by surprise, I'm not sure ...maybe my exposure and... I am someone who see things very radically about a lot of issues...we were discussing a whole lot of issues around what is likely to happen to someone of her age when they are LGBTI...we are a very violent society...as an LGBTI we have people whose violence may attempt to try and correct you..."* **[Hami 90-109].**

Ntabiseng explained her acceptance in these words: *"It took me time to respond to the letter, but I continued to be the mother that I was, that it was like your child is your child, irrespective of sexual orientation and that is the slogan of the campaign that we ran because I run workshops and I would say to the parents your child is your child, regardless or irrespective of their sexual orientation So I continued with*

my workshops. I realised that I still love her and will not change her for anything..." [Ntabiseng 102-108].

Joanna explained: *"There was no specific reaction, because she grew up around me who is gay. My reaction was that I hope people don't think that I am the one who made her gay; that it is her own decision to be gay"* [Joanna 77-94].

Edwards (2015:38) states that family resilience is a family's ability (such as coping mechanisms) to overcome and recover from stress, crisis or trauma. Weber (2011:5-6) refers to certain aspects within a family that will determine how resilient they are, namely, vulnerability, patterns of functioning, resources, how they see the stressor, problem-solving and coping skills, and the ability to adjust and adapt to a challenge or crisis. Edwards (2015:42) places family resilience within the South African context by stating that family resilience amongst previously disadvantaged groups must be understood within the context of the socio-developmental aspects of their lives, especially if they lived under the apartheid regime. Edwards (2015) adds that there is well-documented research indicating that apartheid influenced a family's ability to provide a safe and healthy environment for child development. Parental acceptance greatly improves the resilience of the child who is coming out, as well as his/her psychological and physical well-being, seeing that the parent-child relationship is of such importance in any person's life at any life stage (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez, 2010:206). The acceptance by a parent is also critical in the child's development in self-acceptance and sexuality integration (Rohner, 2008:5).

3.3.4 THEME 4: PARENTS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR FEARS AND/OR CHALLENGES WHEN THEIR CHILD CAME OUT

This theme covers the responses of the parents when they were asked to describe their fears and/or challenges after their child revealed they were LGBTIQ+. Their responses are divided into six sub-themes, as discussed below:

Grafsky (2014:37) postulates that most research regarding the parental experience and/or reaction to a child coming out indicates that parents fear that the child may end up living a difficult life; the parents also fear for the child’s well-being in general (Grafsky, 2014:38). D’Amico, Julien, Tremblay and Chartrand (2015:412) found in their study that parental fears are based on discrimination or societal prejudice against the LGBTIQ+ child’s sexual minority status. Parental concern may also be experienced as positive reactions and help the child to be more resilient and better cope with stressors in relation to this/her LGBTIQ+ status (Roe, 2017:56).

3.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Personal safety

Fear for the personal safety of their child was a common fear expressed by the parents in the present study. As indicated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.1, General Introduction and Problem Formulation), as well as under Theme 3 (sub-theme 3.5), there are a variety of reasons why a parent could be worried about a LGBTIQ+ child’s personal safety.

Violence and attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ persons go hand-in-hand. In a study by the Human Sciences Research Council in cooperation with Reygan, Sutherland, Roberts and Victor (2016:38), a survey was done with 3000 South Africans on their attitudes towards homosexuality and gender nonconformity. The following table indicates the outcomes of their attitudes in terms of percentages per column.

TABLE 3.3: ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY AND GENDER NONCONFORMITY

Scoring	I think gay men are disgusting	I think lesbians are disgusting	I think it is disgusting if men dress like women and women dress like men
Strongly agree	34,1 %	35 %	33,1 %

Agree	27,1 %	25,2 %	33,4 %
Neither agree nor disagree	11,3 %	12,1 %	10,8 %
Strongly disagree	6,6 %	7,3 %	4,1 %
Don't know	0,5 %	0,6 %	0,6 %
No answer	1 %	0,9 %	1,3 %

(Reygan *et al.*, 2016:3)

The above table indicates that in each case the percentage of agree plus strongly agree amounted to over 50% of the participants holding negative attitudes towards homosexual or gender nonconforming persons. In a study by Cishe and Abaver (2018:60), these results were confirmed in a South African university setting. These authors (2018) investigated the attitudes towards violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ students at Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. The study found that 6,6% of the 3048 participants approved of violence against homosexual and gender nonconforming individuals, whereas 25,5% of the participants did not care about discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals, and 33,9% of the participants indicated that they did not accept homosexuals or gender nonconforming persons. These attitudes, which include all forms of abuse, such as physical violence, verbal abuse or stigmatisation (name-calling) of LGBTIQ+ students, are the leading cause why students fear to disclose their sexual orientation (Cishe & Abaver, 2018:66) and why discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons continues to be a problem in South Africa.

Participants in this study expressed their fears as follows:

Ntabiseng explained her fears: *“I think with what had been happening in the LGBTI community, especially with lesbian girls, I always fear...The way that people treat them and the way that they are brutally killed, and having witnessed and having spoken to families whose daughters were killed and having read stories, having*

seen some families where a lesbian girl has been just brutally killed. That is my fear not only for her, but for all of them, especially young girls” [Ntabiseng 110-117].

Simon echoed what Ntabiseng said: *“... my fear is only one, because they are being killed. Otherwise she can look after herself; that is the only fear. If people can... they know her, and they can kill her, because this is what they all want to do in the community. They don’t like them, that is my only fear” [Simon 55-59].*

Lorinda expressed similar fears: *“My first fear was hate crime and society being judgemental of who she is and how she is having to fit into a straight world. But she has handled it quite well. She never had...I can only thank God that she never came across situations like that. I don’t know when she is older, she is 19 this year, going out, going to places outside of her comfort zone, so that is my fear. I always tell her, wherever you go, if you go to a club, be careful who you drink with, be careful what you drink, watch what they put in your drink. So ja, that is my fear mostly: of her getting hurt outside” [Lorinda 78-86].*

Gertie also spoke of fearing for the safety of her child: *“Sjoe, there are fears that will never go away. When your child steps outside the door...You learn to live with the fear. You never really stop fearing for your child’s safety. You know your child will be exposed...the moment your child is among other people...at some or other stage during the day someone is going to say something to your child that is not nice, that your child will feel hurt about. It is always there, but we learned how to live with the fear, because it can be very limiting and it can control your whole life. You cannot worry the whole time about what is going to happen. We began to accept that this is part of our child’s life. It will always be there and all we can do is to say to our child: be strong. And we learned how to protect him when he came home disappointed or feeling hurt” [Gertie 130-141].*

Hami had similar fears: *“...you still have people at varsities who are supposed to be enlightened or exposed, who still think lesbian people or gay people are some black sheep of society. They treat them in a particular way and sometimes the treatment goes to physical violence or death. Some actually resulted in death” [Hami 148-153].*

There is a direct link between homosexuality/gender nonconformity and violent abuse, including killings, stigmatisation and discrimination the world over (Cishe & Abaver, 2018:61). The United Nations Report (2015) titled *LGBT people suffer widespread violent abuse, discrimination* specifically refers to the corrective rape and killings of African South African lesbians. Hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ persons in South Africa are therefore acknowledged at an international level.

In the light of the above research and statements from the participants, parental fears for the safety of their LGBTIQ+ children are understandable and very real.

3.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Family will not accept

Many of the parents expressed the fear that the larger family would not accept the child's sexuality. The participants related how family members changed towards the LGBTIQ+ child that came out and how they knew that the extended family, being conservative, would reject or treat the LGBTIQ+ child negatively. **Joanna** had a further fear that family members would also judge her, as a lesbian, to be the one who "turned her daughter into a lesbian".

When a LGBTIQ+ person reveals his/her sexuality to their parents and/or siblings and other family members; it puts strain on the family relationships. In some instances, the family members are unable to create a friendly, welcoming environment for the LGBTIQ+ person; even if some family members are more accepting (Nascimento & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018:1545).

In this regard, Ayanda said: *"Another thing, I was now scared that maybe now in the family, the family won't accept him. That he won't be respected like he was before. That was my fear"* [Ayanda 145-147].

Hami, as a divorced father, was concerned about the mother and her family's reaction to his daughter's sexuality: *"...then I started being more worried about the background of her mother's side...knowing how it is. I think actually it took some*

time for her to discuss it...well, if it ever happened, because me and her mother got divorced, so I would not know, even to date, how her mother is taking that. So, I was more worried about how her mom would take that. So, I was worried about that and her relationship also with other people in the family. They are a conservative family” [Hami 114-129].

Joanna expressed fears about both families’ responses: *“My family thinks I am the one who coerced her to be lesbian or to fall under the LGBTI umbrella...family on both sides; my side and her father’s side...I feel sort of okay, because I know my daughter, and she can make up her own mind, but my cousins, they are against gays, so now they will use that against me, saying I am not a proper parent or I am not parenting correctly. So, then you start thinking about everything you are saying, is it the right thing for her? We learn as we go, it is a process” [Joanna 117-131].*

Part of the difficulty for family members to accept the sexuality of another family member who comes out is that they have fears regarding homosexuality and gender nonconformity, but more than that, they do not feel able or comfortable to converse on the topic of sexuality in general. Therefore, they do not know how to act or relate to the LGBTIQ+ person (Zimmerman, Darnell, Rhew, Lee & Kaysen, 2015:181). Should the LGBTIQ+ family member feel that the environment with extended family members is not encouraging or warm, they may choose not to reveal their sexuality to them. Conservative and deeply religious family cultures can lead to family members discriminating against the LGBTIQ+ person. In the end, the rejection from family members could affect the LGBTIQ+ person to the extent that he/she experiences internalised stigmatisation (Baiocco, Laghi, Ioverno, Salvati & Pistella, 2016:3-4).

3.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: What others will say

Over and above the family’s reactions, fears were expressed about the broader community’s reactions; especially in the light of communal and societal discrimination. Below is the expression of the fears of participants, based on community perceptions.

Ayanda and **Dorcas** come from African communities where LGBTIQ+ persons are discriminated against and their fears were that it would include discrimination against the extended family too. The community's awareness of the behaviour of the LGBTIQ+ person caused ridicule and bullying. **Ivy**, who is mixed race, on the other hand, reached out to the church for help to accept her children, but only found rejection. This led to her path with the Dutch Reformed Church splitting, as it refused to accept her children.

The importance of a sense of belonging for LGBTIQ+ persons became apparent during the LGBTIQ+ movements all over the world. It is one of the significant forces that provided LGBTIQ+ persons with a sense of community, acceptance and understanding from those around them, especially when they are isolated from family and discriminated against by their communities (Harper & Schneider, 2003:243). People belonging to stigmatised social categories, such as socioeconomic class, race/ethnicity, and gender and/or sexuality have felt the strong impact of stress. The families and friends, who form familial or societal closeness to these people, also experience prejudice and discrimination based on association. These actions of discrimination can cause changes/crises in the family system that require adjustment and adaptation; it can therefore be conceptualised as stressors (Meyer, 2003:674). In the context of South Africa, awareness of the LGBTIQ+ community only fully emerged with the HIV epidemic. Although most infected persons are heterosexual, society is still of the opinion that it is a homosexual disease (Beyrer, 2012:178).

The participants expressed their feelings in terms of the community's reaction, as follows:

Ayanda stated: *"Maybe people don't want to associate with us anymore or maybe they will talk behind our backs"* [**Ayanda 152-153**].

Ivy said: *"My fears...what will the people say? What will the church say? What will the grandparents say? They are all seriously conservative. All of this just became too much for me. What will the people say, what will the church say? For instance, we are big Christians and here we have two children in this gay lifestyle and our church still sees it as a sin...Yes, and then I started taking a journey with the church,*

because I was doing my own research about what being gay really is and why it happens...and I started talking with my own church and tried to convince them...I asked them, how can you reject my child?...It was a very intense struggle for me, whereas my husband accepted it from the beginning...I started talking to my local reverend to tell him...and he just said it's a sin and that's it. There is no other way to look at it. He said I must pray for my children...I was upset. I even went so far as to report the church to the Human Rights Commission, because they were discriminating against my children...but later on I withdrew my complaint. I decided not to go on with it. But my church, the Dutch Reformed Church, is in denial about it, they don't want to talk about it, they don't want to admit that it really happens in the Church. That attitude made it more worse for me" [Ivy 141-172].

Dorcas expressed the fears and challenges they faced in terms of the community's reaction: *"We were scared about the community and how they will handle him, because the community didn't welcome him. Every time on the streets they will look at him, they will laugh at him...he didn't want to go outside many times. Yes, and at school he was not okay, even the physicals, the teacher explained to the learners that he didn't take it...Yes, most of the time we were sitting with him and then, explaining to him that you are not alone... (the community) thought that he is... faking this gay thing, they didn't believe him. They didn't welcome him...because he will wear the dresses, playing with girls, playing netball and not soccer" [Dorcas 55-77].*

As indicated in Chapter 1, a major issue within communities is the belief that homosexuality or gender nonconformity is un-African, and that it was imported by colonisation (Devji, 2016:343). This further contributes to negative attitudes in communities towards LGBTIQ+ persons – to the extent that the LGBTIQ+ person is shunned (Von Vollenhoven & Els, 2013:269). These authors (2013) further state that there is a lack of social tolerance in South Africa regarding LGBTIQ+ persons and that members of society and communities often discriminate and have unfair prejudices due to being ill-informed regarding sexual issues (Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013:266). Pierce (2016:3), in his study on religion and homosexuality in Africa, found that the rejection of homosexuality is often due to the belief in churches that

homosexuals are possessed or involved in witchcraft. The influence of religiosity on the attitude towards LGBTIQ+ persons will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.3.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Difficult to find jobs

Linked to the community's reactions to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children, was the issue of such children finding jobs.

Dorcas' son came out in the late 1980s-beginning 1990s when finding work as an African male in South Africa was already challenging due to apartheid laws. Being gay in a country where it was against the law definitely influenced his chances of obtaining a viable job.

In this regard, **Dorcas** said: *"The other thing is they suffer to get jobs, because you can see them, they like jobs that are like at a restaurant, not a man's job at the mines. They struggle. My son was a hairdresser, so he was okay, but they struggle to get a job. Also the outfits they wear when they are in the streets, you can see they are gay"* [**Dorcas 127-131**].

3.3.4.5 Sub-theme 4.5: Boyfriends/Intimate Partners

The issue of the homosexual child having an intimate partner was alluded to as a challenge by the participants. It could be said that, in some instances, the parent(s) may "accept" the LGBTIQ+ person as he/she is, as long as he/she does not act on his/her same-sex or gender nonconforming sexuality by getting involved in a relationship.

Dorcas said in this regard: *"Yes, the thing that is important that we didn't speak about is that they usually have boyfriends. That thing also surprise people the way they have boyfriends...I was okay that time, but the father and the uncles and the brothers, didn't understand...They didn't allow that...He (the boyfriend) only came once. After their reaction, the boyfriend didn't come again"* [**Dorcas 111-125**].

Reczek (2016:2189) states that disapproval from parents in relation to LGBTIQ+ children having same-sex relationships causes stress and discord in these relationships. In her study on *Parental Disapproval and The Quality of Gay and Lesbian Relationships*, Reczek (2016) requested participants to express how they experienced the influence of their parents' disapproval of their relationship on the quality of the relationships. Her findings indicated that participants experienced that it caused relationship strain, but it also enhanced relationship resiliency, and lastly, participants distanced themselves from their parents in order to protect their relationships.

3.3.4.6 Sub-theme 4.6: Bullying at school

Bullying by other children at school was cited as another challenge by the participants.

Gertie explained how her son was bullied at school and how they had to move him from the school: *“There was an incident where his female friends, like friends do, started joking with him about eyeing another boy and this came out at school and the boy he was in love with went to the principal at the school to complain and it ended in a disciplinary hearing against our child at school, this thing broke us...and this all because of the girls joking about stuff. Our child was charged with sexual harassment...I then went to the principal and we had a deep conversation about the situation around the child. The only light I could see was to take our child out of the school. The Boland College then opened its doors in our town and us as a family spoke to the child and we decided together to take our child out of the school and put him in Boland College for a three-year course in Admin”* [**Gertie 83-99**].

Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2017:361) (2017:361) report that there are high levels of bullying of transgender children in schools, including a general lack of understanding or support from the school and teachers. These authors (2017) further found that schools do not make provision for bathroom use, school uniforms, or different sport activities based on the transgendered youth's gender identity. Sadowski (2016:14) confirms this, arguing that schools should be safe spaces where there are anti-

bullying policies that include LGBTIQ+ children. The foundation of schools' policies should be inclusive, supportive, and gender-affirming to transgender children. Unfortunately, this is not the case in most schools the world over and specifically at the school that **Gertie's** transgender child attended.

The nuclear family in this case had the resources, perspective and resiliency to make the applicable changes to ensure adjustment and adaptation of their transgendered child, moving him to a school where he would be supported and affirmed. As previously indicated, external stressors often lead to a family becoming more resilient, pulling the family together to resolve the stress factor, as seen in this instance (Weber, 2011:3).

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the first part of the research findings. It began with the demographic profiles of the ten participants. The first four of the eight themes that emerged, with their relevant sub-themes, were discussed. Storylines from the transcribed participant data illuminated and underscored the themes and sub-themes. Additionally, a literature control was applied.

The first four themes of the findings were presented as follows:

Firstly, the participants provided accounts of any previous knowledge and/or experiences they had regarding the LGBTIQ+ community.

Some participants had no experiences to relate,

Others had some knowledge/experience from their childhood,

Some of the parents knew about gays and lesbians due to name-calling in the community, and

Two of the participants were lesbian mothers who knew through their own life experiences.

Secondly, the participants provided descriptions of how their children told them about their LGBTIQ+ status. The participants related that:

In some instances, the child did not disclose their sexual identity,

In other cases, the child opened up and came out to the parents, and
Some of the participants directly asked their children about their sexuality.

The third theme referred to the participants' reactions when they found out that their children fell under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella. Their reactions were varied, including:

surprised and unhappy,
disappointed,
pained or shocked,
discrimination or rejection,
fearful,
or, in some cases, the participants were accepting of their children's sexual identity.

The last theme discussed in this chapter involved the participants' accounts of their fears and/or challenges when their children came out. The fears fell under three sub-themes:

fear for the personal safety of child,
fear that extended family members would not accept the LGBTIQ+ child,
fear of what the community would think of them now that they had a LGBTIQ+ child.

The challenges the participants reported were:

when the LGBTIQ+ child came home with a loved one/same-sex partner,
the difficulties experienced when an obviously LGBTIQ+ person looks for a job,
and
bullying at school.

In the next chapter, Themes 5 to 8 will be presented as Part Two of the research findings on the accounts of the participants' experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, including suggestions for social work support.

In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the following themes:

Parents' descriptions of how they were coping with their child being LGBTIQ+

Parents' thoughts on what would help them cope better with the situation

Parents' suggestions to other parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+

Parents' suggestions on how social workers can assist parents when they find out that their child is LGBTIQ+

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: PART TWO

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 is a continuation from the previous chapter and will therefore also focus on presenting the research findings and the literature control. As presented in Figure 3.1 (Themes and Sub-themes), eight themes were identified and 35 sub-themes emerged from the storylines that the participants shared about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their children came out as LGBTIQ+, including suggestions for social worker support.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL, THEME 5-8

This section involves questions that were focussed on the personal coping mechanisms of the parents and what would have helped them cope better. They also make suggestions for other parents in the same situation, as well as made recommendations for social workers who want to support parents to cope better with a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.

The following themes and sub-themes will be discussed:

TABLE 4.1 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES (THEME 5-8)

Theme 5: Parents' descriptions of how they are coping with their child being LGBTIQ+	Sub-theme 5.1: Consulted and shared with others Sub-theme 5.2: Has come to terms and accepted it Sub-theme 5.3: Coping well Sub-theme 5.4: Knows child can cope
Theme 6: Parents' thoughts on what would	Sub-theme 6.1: More knowledge

have helped them cope better with the situation	<p>Sub-theme 6.2: More support (support group)</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.3: Churches to be more understanding</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.4: Focus on being a person</p>
Theme 7: Parents' suggestions to parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+	<p>Sub-theme 7.1: Accept, love and support them</p> <p>Sub-theme 7.2: Consult someone or obtain support</p> <p>Sub-theme 7.3: Need to be flexible as a parent</p>
Theme 8: Parents' suggestions on how social workers can assist parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+	<p>Sub-theme 8.1: Social workers must first understand themselves</p> <p>Sub-theme 8.2: Talk to family, give guidance</p> <p>Sub-theme 8.3: Empower parents with knowledge</p> <p>Sub-theme 8.4: Address policies</p>

The researcher will now proceed to discuss Theme 5 to 8 of the research findings:

4.2.1 THEME 5: PARENTS' DESCRIPTIONS OF HOW THEY ARE COPING WITH THEIR CHILD BEING LGBTIQ+

The parents were asked how they are coping with their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Almost all of the parents explained in various ways how they have come to terms with the fact and accepted it.

Martin, Hutson, Kazyak and Scherrer (2010:962) found that many LGBTIQ+ persons demand that they remain part of their family and be openly gay, lesbian or transgender. They often also insist that the family accept their partners/spouses. This leads to heterosexual family members either struggling to accept the LGBTIQ+ family member or growing more accommodating to the point of accepting and coping with having a LGBTIQ+ kin.

Boehmer, Clark, Timm, Sullivan and Glickman (2012:195) conducted a study on the relation between parental reactions (acceptance or rejection) of the LGBTIQ+ child and that child's physical and mental health. Where parents responded with support, the child's health risk factors were significantly lower. Unfortunately, the opposite type of research has not yet been done, namely, *How does parental acceptance and coping with or rejection of the child's coming out affect the parent's health?* In the present study, the researcher found that after a period of emotional distress, some of the parents were able to say that they were coping well because they had accepted and welcomed the LGBTIQ+ child into the family. It was clear, for instance, in the case of **Ivy**, that she suffered considerable emotional and mental health issues until she accepted and welcomed her gay and lesbian children.

When using the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, the family's resilience, and thereby recovery (acceptance), after the LGBTIQ+ family member came out will be dependent on certain resources within the family, such as the family's sense of connectedness with each other, social support, and coping mechanisms like developing a sense of coherence within the family. These are all important issues to look at in determining the coping strategies of parents when they have to form their new identity as parents of a LGBTIQ+ child. The parents will therefore have to adapt to the family member's coming out, which could lead to a turning point for the family whereby changes in family functioning could occur (Patterson, 2002b:237). Phillips (2007:15-16) states that parents or a family who shows resilience should be able to adapt and adjust to the sexual minority status of the LGBTIQ+ family member and continue with stronger bonds in terms of core functions within the family, such as nurturing, support and socialisation. Because the patterns and types of resilience shown by families through their coping strategies differ so much, Phillips (2007:16) indicates that qualitative research is best suited to investigate how well family members cope with a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, allowing for different themes to emerge.

The parents' responses are provided in four sub-themes, which are:

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Consulted and shared with others

Some parents consulted and shared with others in trying to cope with their child being LGBTIQ+.

In Chapter 1, under Theoretical Framework (sub-section 1.4), I described certain aspects that are important in family resiliency and coping strategies. One of the factors in family resiliency is access to **resources**, such as a therapist or a pastor (Walsch, 2012:406). **Ivy** and **Dorcas** both reached out to their churches, but **Ivy** had a negative experience when the Dutch Reformed Church (see Theme 6.3 for specific focus on churches) indicated to her that it could not accept her children, nor could it support her as a person, except for praying that the LGBTIQ+ children should change. **Ivy** then found her way to a psychologist, who walked a path of healing with her. As she explained: *“I didn’t have any support from social workers ...I reached out to the church to support me and they gave me the cold shoulder. So, for me I had a psychologist counselling...”* [**Ivy 225-227**]. On the other hand, **Dorcas** consulted her pastor: *“Yes, I do cope. I go to the pastor and told him that I have got something like this in my life and he consoled me. Yes, that helped me a lot...he said we are all people before God, we should not judge him, we should allow him to be who he is...but it was difficult...”* [**Dorcas 80-85**].

It is also a process of coming out for the parent of a child who is LGBTIQ+. In a study by Soldati-Kahimbaara (2016:119-120), which dealt with mothers coming out as the parents of LGBTIQ+ children, she found that five of the six participants reached out to people within or outside the family to share the information with; thereby coming out as a parent of a LGBTIQ+ child.

Other ways of helping parents cope were to gain knowledge about same-sex and gender nonconforming persons by reading up about it, or like **Ivy** in this study, who reached out to a psychologist, and **Ntabiseng** who became involved with ²¹PFLAG.

Four of the participants in the study were referred to me by PFLAG, and were part of their support groups. These four participants therefore consulted and shared within the context of PFLAG.

Ayanda, Simon, Pamela and **Ntabiseng** joined PFLAG as a means of accessing support and knowledge. **Ntabiseng** became actively involved and is now an ally of the LGBTIQ+ community through PFLAG.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Has come to terms and accept it

The parents also described how they have come to terms with their child's sexuality and accepted it. In the following narratives, the participants indicate how they came to terms with their children's sexuality.

Ntabiseng said she and the family have accepted it as normal: *"I think, we have come to terms with it, and as a family, my husband, his brother, our immediate family, it is...normal...Obviously, whatever she decides, this is her life, this is who she is, I would not stand in her way because this is who she is...fortunately I think, her partners are mostly outside the country. She goes away mostly. They have not been to our house. She had a friend that constantly visited, the kids would come, but I am not sure if she was a girlfriend or if they were just friends, but I know that she does have a partner"* [Ntabiseng 120-133]. **Pamela** echoed this normality: *"... it is normal. It is normal for me. I took it the other way round than in my marriage. I am separated from my husband. My marriage was so deceitful and I told my girl and maybe she saw and that is why she changed to be a lesbian...Ja, she is very happy*

²¹ PFLAG is an organisation that is a valuable resource in the LGBTIQ+ community, providing important information on LGBTIQ+ individuals, establishing support groups for parents and family members, and presenting workshops. They not only help parents to accept their LGBTIQ+ children, but also encourage them to provide support and knowledge to their children and extended family.

with who she is, she does not complain. She has been with this one girl since school and I am happy about that” [Pamela 51-58].

Phillips (2007:14), in agreement with Patterson (2002b:137), describes family resiliency as the interaction between processes that take place on three levels within the family: individual-to-individual (for instance, among siblings); secondly, among units of the family system (such as between the children and the parents); and thirdly, between the family and outside communities. The Resiliency Theory, within the family, has its roots in theories on stress, adversity and/or crisis, with the focus on the family unit, rather than the individuals within the family (Masten, 2018:13). Challenges or crises are handled through balancing the crisis-situations with the family’s coping strategies and resources, based on how the family defines (meaning making) the event that caused the stress/crisis (Phillips, 2007:15). In this instance, it depends on what meaning the family gives to the LGBTIQ+ child’s coming out and sexual identity within the context of their available resources and coping mechanisms.

In a study by Cassar and Sultana (2018:3) on adjustment to a child coming out in terms of time and space, they argue that the past is not static, and a person (the parents) relives and re-examines it daily; therefore, certain things we believed in the past can change with time and in different spaces (circumstances). The present and the future depend on how we re-conceptualise the past through our relations, resources and coping strategies. How we re-perceive past events (meaning making of the event), will depend whether we accept, reject or come to terms with the crisis event (LGBTIQ+ children). In the light of the aforementioned, it can be said that, as time went by, some of the parents’ perspective/opinion of their children’s LGBTIQ+ status changed and they became more open to them and employed their coping strategies to deal with their sexual status, and accepted it.

Although I found a number of studies on parental reactions to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+, there is a paucity of literature on how parents come to terms with their children’s sexuality, how they cope, and where they find resources to assist them, as well as what specific coping mechanisms they employ. In view of the

above, one could say that reaching out to the extended family as a support system and obtaining their acceptance also helps the parents in their personal acceptance of their child being LGBTIQA+. The Theory on Stress and Resiliency provides clarity in understanding how families or parents deal with stress within the family system by utilising the strengths within the family.

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Coping well

The parents also described how they had accepted their child and his/her sexuality, and were now coping well.

Lin, Lo, Liu and Wong (2016:200-201) argue that one cannot discuss family resilience without mentioning the crisis-situation related to it. Family resilience means that a family (the parents) is coping well with a situation that *has previously been perceived as a crisis*. Their study focused on which coping mechanisms influence resiliency in a crisis-situation. The outcome of their study indicated certain types of family strengths that help families cope; economic strengths, problem-solving skills, and family cohesion significantly contribute to a family's ability to cope with a crisis. The authors (2016) add that the cultural context of the family could contribute to its strengths, or negatively influence the family resilience, and should also be taken into account.

Herewith the responses from the participants:

Ivy, who had initially responded very negatively, said: *“You know, now it is wonderful, both my children are married, and I found healing, because I walked the road with my psychologist. She really put me on the road to healing. I learned that I must take care of myself, my own health, and I must think about my children and not reject them and the way things are now. My husband and I have a fantastic relationship with them. My son is married and he and his partner adopted a little girl – they are in the process...We are living life as a family. Just like any other happy family” [Ivy 175-182].*

Lorinda was also positive: *“I am coping very well with it. I don’t have a problem, honestly, as I was saying – maybe it is because I am gay, so that makes it easy for me, because for me it is normal. And I think now, for them also, it became a norm. Even my son, it is normal for them to see a same-sex couple, it is not like ‘wow’”* [Lorinda 88-92]. **Joanna** explained how she is learning to be friends with her daughter: *“We are good, we are good. We are now learning to be friends with each other, since she is older, she is 21 now. Yes, we are just learning to get along and talk; it is not even about her being gay any more. It is just about her growing up. Because kids change as time goes...she is also now part of a documentary: being the child of a lesbian mother. She is working on that now”* [Joanna 134-139].

As indicated in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.4), D'Augelli (2005:122) found in his study that parents go through basic stages when their children come out before they reach resilience or a stage of coping well. Disintegration means that the family equilibrium is disturbed and the coming out is perceived as a crisis; ambivalence indicates that the parents are using their strengths and resources to make meaning of the coming out of their child and to handle it. Once the parents have reached integration of the child being LGBTIQ+, the family has reached bon-adjustment, implying that the harmony has been restored. Thereafter, the adaptation phase starts, indicating that the family can cope and handle the situation, and that the family has adapted to the situation by developing and/or discovering new family strengths (Weber, 2011:30). According to Booth and Niell (2017:47), the type of coping strategies the parent(s) employ to overcome the stressful/crisis situation of their child being LGBTIQ+ will have an influence on the psychological outcome for the family and whether equilibrium will be restored and the family will “bounce back”, such as having a problem-solving approach and adopting positive thinking. On the other hand, negative coping strategies, such as ignoring the issue or worrying about it, could make the situation worse. The abovementioned parents went through a process of employing positive coping mechanisms to accept their children’s LGBTIQ+ status.

4.2.1.4 Sub-theme 5.4: Knows child can cope

When asked how they were coping some parents referred to the fact that they know their *child* can cope, which was clearly important to them.

Simon's response with regard to this was as follows: *"...with these workshops they are doing, she is doing them, the workshops, she runs the workshops also herself. I think she is well equipped and she is looking after herself. If she can go out, we are only worried sometimes at night, it will be bad, but we know that she can, she is, she can defend herself, especially if people come to ask her about it, she can give them any answer what they want"* [**Simon 62-67**].

Ayanda said: *"...actually we must focus on our children, if we focus on our children, then everything is good...now he is living his life. In December this year, we were at his place and we met his boyfriend. He was happy. Even I was happy because what I learnt in the workshops I can see now. I am very, very much happy"* [**Ayanda 154-161**].

I will examine this through the lens of Meyer's Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003:675). This theory was developed on the basis of Hill's Stress Theory, as discussed in Chapter 1 (sub-section 1.4). Minority Stress indicates that due to the stress of prejudice, discrimination, rejection and the social stigma of being LGBTIQ+, these people suffer more psychological and physical health risks than heterosexual persons (Meyer & Frost, 2013:254). The measure to which a parent accepts his/her LGBTIQ+ child's sexuality will have an effect on the person's identity development and/or internalised homophobia. Should the parents reject the LGBTIQ+ child, the child could end up having internal hate for him/herself due to his/her sexuality. It was also found, however, that those LGBTIQ+ children who disclosed their identity to their parents experienced less minority stress and a sense of relief (Katz-Wise *et al.*, 2016:1019).

The LGBTIQ+ person's ability to cope with his/her sexual minority status can therefore be linked to the parental acceptance and adjustment in the family to his/her

status. In the narratives indicate above, the parents conveyed their relief that their children were able to cope with their own sexual identity.

4.2.2 THEME 6: PARENTS' THOUGHTS ON WHAT WOULD HELP THEM TO COPE BETTER WITH THE SITUATION

In this section, the parents were asked to describe what would help them cope better with having a LGBTIQ+ child.

Grafsky (2014:39) states that negative parental reactions in coping with their LGBTIQ+ child are usually due to internal and societal homophobia, lack of information or disinformation, and religious considerations. Freedman (2008:250) found in her study *Accepting the Unacceptable* that part of parental coping mechanisms was to read and self-inform about LGBTIQ+ matters as much as possible and also to reach out to the church, but it did not always have positive results to talk to clergy. Cramer and Rouch (2010:87) conducted a study on disclosure to parents and parental reactions. These authors (2010) found that the more religious and orthodox the parents are, the more authoritarian the father is, and the less educated the parents are, the more likely they are to reject their LGBTIQ+ child. From the aforementioned research, it is clear that factors such as knowledge/information, religiosity and societal perceptions play a considerable role in parents' ability to accept and cope with their LGBTIQ+ child.

The parents' responses are provided in four sub-themes:

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme 6.1: More knowledge

Some of the parents specifically stated that it would have been easier to cope with a child coming out if they had had more knowledge about being gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender.

Jones (2019:461) conducted a study on post-apartheid South Africa's contribution to education regarding LGBTIQ+ knowledge and rights on a national and

international level. It was found that South Africa has contributed substantially to the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons, but that this does not show in society and family life. In a study by Reygan *et al.* (2016:38), as indicated under sub-section 3.3.4.1 on attitudes regarding LGBTIQ+ persons, more than half the participants indicated that same-sex acts are wrong and disgusting, based on religion and gender bias.

As much as the old regime outlawed homosexuality and thereby caused it to be a taboo topic, post-apartheid South Africa ensured that sexuality and gender diversity education and research was stepped up. The educational work done focuses on sexual diversity so that the previous attitude that all people are heterosexual and ²²cis-gender is no longer assumed (Jones, 2019:464-465). Knowledge about South Africa's Constitution and its contributions to research and information on LGBTIQ+ persons should be made available to all communities and families.

The aforementioned literature supports the parental need, indicated in the present study, to have access to more knowledge and information on sexuality and gender nonconformity.

The participants' views follow:

Ayanda: *"I think parents should attend the ²³workshops. They should not hide away. We as parents, we are thinking: what will people think. There are those parents in my church, when they hear you talking about it, because I speak proudly about it, there was this lady, she said something bad about gays, I said: 'Ho-ho Mama, stop talking like that about our children'. I talk about my organisation and I am even a leader in my organisation. I tell that lady, 'Look. Lady, I am even a mother to such a child. You can't talk like that'. If we educate, this will help a lot"* [Ayanda 164-171].

Ivy supported this stance: *"If I had more knowledge. If I weren't so uninformed, because this was a totally unknown field for me...I never had to deal with it until my children came out. Ja, as I say, it wasn't easy for me..."* [Ivy 195-197].

²² Cisgender: An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity and gender expression align with the sex assigned at birth.

²³ PFLAG presents workshops for parents, the family and friends of LGBTIQ+ persons.

Lorinda also stressed the importance of having more knowledge: “Give them as much knowledge as possible about a child being gay. Just empower them with knowledge about gays and LGBTs. What it’s all about...” [Lorinda 122-124].

In a guide compiled by Ryan, *et al.* (2009:1) to help parents support their LGBTIQA+ children better, it states that parents, teachers and service providers should have access to the correct information about sexual orientation and gender identity so that they can provide relevant support for LGBTIQA+ family members. Research (Ben-Ari, 1995; LaSala, 2000; Savin-Williams, 2005) on LGBTIQA+ disclosure to parents suggests that parents go through the same stages of grief/loss, as described by Kubler-Ross (1969), which is a process of grief that involves shock, shame, guilt, and denial. These studies do not take into account how social, cultural and historical contexts influence families, as well as the discourses that are available to contemporary families on matters of LGBTIQA+. These available sources could shape the reaction of parents (Martin *et al.*, 2010:963). In the context of South African cultures influencing parental reactions, research found that colonialism caused anti-homosexual approaches against certain cultural same-sex practices, such as female ²⁴*izasangomas* in same-sex relationships, referred to as the “third sex”. Existing studies indicate that ancestral spirits and possession play a role in the same-sex relationships of *izasangomas* (Mkasi, 2016:2076). However, as a researcher I do not have the knowledge regarding cultural belief systems to venture into the same-sex relationships of *izasangomas*, other than needing to refer to the fact that same-sex relationships have an African connection (for the purposes of this study) and this needs further investigation when referring to homosexuality in an African context.

In summary, Rothman, Sullivan, Keyes and Boehmer (2012:196) conclude in their study on LGBTIQA+ youths’ physical and mental health, that it was apparent that parents’ positive or negative reactions to children’s disclosure of their sexual orientation was a contributing factor to those children’s physical and psychological health. The authors (2012) further state that it is thus necessary for strategies to be

²⁴An *izasangoma* is a traditional healer in African cultures

implemented that provide parents with the *accurate knowledge and skills* they need in order to support their LGBTIQ+ children appropriately.

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 6.2: More support

The parents indicated that support was important in order to cope better with the situation. In the light of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, research has established that having supportive resources, such as familial or societal support, during times of crisis or change highly contribute to the coping abilities of the family going through the trauma or crisis (Nguyen, Chatters, Taylor & Mouzon, 2015:962).

Support groups, such as PFLAG, usually provide information and emotional support to families (Widan & Greeff, 2019:159). Saltzburg (2009:340-341), in a study on parents of LGBTIQ+ children who felt supported, states that "social support" is experienced within the context of relationships and the social implications (being positive or negative) are channelled through the community, social networks and intimate relationships. Social support is vital for resilience and as a coping mechanism for these parents (Saltzburg, 2009:343).

The participants below indicated in their narratives how important support groups could have been when their children came out as LGBTIQ+.

Lorinda said there should be support in the form of support groups for parents with LGBTI children: "... *there is so many support groups for parents who maybe lost a child, or the child is an alcoholic, or some drug abuse. Maybe there should be a support group for parents who have LGBT kids as well*" [**Lorinda 124-128**]. **Joanna** echoed this: "...*and I also think there should maybe be a support group for parents with LGBT kids...*" [**Joanna 122-128**].

Pamela implied that more support is needed: "...*(Ms M) she had a workshop for parents to see if we understand our kids' stuff, but they only did that once, they never*

did it again. So I don't get the support much and even the other parents they say it was her choice to be like this, so she must just be...But I know she is my girl, it is my problem for her to live like that..." [Pamela 109-113].

In a study by Hillier and Torg (2019:168-169) on parental support groups for parents of transgender and gender nonconforming children, they found that as much as the LGBTIQ+ children needed support, the parents needed support in renegotiating identities and relationships within the family system. The authors highlight the benefits for parents of LGBTIQ+ children of joining a support group, as follows:

- perceived sameness with other parents in the same situation where there will be no judgement;
- being able to compare situations and learn from each other, and
- mutual support through peer relationships (Hillier & Torg, 2019:169).

In another study on parent-to-parent support groups, the benefits were listed as:

- sharing and learning from each other,
- as well as feeling supported, accepted, and encouraged by the group members (McCabe, 2008:309-310).

The participants in the present study, who were quoted above, all indicated the need to have other parents in the same situation to share their experiences with and to learn more about their LGBTIQ+ child. They stated that workshops or support groups could enhance their coping with and understanding of their children's status.

4.2.2.3 Sub-theme 6.3: Churches and Christians should be more understanding

Some of the parents specifically stressed that churches and Christians should be more understanding. In a country where 79,6% of the population profess to be Christian and believe in the Christian morals and values, as prescribed in the Bible, there is definite Christian mobilisation around the sphere of LGBTIQ+ rights. LGBTIQ+ activism is equalled and paralleled by rigorous forms of public religious expression against it. It can even be said that the progressive equality before the

law of LGBTIQ+ persons has become a key motif for the Christian mobilisation against homosexuality and gender nonconformity. The negative relationship of church against state-instituted equal rights can also be seen in public spaces and communities (Burchardt, 2013:241).

If a LGBTIQ+ person belongs to any of the mainstream Christian churches, they will most probably experience interpersonal stress about what the church teaches and who they are. To some the only answer is to renounce either their Christian identity or their LGBTIQ+ identity. While renouncing either their faith or their sexuality could be an option to some people, there are people to whom both their sexual orientation and their religion are important aspects of who they are (Subhi & Geelan, 2012:1383-1384). Rodriguez (2010:9) states that this clash between being LGBTIQ+ and a person's religious identity causes considerable stress in the LGBTIQ+ person. The clash is therefore not just between being LGBTIQ+ and the church, but also about experiencing internal conflict.

Campbell, Zaporozhets and Yarhouse (2017:340) in their study investigated the parent-child relationships in the context of religious beliefs before disclosure, after disclosure, and at the time of the interviews. These authors (2017) found that in terms of acceptance and affirming the child's sexuality, parents differentiated between their love and acceptance for their child and their moral beliefs in terms of the child's sexuality or sexual behaviour, where they could state that they love their child, but they believed his/her sexuality to be immoral and sinful. Some parents also did not believe that the child would stay LGBTIQ+. Furthermore, it was found that parents had three reactions regarding the sinfulness of being homosexual:

- It is a sin,
- Questioning whether it is a sin, and if the Bible should be read literally,
- It is not a sin.

Some parents moved from the first position to the "it is not a sin" during a period of adjusting and adapting to their child's status, by redefining the meaning of his/her LGBTIQ+ status.

This could also be seen in this study in **Ivy's** responses, where she first followed the church's opinion that it is a sin, and then started reading up about the matter and started questioning the church to where she is now, accepting and affirming both her children as LGBTIQA+ and believing that homosexuality is not a sin. **Ivy** was deeply involved in her church prior to her children coming out and reached out to the church for support, understanding and acceptance, but the church rejected her children. Here is her narrative: *"Yes, and then I started taking a journey with the church, because I was doing my own research about what being gay really is and why it happens...and I started talking with my own church and tried to convince them ...I asked them, how can you reject my child? [Ivy 152-155]."*

Ayanda also expressed these thoughts as follows: *"If we educate, this will help a lot. Because these children are even staying away from church. If they attend churches, they don't want to feel uncomfortable for being lesbians and gays. Church people will say to the lesbians: no, no, no you can't wear trousers to church. We must get to the point where we understand each other. Clothes are not the one that should be a problem for others. It is the spirit...now, my Pastor understands there are such people. It comes from above from the bishop, that it is wrong. In our churches, we should understand – that will help a lot" [Ayanda 171-179].* **Ayanda** substantiated, adding in another storyline by stating: *"Parents need these knowledge so we can tolerate each other and until we know we are on the same page, but in church, it is like...There is a scripture that says God is love, but we forget about that and we think that God loves only certain people. They even call the gays demonic. They say they are all demonic, forgetting that we are all made in the image of God. Which means we are all God's children. When one says a person is demonic because he is a gay, it is so painful, because it isn't by choice. It is not by choice to live in fear or like an animal running away..." [Ayanda 115-124].* **Ayanda** continued: *"...people are raped, you understand me? We must teach people that a lesbian or a gay or a bisexual isn't by choice. We must teach our people this. It even start in the early years, raping these small kids if there is a gay child next door, the others, they talk about this child, the next door neighbours. It is so hurtful. That is why our children who now grow up has a hatred for other society members" [Ayanda 125-130].*

Joanna confirmed that the church needs to be more understanding: “... *it is spoken of in church and gay people don't even want to go to church anymore. If you are a lesbian or homosexual you are living a life of sin. It makes you feel like God is going to reject you and in the Bible you read the book and it says God is the only one who can judge you. Maybe a person needs counselling and wants to go to a priest, how can you even tell the priest if you have issues like this?*” [Joanna 45-50].

In a South African study by Mason and Nkosi (2017:72), it was found that some Christians are of the opinion that Christianity and homosexuality can co-exist, but other Christians openly advocate that homosexuality is against the basic values of the Christian faith. These Bible statements against homosexuality are seen as the authoritative and final word on the subject. Due to the attitude of the church, LGBTIQ+ persons often feel that they have no choice but to leave organised religion and find spirituality elsewhere.

In conclusion, Yarhouse (2010:17) confirms the experienced attitude of the church by stating that even if Christians do not fully understand the rationale behind the statements against homosexuality, they accept that the Bible is the *Word of God* and should therefore be obeyed. They see the Bible as the primary source on morality, and it is this perception towards LGBTIQ+ matters that causes discrimination and prejudice from the church/religious society.

4.2.2.4 Sub-theme 6.4: Focus on being a person

Gertie stressed how the focus should be on the person and his/her essential humanity, and not his/her sexuality or gender. Gertie's transgender child was bullied at school and ridiculed for being gender nonconforming. She narrates her view as follows: “*I always say if people can just change their minds. When you look at another person, take away their gender and their race and their money. If you take away everything and just make the person naked, then we will get along better with each other. I was taught to not be impressed by you being richer or in a better position than I, or have a better job than me. What will impress me is your*

personality. That is who you are. If people focused more on being human and not on what you are or what you do, then I think we can make a big difference in the world” [Gertie 162-170].

Reyneke (2010:72) states that if the South African school system, as well as society, actually applied the values of the Constitution, citizens would be more tolerant and not abuse another human being’s rights just because they are acting or thinking differently than general society. He (2010) concludes that the failure to uphold the Constitutional rights of LGBTIQ+ persons is based on a failure to respect human dignity. lafrati and Williams (2016:25-26) state that homophobia is the reason why a LGBTIQ+ person is not seen as a dignified human being, and instead has to endure hate crimes and threats of violence. These authors (2016) assert that the possibility of hate crimes often lead to LGBTIQ+ persons adopting different personal traits that do not show their sexuality (hiding their sexual orientation and identity) in order to avoid conflict and hate crimes, especially in certain spaces. Van Vollenhoven and Els (2013:270), in their study *The human rights paradox in South Africa* found that even though the country has a Constitution that protects the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons, social, religious and cultural discrimination often leads to LGBTIQ+ persons pretending to be heterosexual; thereby hiding their sexual identity in order to prevent prejudice and discrimination.

Gertie’s transgendered child refused to change his gender nonconformity or hide who he was, which led to bullying and threats of violence at school. **Gertie’s** plea was to respect a person for their personality and humanity, but despite the Constitution, the South African LGBTIQ+ community do not feel safe as persons within their cultural, societal and religious context in the country.

4.2.3 THEME 7: PARENTS' SUGGESTIONS TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN COMING OUT AS LGBTIQA+

After responding to how they could cope better with the situation, the parents were asked what they would suggest to other parents whose children came out as LGBTIQA+.

Cassar and Sultana (2018:2) indicate that the experience of the parents of a child who came out as LGBTIQA+, depends on the various spaces that the family occupy simultaneously, for instance religious, societal and community. These spaces are also constructed in terms of the time the coming out event takes place. These aspects can influence how a parent responds to their child, be it acceptance or rejection. Should these aspects influence a parent in accepting their child, Roe (2017:55) found in his study *Parental Acceptance of LGBTIQA+ Youth* that support from parents leads to a variety of positive outcomes for the youth. Needham and Austin (2010:1191) confirm this, adding that perceived parental support could prevent risk factors such as suicide, depression and drug use amongst LGBTIQA+ youth. The participants in this study had already gone through the different stages to arrive at acceptance and support of their children; therefore, they were in a position of experience and knowledge to provide advice to other parents whose children had come out as LGBTIQA+.

Katz-Wise *et al.* (2016:1018) concluded in their study that families with strong traditional values (e.g. religion, emphasis on marriage and child bearing) were found to be less accepting of their LGBTIQA+ children. Further factors that influenced reactions were culture and race/ethnicity. It is therefore important to consider these aspects when a researcher intends to gain an in-depth understanding of parental reactions, experiences, challenges and coping strategies.

For a LGBTIQA+ person to have healthy relationships and sexual identity development, it is important for him/her to have a strong bond with his/her parents. The relationship with one's parent is a lifelong important trajectory from birth until adulthood; therefore, positive outcomes in this relationship will hold positive

outcomes on a personal level for the LGBTIQ+ person (Roe, 2017:55). The relationship between parent and child (be it youth or adult) is therefore of utmost importance to ensure that the LGBTIQ+ person develops positively in his/her sexuality and gender identity.

Below is the parents' suggestions to other parents experiencing the same coming out event of their LGBTIQ+ children. It is divided into three sub-themes:

4.2.3.1 Sub-theme 7.1: Accept, love and support them

The participants' predominant response was the suggestion that parents should love, support and accept their children as they are.

Willoughby *et al.* (2008:75) utilised the Family Stress Theory to explain parental reactions to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+ in terms of the availability of resources in the family, the ability of the family to manage stress, the meaning the family attaches to sexual orientation/gender identity, and any other co-occurring stressors. Should the family therefore have the resources to cope with the child's sexual identity and have gone through the process of adjustment and adaptation to the child's status, they will be able to accept, support and show love to the LGBTIQ+ child.

In the study by Katz-Wise *et al.* (2016:1021), the authors refer to a specific case in point: a LGBTIQ+ female child had masculine gender expression that caused bullying and mistreatment at school. The exclusion and minority stress she experienced affected her psychological health. However, she had positive support from her parents, who listened and assisted her and **affirmed** her sexuality and gender identity, and she had a medical doctor who was another source of support. The study found that the child benefited greatly in coping through the protective effects of supportive parents to whom she had a secure attachment.

In view of the above literature, positive responses from parents will enhance the well-being of their LGBTIQ+ child and help him/her to have positive regard for him/herself as a LGBTIQ+ person.

The participants' responses will be presented as follows:

Dorcias indicated her advice to other parents using these words: *"...you can meet with them, and the one thing is, they must accept their children. The first step – accept them, and love them because sometimes the parents do things that make the children just go out and stay outside, because the parents don't accept them. It is like any other illness, or what"* [**Dorcias 91-95**].

Ntabiseng made a similar suggestion: *"I think for me my suggestion...just to give advice to parents, and say your child is your child and the community out there is so horrible and harsh towards lesbians and gays and trans people so I will say if you are a parent, and you know, you must thank God and try and give love and support to your child as much as you can and forget about other people and what other people would say because this is not other's business. This is our business with our child and if you have accepted her, she is our child, she is still the same child she was 30 years' back and she is still that daughter that she used to be. So, if every parent would learn to say, this is my child, this is what God gave me, I cannot change it, and I cannot question God, why did He give me this child. I always say to parents that when we give birth to children that they are gifts from God, and God gives you a gift....It is like a person that gives you a gift, and it is wrapped. When you open it, it is the gift that the person has given you, you cannot take it back and say no, this is not the kid that I wanted – that would be my advice to parents"* [**Ntabiseng [136-152]**].

Pamela emphasised supporting the child: *"I would suggest to support their children in whatever they want to be, just give them support. My daughter turned, I don't know what 'cos she was born a girl and that they talk to her, why is she not wearing a dress? I said to her, 'You know what my girl, just wear what you want. it is fine, don't stress'. So she got problems with her dad; her dad doesn't want to accept who*

she is, her dad is not involved with her, so if she has friends around and drinking he will say, 'These people they are making you drink alcohol and I don't like what you call yourself, what, what, what.' So I went to him last time and I said to him, 'If you don't like what she is doing, stop saying it to her, you stopped supporting her a long time ago, so just leave her, the way she is...the life she is living...she is old enough to know...'. That is what I am going to tell parents, just support your kids, no matter what" **[Pamela 116-133]**.

Ayanda emphasised acceptance: "...if the mother comes to me with that problem, from what I have learnt, sometimes you can see before even the child comes out to you, you understand. You don't have to confront him or her, you just wait until he or she is ready. And again, you don't have to tell. My child is my child in spite of who he is" **[Ayanda 182-186]**.

In **Gertie's** words, the most important thing for parents to do is to love their child: "Just love, just love, just love your child, you can never stop loving. God gave you that child and to me that is the biggest gift on earth, when you pray for a child or you are expecting a child, you are not going to tell God: give me a boy or give me a girl child. You will ask for a child...so who gives you as a parent the right not to want a gay or transgender child? Now you are saying: I don't want the child, I wanted a boy or a girl; you just wanted a child. Now I am saying to parents to love your child irrespective of their sexual preferences or identity. That child is a person in his own right. You are there to feed, clothe and love the child. That is what your child needs from you, give it to him. Unconditional love, with the necessary respect too. Don't put your child in a box, don't force your child to be what you want him to be" **[Gertie 173-190]**.

After her experiences, **Ivy** suggested parents should love their children unconditionally: "You know, from my experience of this, I would just say: accept your child unconditionally. It may not be easy, but it is worth it. You could make yourself sick over this, acceptance may not come easy...you start avoiding other people and they start avoiding you, because they don't want to talk about it. My advice to parents is that: if your child is gay, just know that you cannot change that...so, accept it and

take the journey with your child, because the world out there already rejects them. You must embrace your child with lots of love. You know the day when I accepted my son...my daughter is very self-confident and she has a strong personality, so what others think did not bother her as much as it did him. But my son is an introvert and he always had the fear that when he would come out, people would react negatively. My son even tried to commit suicide once or twice due to being gay, but he survived. With all of this that happened, and now I look at where we are today with these two beautiful grandchildren that we got in such a manner... then I am just thankful that I was able to accept my children. I am now at a happy place in my life with my children's sexuality" [Ivy 201-221].

Joanna emphasised support and listening to the child: *"Sometimes children come out to their friends and not their parents, because they want to save your reaction. Just see where it is going, and support the child with whatever...sometimes it is just temporary, sometimes it is just a child being a child. It is a phase...support again, stand by your child with whatever she is. Listen to the child. Don't project your own feelings onto what they are saying. Listen to what they are trying to say. Let them express their own feelings" [Joanna 147-158].*

A variety of studies in terms of parental reactions to youth coming out as LGBTIQ+ suggest that those youth who felt accepted had better self-esteem and functioned better in general; they also felt more protected psychologically and mentally against minority stress (Bebes, Samarova, Shilo & Diamond, 2013:882). Parents who are responsive, caring and sensitive to their children's needs will let the child feel "secure". A "secure" LGBTIQ+ child will have positive models of self and others, whereas a child who feels "insecure" usually has a parent who is inaccessible and unresponsive (Katz-Wise *et al.*, 2016:1014). It is therefore important that the parents respond with love, care and support.

Comprehending the parents' experience of their child's disclosure within the context of the family, one should understand that the parents often have to re-envision the meaning of who they are as parents of an LGBTIQ+ child (Grafsky, 2014:36). The participants' advice to other parents who are in the same situation stems from the

family context and how they as the parents of the family might have made errors of judgement in their reactions at the time when their children came out. It involved family processes and stages of personal growth to arrive at the point of accepting and supporting their children. The Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation supports this perspective, where the stress situation at first could disrupt normal functioning, but through a process of new meaning-making of the child's sexuality, and the parents' roles as parents of an LGBTIQ+ child, the re-envisioning becomes a coping strategy, and the family adjusts and adapts to their child coming out as LGBTIQ+ (LaDuke, 2016:42).

4.2.3.2 Sub-theme 7.2: Consult someone or obtain support

Another suggestion from the parents was that other parents should consult someone or obtain support. In order for a parent to seek support or consult on the topic of LGBTIQ+ persons, the resources to educate and equip need to be available. In the case of this study, a major source of information was the workshops presented by PFLAG, as well as the PFLAG support groups. To join such an organisation could therefore benefit the parents and the children. The founder of PFLAG, Jeanne Manford, marched with her gay son, Morty, in New York City's Liberation Day Celebrations. Shortly thereafter, she held her first support meeting with families and allies of LGBTIQ+ persons. PFLAG has not been functioning for long in South Africa, but has already reached rural areas such as Mahikeng, where workshops inform and educate parents and family members of LGBTIQ+ persons.

The following advice from participants indicates the need to reach out for assistance:

Dorcias suggested consulting a pastor or social worker: *"I will say: I know this is a bad time, you can go to the social worker or the pastor and they will help you with advice and they will pray with you, because it is not easy, Mam, it is not easy. The community, the men especially, even if their parents can accept them, but when they go outside their families, yes, they are more hurting"* [Dorcias 99-105].

Lorinda emphasised the importance of support for the child and the parent: *“I have a situation now, my daughter’s cousin on her father’s side. She is the one helping him, because his parents are not accepting him being that, because he is a guy and open, you can see he’s gay, so he is very suicidal, very depressed most of the time, you can see it in his face and she is the one actually helping him coping through all this. She is the one he can go and talk to. I would just advise: what can you do? You gave birth to the child”* [**Lorinda 95-101**].

Lorinda spoke about how a supportive parent helps a homosexual, bisexual or transsexual child: *“It is a lonely world in the gay world, the gay community, there is a few of us and we stand out and for people to accept us; especially a child trying to find themselves, being a teenager with all that hormones. Being a supportive parent just makes life easier for them”* [**Lorinda 104-108**].

Ivy reached out to a psychologist who helped her through a process from rejecting her children to acceptance. *“I found healing, because I walked the road with my psychologist; she really put me on the road to healing”* [**Ivy, 177-178**].

Rothman *et al.* (2012:196) state in their study on parental adjustment to a child who has come out as LGBTIQ+ that, ultimately, parental reactions (being positive or negative) to children’s disclosure of sexual orientation contribute to those children’s physical and psychological health and/or risk behaviours. Thus, the authors (2012) concluded that *parents should be equipped with the information and skills* they need to appropriately support their LGBTIQ+ child.

There is very little open information available to parents, especially if they cannot afford a psychologist or do not know how to do internet searches, and even internet searches provide limited information, which is mostly not within the South African context. Parents, however, need to be informed and educated about the facts on LGBTIQ+ persons and on how to support their LGBTIQ+ child.

4.2.3.3 Sub-theme 7.3: Need to be flexible as parents

Part of coming out to one's parents as LGBTIQ+ is not to have the need to hide your romantic relationships from your parents and family members any longer. This coming out process then promotes more authentic and honest relationships with one's family members. However, LGBTIQ+ persons who disclose their sexuality often fear rejection from their parents. Parental reactions are often influenced by social norms and perceptions in the media about LGBTIQ+ persons, thereby causing parents to respond in terms of stereotypes that lead to negative reactions (Grafsky, 2018:784). When a parent responds positively, the child has a greater chance of self-acceptance (Bebes *et al.*, 2013:881).

Hami described the need for parents to be flexible as follows: *“Well, I would say we need to be flexible as parents, flexible to the idea that we might be giving birth to lesbian or gay children and despite having a background of being black, of being Christian or being conservative, we need to individualise our relationship with our children, because most people, they are more worried about what other people would say about what's happening in their families. You get it? So, most people, their primary worry is not of themselves, it is about what the neighbour, what other people will say...so, I think if we were to be more flexible and be ready to face the outside world with regard to what or who or how our children are. If we were to deal with such we will probably give our children more space to become themselves or to maximise or to take advantage of who or whatever they are”* [**Hami 275-289**].

The fear of negative responses from parents may prevent a child (adult or youth) from opening up and disclosing their sexuality, but on the other hand, if a child has disclosed their identity, the possibility exists that parents may be supportive (D'Amico & Julian, 2012:216). Grafsky (2014:39) postulates that the process of becoming a parent of a LGBTIQ+ child is important in terms of the narrative it relates in conceptualising the parents' experiences. She (2015) highlights how disclosure introduces new roles for the parents as parents of a LGBTIQ+ child(ren), which influences the interpretation (meaning-making) of themselves as parents. Heatherington *et al.* (2008:337) in their article *Coming To Terms With*

Coming Out” refer to family processes that give meaning to family events (such as a family member coming out); this interpretation of the event will be influenced by the family’s problem-solving ability, adaptability to change, and dedication in supporting and affirming the LGBTIQ+ child’s identity.

In the light of the above and within the context of the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, being flexible therefore means the ability to adjust and adapt to changes (that were previously viewed as a crisis/adversity) in the family system, such as a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. In this study, I found that through processes of meaning-making – for example, **Ivy**’s experience of adapting to change and giving different meaning to the sexual orientation/identity of her children – parents became able to also identify (meaning-making) themselves as parents of LGBTIQ+ children, thereby *coming out* as parents of LGBTIQ+ children.

4.2.4 THEME 8 PARENTS’ SUGGESTIONS ON HOW SOCIAL WORKERS CAN ASSIST PARENTS WHEN FINDING OUT THEIR CHILD IS LGBTIQ+

The final question asked of the parents was what they would suggest on how social workers can assist parents when finding out their child is LGBTIQ+.

Across the world, it is the belief that social workers are charged with the responsibility to provide services to vulnerable and marginalised communities. Throughout history, social workers have played important roles in addressing socio-economic injustices and situations of stigma and discrimination. It is expected of social workers to promote equality to all citizens. This should mean that social work students must be exposed to diverse populations so that they can be sensitised to the needs of these populations, including LGBTIQ+ persons (Matthews, Clemons & Avery, 2017:287). Corturillo, McGeorge and Carlson (2016:56) have postulated that in order to work in confidence and with competence with LGBTIQ+ clients, social worker students and social workers in practice need the relevant training in affirmative therapy. The authors (2016) describe affirmative therapy as therapy that

is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ persons and affirms their sexual orientation and/or identity, as well as minimises the effects of oppression against them.

None of the participants actually reached out to a social worker, be it in private practice, at a non-governmental organisation, or at the Department of Social Development. It did not cross their minds to request assistance from social workers regarding their children coming out as LGBTIQ+. This could be due to a lack of marketing from social welfare organisations and the Department of Social Development in terms of services to LGBTIQ+ persons.

The participant responses are provided in four sub-themes, as indicated below:

4.2.4.1 Sub-theme 8.1: Social workers must first understand themselves

The parents were of the opinion that social worker could help parents, but they had concerns about the social workers' own level of understanding and ability/skills in terms of LGBTIQ+ issues. The following narratives came to light:

Simon stated: *“Social workers can help parents. First of all, as you said, they must also be given workshops, yes, because they themselves they don’t believe in lesbians, they don’t know. They know, but cannot accept that, that is something people must know, it is there and they cannot say tomorrow morning that we have just washed it out and rubbed it off, it is not anymore there. It is part of our life”*

[Simon 78-83]. Ntabiseng echoed what Simon said about social workers: *“Well, I have had very negative (experiences with social workers)...because I run a children’s home...”* **[Ntabiseng 174-175]**. She added: *“I think before social workers can help, they themselves need to be helped, because some of them...I think LGBTI communities have very strong social workers, from nurses in the clinics, from police – these service providers themselves have to be empowered to accept. When they are ready, they need to journey with the parents to make them understand that this is not a demon, this is not a curse from God, this is their child and their child could have been anything, their child could have had a disability or anything, but in this case it is a normal child with a different sexuality. I think that is what is important for*

social workers to understand and to help parents understand as well” [Ntabiseng 155-164].

Ayanda also expressed her concerns about social workers: *“You know I have a problem sometimes, because before one can be a social worker, you are a human being. There are those who are bad at their work. It should be like a calling. Sometimes I can preach and preach to people, you must accept these children and then they accept these children, but then when it comes to me, behind the closed doors, I know it’s nonsense, I don’t accept these people. Maybe if radio can have some people to do the work; it does not even have to be social workers, we need such people who can create awareness. I can be a social worker, but maybe I won’t make the people understand how deep this is” [Ayanda 190-199].*

Ferguson (2018:415) comments that in understanding the self and utilising the self in social work, *reflexivity* is needed. Reflexivity in social work is a core concept and spans different professions; the origin thereof is in Schon’s (1983) theory on how professionals reflect while they are *having an experience/action* (helping a client) and *reflect on the action* (after the experience). This is a method of linking practice to knowledge. Reflexivity means that the social worker has self-awareness that entails that the professional gains insight into him/herself, his/her identity, and his/her position on matters such as race, ethnicity, LGBTIQA+ issues and cultural backgrounds. Self-awareness would therefore include exploring a better understanding of working with LGBTIQA+ clients and their families (Bender, Negi & Fowler, 2010:35).

In a study titled *The tension between Christian social workers and affirmative practice with LGBTIQA+ clients*”, Dessel, Jacobsen, Levy, McCarty-Caplan, Lewis and Kaplan (2017:14), recommend that a strengths-based perspective should be employed to recognise that both the clients and the social workers bring strengths, resources and challenges/obstacles to the therapeutic process. The Strength-based approach views personal beliefs and values as possible positive elements, without denying their possible negative influences. The approach also encourages the

social worker to be diligent in assessing tensions and to always act in the best interest of the professional relationship with the client. It is important for the social worker, in working through the tension, to be self-aware of her own beliefs, culture, socialisation and values. Social workers should assess the similarities they have with their clients and use them to build a working relationship based on mutual respect and client-centeredness. Social workers should also ensure that they take time to do self-reflection.

The participants were very clear that they felt that social workers should first know themselves and their own opinion about LGBTIQA+ persons and issues, before they will be ready to work with a client-system dealing with these issues.

In conclusion, Social Workers in South Africa are bound by the ²⁵Ethical Code of the South African Council for Social Service Professions to treat clients with equality and dignity and they are obligated to follow the Constitution whereby the human dignity of persons from different sexual orientations or identities are protected.

4.2.4.2 Sub-theme 8.2: Talk to the family and give guidance

The parents recommended that social workers should be able to talk to the family and give them guidance. In the narratives below, the participants indicate how they think social workers should go about handling/assisting the LGBTIQA+ person and their family:

²⁵ As a social worker I believe in:

- the uniqueness, responsibility of self-determination and ultimate worth of every human being, irrespective of status, culture, gender, religion, lifestyle and other differences;
- a society in which all members share the same basic rights, security, opportunities, obligations and social benefits;
- collective human responsibility for the well-being of society; and
- the capacity of all people to change, grow and develop under the stimulating influence of other people, through their own life experience and through beneficial living conditions.

Dorcas proposed the following: *“The social worker can call them and maybe arrange with them, so the family can come together and talk to them. It is a family thing”* [Dorcas 107-108].

Although **Ivy** received no assistance from social workers, she supported the idea that they should be able to assist families: *“I didn’t have any support from social workers...I reached out to the church to support me and they gave me the cold shoulder. So, for me I had a psychologist counselling me. Social Workers should be able to guide that parent on a road where the parent, at the end of the day, can realise that their child is not a mishap. Your child was meant to be this way, he is a creation of God. He doesn’t have a disability, because one of the things that hurt me most was a reverend who told me that it was a disability and it had to be fixed”* [Ivy 225-233].

Johanna had specific advice for social workers, emphasising that they should focus on counselling the family: *“Don’t ridicule the parents. Do not putting Christianity into it. Because I went to sessions with psychologists, you know, and then they put Christianity into it; I mean it’s something that was drove into us by our parents. When you go to a social worker, you need someone neutral, not someone who is going to tell you to pray about it. I mean, what are we going to pray about? Your job as a social worker is to counsel”* [Joanna 162-168].

Joanna’s complaint about bringing in Christianity when dealing with LGBTIQ+ persons formed part of the study by Dessel *et al.* (2017:13), where the authors opined that social workers should understand the factors that could increase, reduce or relieve harm to their clients. Social workers are expected to follow the standards of professional practice and can be disciplined for not following the professional ethics and code of conduct. Social workers of the Christian faith often have conflict between their professional values and their religious beliefs. These authors (2017) refer to “cultural competence” and “cultural humility”, indicating that social workers should understand their clients’ lived experiences. It is not the clients’ responsibility to teach the social worker about their lives as LGBTIQ+ persons; the social worker should be involved in continuous professional education, thereby seeking additional

knowledge through resources, training and interaction with the community (Dessel *et al.*, 2017:15).

In a study undertaken in the United States of America regarding the readiness of couples and family therapists (social workers) to work with LGBTIQ+ clients and their families, the researchers found that most participants indicated that they had no training or very little training in terms of Affirmative Therapy, or how to deal with LGBTIQ+ clients, and issues around such clients (Corturillo, McGeorge & Carlson, 2016:62). In my research for this study, I could find no information in terms of South African social workers being trained on Affirmative Therapy, or in terms of LGBTIQ+ clients, apart from those social workers who were exposed to some information on working with a diverse client-system during their studies.

In view of the above literature, it is clear that social workers should be trained to have understanding and knowledge to assist and guide parents in their processes of coping, accepting, adjusting and adapting to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. Social workers should also understand that their Christian beliefs may not be forced on their client system.

4.2.4.3 Sub-theme 8.3: Empower parents and others with knowledge

The participants emphasised that social workers should empower parents with knowledge. Although parents were cited as the primary target group, the participants added that social workers should play a role in empowering others and the community with knowledge on LGBTIQ+.

As indicated above in sub-theme 8.2 (sub-section 4.2.4.2), social workers need to be trained and educated, and gain understanding of LGBTIQ+ issues before they can educate parents and communities about it. The following narratives were related by the participants:

Pamela explained that social workers should empower parents with knowledge: *“To make workshops and to teach other parents because there are parents who accept*

this LGBTI...to teach us how to understand your child, what it takes to become gay. We need knowledge, we need to understand this. Other parents they are older, they are not accepting. So I think we need more workshops as parents...I think every area has got social workers, so we can have an office, if a parent sees his or her child is gay, just go there, and ask questions and get information so you can and ask questions and get information, so you can assist your child” [Pamela 136-147].

Lorinda echoed Pamela’s sentiments: *“Give them as much knowledge as possible about a child being gay. Just empower them with knowledge about gays and LGBTs. What it is all about” [Lorinda 122-124].*

Ntabiseng highlighted that siblings and communities were in need of education: *“I think, more than any other thing, is just to educate communities, to educate siblings, because some LGBTI people are ostracised by their own siblings because of their beliefs – whether they are too religious or too traditional, and so. I think by now that most LGBTI communities or people are empowered” [Ntabiseng 195-199].*

Lorinda recommended that social workers should visit schools to impart knowledge and information to children, as well as parents: *“I think the stigma involved in being gay in our communities...if social workers can maybe go to schools and empower the kids and maybe the parents, and tell them it is okay – the only thing different is who you sleep with, who you date, who you love. In the end, it is all about love” [Lorinda 133-137].*

Ayanda emphasised the need to empower parents with knowledge: *“My house is permanently full of children and I have chatted to these children and, sjoe, you won’t believe what happens to these children in their parents’ homes. How they have to live with their own parents hating them, not loving them, rejecting them. I think parents are uninformed, they are very uninformed about what these children are going through, and what it is all about. In our brown communities, it is often taken that you chose this and that you can be different. What they don’t understand is that it is not like that. These parents do not have access to the necessary information. These things are very difficult for them to understand. So, I want to say: maybe they don’t really feel like that, it is just because they are uninformed that they are reacting*

like that. If social workers could go to schools, especially primary schools, because these children will be bullied...that is just how it is. These children need their parents much more than any other child. So, to me it is...if you can start at primary school stage to work with the parents and their children. Children do not want other children to know that they are different, but if there is more awareness of it at schools, it will already be better for these children. But to me it is about the parents, this child needs to go home and the child needs a mom or a dad with whom he can talk about his fears and what happened at school that day. So, if social workers can develop a programme to make parents more aware and communities in general about the struggles that these children go through. If you have a child with a psychological problem or a disability, you will definitely give that child some extra help, so why not our children who also have a problem? If you think about the psychological impact that issues have on these children, then you can imagine that these children must also receive assistance in some way. So, social workers should try to do something for these children and parents” [Gertie 195-223].

Gertie further recommended that social workers should be responsible for empowering parents and the community with knowledge: “...especially with parents. At this stage there is totally nothing. The only help available is psychologists at the clinics and what child under 18 will be diagnosed with a psychological problem? Because this is not a psychological problem. So, why send the child to a psychologist when they don't have a psychological problem, it is not necessary. I think the community needs the education more than the children” [Gertie 226-232].

Francis and Le Roux (2011:301) state that what is needed is communities who are shaped by human rights. Such communities will allow for social justice education as a goal, where there is equal participation within the society by all groups and their needs will be attended to. Social justice education relates to societies where the individuals are both independent and individually functional, as well as interdependent, where they interact with others in the society on an equal level. Social justice societies consist of community members who act as independent social agents, as well as protectors of the community's human rights (Francis & Le Roux, 2011:302). The aim that the participants referred to is thus to have

communities where LGBTIQ+ persons can live as equal individuals within the community, where they interact with other community members democratically.

In a study by Sekoni, Gale, Manga-Atangana, Bhadhuri and Jolly (2017:6) titled *Pre- and Post-education Attitudes in terms of LGBTIQ+ persons and Health care workers*, they found that most health care workers who had a negative attitude towards LGBTIQ+ persons, prior to being informed/educated, changed their attitude after the training. This indicates that knowledge is of utmost importance in changing people's views of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Rosenwald and Rodriguez (2017:1) summarise that social workers are essential as mentors, therapists and advocates for LGBTIQ+ persons. Social workers should study and draw on available texts to increase their competencies in working with LGBTIQ+ communities. Understanding the sub-populations within the general term of LGBTIQ+ is also important in terms of acknowledging their different lived experiences, challenges and resiliencies. It is also important that social workers understand the intersectionality of LGBTIQ+ persons regarding their race or ethnicity, which also influences discrimination against them. In the end, social workers should appreciate the complexity of the human experience of LGBTIQ+ persons.

4.2.4.4 Sub-theme 8.4: Address policies

Under the apartheid regime, LGBTIQ+ rights were not protected and homosexuality was outlawed. LGBTIQ+ persons were condemned and punished in the criminal, civil and family sphere, because they did not adhere to societal norms. In the 1980s, Simon Nkoli established the GLOW organisation (Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand). As an organisation, members were mostly middle and upper class whites, even though an African activist established the organisation. Post-apartheid, the organisation was well equipped to fight for the protection of LGBTIQ+ persons under the new South African Constitution (Ilyayambwa, 2012:51). Ilyayambwa (2012:51) further states that the South African legal system has overcome a number of constitutional and legislative hurdles to ensure that

human rights in the country applies to everyone, especially minority groups such as LGBTIQ+ persons. Unfortunately, this has been met by obstacles based on societal perceptions and religion; however, the supremacy of the Constitution rules. As much as the legislative processes are in place to protect LGBTIQ+ persons, much grassroots work still needs to be done, as perceptions prevail regarding LGBTIQ+ and the degrading of such persons. As perceptions are individual choices of thinking, institutions can only address these challenges by integrating policies that address these societal attitudes and obstacles (Ilyayambwa, 2012:57).

Hami suggested a broader approach, which included addressing policies. Hami's narrative regarding the treatment of LGBTIQ+ clients and the public was as follows: *"I don't think social work itself has given special needs people or special groups much attention in terms of maybe services; it could be people with disabilities, it could be other groups like older people, or LGBTI people. I don't think we are putting too much research, too much policy, too much services into such special needs. I think if we were to have policies, it could be policies regarding how institutions should deal with LBGTI. They must start at school, because it might affect how they treat the issue of uniform...I might be a girl in a school where girls wear tunics and I feel like wearing pants. So, the openness will start there. And it will go up into institutions, even institutions like your institution, even policies with regard to that integrated...there are probably some politics, I think, within issues of LGBTI, in the institutions. So social workers would probably influence how we view LBGTI. First, by amassing a whole lot of knowledge like doing this research, you can test or at least scan around how we think and what influences how we think and what other things are dependent on the way we think, like the behaviour of people in the streets when two girls are holding hands or when you see two girls kissing in the streets, such things, like changing how society views LGBTI"* [**Hami 226-245**].

Hami indicated that **educating** society should start in schools. In 2019, with the introduction of the new curriculum for sex education in schools in South African,, there has been huge debates regarding to what extend children should be informed. This education will include information regarding sexual minorities. Bhana, Crewe and Aggleton (2019:361) postulate that there is conflict between the colonial

apartheid regime's sexual moralities and the democratic movement to be more open and tolerant towards sexual diverse cultures. The attitude in the national political domain and within schools had been to hold a Judaeo-Christian view of sex and gender. The education system recognises the need for more open forms of sex education, but the focus of teaching (teachers) is still entrenched in heteronormative and traditional values. At a UNESCO conference in 2018, it was stated that sexuality education should address the need to support, protect and empower the youth towards sexual safety, positive relationships, enjoyment and well-being. Swanepoel and Beyers (2015:166) found in their study that the South African classroom is however, highly influenced by the country's socio-political context, complicating the manner in which content can be delivered to students. The authors (2015) state that knowledge should be dynamic and continuously adapted and reconstructed to fit the needs of the students and within the context of the modern day needs of sexual education.

Victor and Nel (2016:351) conducted a study on the guidelines for psychotherapy and counselling of LGBTIQ+ persons in South Africa. The researchers conducted 15 in-depth qualitative interviews with selected participants. Their findings were that Affirmative Therapy by therapists provided unconditional positive regard, acceptance and non-judgement, and viewed same-sex attraction as normal behaviour, and not a variant of sexuality. Negative responses arose from cases where therapists were being disaffirming of the participants' sexual orientation and gender identity. According to these authors (2016), these findings provide a basis for practice guidelines and indicate that Affirmative Therapy is important in working with LGBTIQ+ client-systems.

Even though the aforementioned study was based on experiences with psychologists, the general result that affirming one's sexual identity and orientation is of the utmost importance in therapy should also be applied to social work. Social workers can build on the psychological study and develop guidelines for working with LGBTIQ+ clients.

One could conclude that South Africa has a “human rights paradox” (as described by Van Vollenhoven and Els, 2013). On the one hand, we have forward-thinking and progressive legislative frameworks to enhance and protect the human rights of all citizens, but at the same time, the country is still morally ruled by apartheid, and colonial and conservative cultural ideologies, which do not promote the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. Therefore, caring professions such as social worker and the health professions should establish policies that will enhance and guide service delivery to LGBTIQ+ persons (Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013:263).

4.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 presented the second part of the research findings, as obtained through data collected from in-depth interviews with the participants in the research study. It followed the presentation of the biographical details of the participants and the first four themes presented in Chapter 3. The same method as Chapter 3 was followed, by presenting the research findings using verbatim quotations from the participants. A literature control was also applied.

The following themes were presented:

In Theme 5, parents’ descriptions of how they were coping with their children being LGBTIQ+ were presented. The findings were:

- that some participants consulted psychologists and pastors and shared their child’s LGBTIQ+ status with others in order to gain support.
- Other participants indicated that they had come to terms with it, and accepted their children, even though they had gone through a process of adjustment and adaptation.
- Some of the participants indicated that they were coping well and also that they were certain that their LGBTIQ+ child is coping well with their sexual orientation and identity.

Theme 6 involved the parents' thoughts on what would have helped them to cope better with the situation:

- The parents indicated that they would have liked to have access to more knowledge on LGBTIQ+ matters.
- They also referred to needing more support, and especially support groups for parents of children who have come out as LGBTIQ+.
- A sensitive point was the attitude of the church and how it influenced their perception of their children. The parents noted that more understanding from churches is necessary.
- Lastly, the participants spoke of society needing to focus on the person, and not his/her sexuality; thereby treating the LGBTIQ+ person with dignity.

Theme 7 revolved around the parents' suggestions to other parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+. The main underlying sub-theme was the following:

- Parents should accept, love and support their LGBTIQ+ children.
- The participants also suggested that other parents should consult someone with knowledge or obtain support through organisations or individuals who could assist them.
- Lastly, the participants explained that parents must be more flexible in dealing with their children, because LGBTIQ+ children are born from mostly heterosexual parents; therefore, the parents expect them to fit into the heteronormative society. The parent should consider the possibility that his/her child could be LGBTIQ+.

Lastly, in Theme 8, the parents made the following recommendations and suggestions for social work support to parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+:

- Social workers should first become aware of themselves and understand themselves before trying to understand LGBTIQ+ persons.
- Social workers should be open to talk to the family and give guidance to them, as it is a "family matter".

- Parents and the greater community should be empowered with knowledge on LGBTIQ+ matters.
- Lastly, one participant, who is a social worker, suggested that policies in terms of LGBTIQ+ persons should be addressed within the social welfare framework.

In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of all the chapters, reflect on the conclusions derived from the collected data, and make recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 1, the aim of this research endeavour was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, viewing it from a multi-perspective lens. This was done by gaining understanding from samples of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+. The participants were prompted during interviews to provide their perspectives and offer their suggestions to address these phenomena in order to develop recommendations for Social Work Practice guidelines that could result in a better understanding of the phenomena and, consequently, in social workers being able to respond better to the requirements of the parents of LGBTIQ+ children.

I was motivated to conduct this study through my interest in LGBTIQ+ matters, as I am a lesbian, and had to come out to my parents, friends and society, through a continuous process of identity development. I conducted an investigation into existing research on LGBTIQ+ matters within the South African context and found a gap in literature, especially relating to information on African and mixed race LGBTIQ+ matters. What further motivated me was that I wanted to understand how parents' experience the coming out of a child, what their challenges are, and what coping strategies they employ to deal with the fact that they now are the parents of a LGBTIQ+ child. Tuckman and Harper (2012:22) state that a researcher should select a topic that they have great interest in, because they will spend a considerable amount of time and energy on the subject matter.

In Chapter 1, the research topic was introduced; the research problem that provided a rationale for the study was framed; and the research approach, design and methods proposed for the study were introduced. Chapter 2 dealt with how the

research plan introduced in Chapter 1 of the research was implemented in practice. The findings, together with a literature control, extended over Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

In this final chapter, I will provide brief conclusive summaries of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, and focus on the pertinent elements of each chapter. I will also cover the research findings (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4) that emerged from the thematic data analysis. In the closing comments, I will indicate the limitations inherent to this study and make recommendations for social work support, as well as future and further research. As was the case in the previous chapters, a chapter summary will conclude the aspects that were addressed in this chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

5.2.1 Summary and conclusions of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to a general background, the problem formulation and the motivation for the study. Moreover, a theoretical framework that served as a lens for the study was introduced.

Different sources of information, journal articles and textbooks on previous and recent research studies on the topic and general matters surrounding the topic were examined to provide insights into the complexity of the research topic. I set out to introduce the topic, but also to pique the interest of the reader in the study. In Chapter 1, I described “coming out” in terms of Cass’s Stages of Coming Out (Figure 1.1). Coming out has been defined as a process during which a person discloses his/her identity as LGBTIQ+ to others, be it friends or family or society. Before coming out, these persons were assumed to be “heterosexual” (Boxer, Cook & Herdt, 1991:57). I refer to this in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, where parents assumed that their children were heterosexual, and therefore they had heterosexual expectations of them. I also discussed from the literature that family rejection was often the case when a child came out and that impacted on his/her physical and psychological health. This influences family functioning in general and therefore I

decided to use the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation to determine how resiliency is fostered in the family within the context of a child coming out (Baiocco *et al.*, 2017:190). I also described the stages of coming out as determined by Cass's Model of Coming Out (1984:143-167), where a person moves from identity confusion to a state of identity synthesis or integration. I described and explained factors in terms of African persons coming out and the notion that being homosexual or LGBTIQ+ is Western and un-African. However, in studies by Wahab (2015:2), Bajaha (2013:1) and Mwikya (2012: 98) they found that the idea that being LGBTIQ+ is wrong is rather the direct influence of Western and European Christianity, than African conviction. In Chapter 1, I also described the danger for Black and mixed race lesbians with regard to corrective rape as an ideology of "curing" a lesbian of her homosexuality.

With regard to existing research on the topic of parents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their children came out, I found international studies that provided existing results and guidance to focus my frame of mind in terms of the research study. I only found two studies in South Africa related to the topic. One study was by Alpaslan *et al.* (2009) on parental reactions to children coming out, and the other was by Soldati-Kahimbaara (2016), on mothers coming out as the mothers of LGBTIQ+ children. There was therefore a lack of homegrown research on the topic.

In Chapter 1, I further discussed the relevant legislation in South Africa to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. I also indicated that although these laws and policies were in place, there was a human rights paradox, where society did not follow the rules and ideals set out in the legislation.

The theories selected as theoretical framework for the study were introduced in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4). Dickson, Emad and Adu-Agyem (2018:438) state that **the theoretical framework** provides a structure for how a researcher defines his/her study philosophically, methodologically and analytically. Ravitch and Carl (2016:109) concur that the theoretical framework provides situational and contextual theories that could be incorporated into studies. This positions research projects in

a scholarly and academic setting. The theoretical framework therefore focuses the research project, and is linked to the research problem. The theoretical framework that the researcher chose to utilise as a lens to view the research results was the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation as linked to Hill's Stress Theory. When one talks about adjustment and adaptation, one is actually referring to the resiliency that a family system has to recover after a crisis or change. Hadfield and Unger (2018:83) state that one cannot have a conversation about family resiliency without involving the important role that social workers play in ensuring understanding of how the resiliency of family systems can improve the lives and resiliency of individual family members. Zimmerman (2013:382) describes the Resilience Theory in terms of risk and protective factors, where risk factors can be internal or external factors influencing resiliency and causing difficulties for the family system and the LGBTIQ+ child. Protective factors lessen the chances of risks or harm and increase the chances of success/resiliency. Linked to the concept of "resiliency" is the Strength-based approach, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.4). During the interviews with the participants these factors were uncovered and will be discussed in the summary and conclusion of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, in terms of the findings of the study regarding challenges and coping strategies. The theoretical framework was extended to include the Minority Stress Theory, as it is linked to Hill's Stress Theory, and involves the stress that minority groups such as LGBTIQ+ persons experience due to their sexual status.

Therefore, I concluded that the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, linked to Hill's Stress Theory, the Strength-based approach and the Minority Stress Theory, adopted as the theoretical framework for this study, were particularly suitable as I implemented and reflected on each theory. As a researcher, I recommend that a theoretical framework, such as the one used in this study, is ideal when one investigates the experiences, challenges and coping strategies related to a stressor event in a family's life, as it serves as a spotlight to illuminate the researcher's understanding of the phenomena under investigation

The primary aim of Chapter 1 was to set out the research plan and what actions I intended to implement to answer the research questions. The research questions

indicate what the researcher aims to answer through the study (Fouché *et al.*, 2011:80). At the outset of the research project, I developed four research questions in line with the research topic to guide the research process. These questions formed the foundation of this research project.

TABLE 5.1 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions	Answer according to Data Analysis and Themes
What are the experiences of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+?	The participants indicated that they experienced their child's coming out as stressful, disruptive, surprising and shocking. Some participants felt disappointed. Most participants felt worried about their children's safety in terms of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons. In conclusion, one cannot pick any one emotion or fear in terms of the participants' experiences, but one could say that the coming out of a child definitely influenced the family functioning.
What are the challenges of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+?	The greatest fear, as indicated above, was discrimination and stigmatisation due to their children being LGBTIQ+. The participants also felt worried about what the community and the church would say about them. Those participants who had teenagers were worried about them being bullied at school.
What are the coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents of child(ren) coming out as LGBTIQ+?	The most important coping strategy that came to light was the participants' involvement with PFLAG. They received information from the organisation and attended group sessions. Other coping strategies included talking to someone or going to a psychologist or pastor.
How would mixed race and African South African parents like to be supported by social workers in relation to the	All the participants indicated that they needed more information/knowledge and that they would like to be part of support groups. Most of the participants also indicated that the church should be supportive.

coming out of their LGBTIQA+ child?	
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I will now summarise the answers to the questions as I came to understand them during the research process and from the data analysis. The conclusions of the research findings will be expanded on in Section 5.3.1 and Section 5.3.2.

In conclusion: The summary of the answers obtained from the participants in relation to the overarching research questions formulated at the outset of this study, to steer this endeavour, point to the fact that I managed to answer all the research questions.

In Chapter 1, it was explained that the qualitative approach will be utilised. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:15) indicate that qualitative research is focussed on meaning making of the world and how people interpret the world we live in. With the background of the literature on the qualitative approach, I found qualitative research to be the best suited approach to answer the research questions, as stated above. The qualitative approach focussed the research on the lived experiences of the participants of the study. In view of the aforementioned, I concluded that the qualitative research approach met the goal of the study, which was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQA+, including suggestions for social work support (see Table 5.2 below).

After defining the research topic, the research goals and objectives were deduced from the research questions. A research goal, according to Maxwell (2013:13), is something that one plans to reach or achieve. Table 5.2 summarises the research goals formulated for this study and the conclusion/outcome thereof:

TABLE 5.2: GOALS ACHIEVED

GOAL	CONCLUSION
To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+.	I gained an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+. This understanding and insight are explored, described, contextualised and discussed as a phenomenon in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.
To proffer suggestions for how social workers can support mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.	I gained information in line with the suggestions for social work support (see sub-section 4.2.4, Theme 8). These suggestions are reflected under sub-section 5.5 later in this chapter

The research objectives are action tasks that I intended to undertake in order to reach the overarching goals. According to Thomas and Hodges (2010:39), research objectives are set to provide a more detailed set of tasks of specific research issues to investigate and implement in order to build on the theme from the research goals.

The objectives formulated for this study, with outcomes, are discussed below:

- To obtain a sample of mixed race and African South African parents whose child have come out as LGBTIQ+.

I was able to obtain a sample of seven African and three mixed race participants from across South Africa, with a wide region of representation of areas.

- To conduct semi-structured interviews, contained in an interview guide, with a sample of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+.

I had four face-to-face interviews, two internet video calling interviews, and four telephonic interviews. I found that all the interviews had equal value in the depth and richness of information gained, although internet video calling had to be followed up with telephone calls due to bad signals.

- To explore the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child.

I compiled an interview guide, which included the relevant questions needed to explore the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of parents of LGBTIQ+ children. I also made use of interviewing skills, such as active listening, probing and summarising, to encourage the participants to share their lived experiences.

- To sift, sort and analyse the data obtained, utilising the eight steps of qualitative data analysis of Tesch (in Creswell 2014:198), in order to interpret the data.

I conducted the eight steps of Tesch, as described in Creswell (2014:198), and certain themes and sub-themes emerged. I then proceeded to provide the transcribed interviews to an independent coder who also came up with themes and sub-themes that corresponded with my own results. The supervisor also agreed with the findings.

- To describe the findings regarding the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African Parents in relation to the coming out of their LGBTIQ+ child, and how they would like to be supported by social workers in this regard.

I described the outcome of this task objective in Chapter 4 (subsection 4.2.4 and Theme 8). The participants suggested that social workers should receive training and education so that they could empower parents and the community in terms of LGBTIQ+ issues.

- To interpret the data and conduct a literature control in order to verify the data.

I compiled the interpretation of the data analysis with a literature control in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this study.

- To draw conclusions and make recommendations about the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to the coming out of a LGBTIQ+ child, and to present suggestions for social work support to parents in this regard.

The present chapter contains the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for social work support.

To sum up: I set out task objectives to reach the goals of the research study and, as indicated above, I was able to implement the task objectives in line with the research questions and topic.

The next part of this chapter will summarise the application of the methodology and the conclusions and recommendations arrived at as a result of its application.

5.2.2 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE APPLIED METHODOLOGY UTILISED IN THIS STUDY AND EXPLAINED IN CHAPTER 2

As summarised above, Chapter 1 provided the introduction and background to the study and the problem formulation, and pointed to the theoretical framework chosen for the study. In addition, the research plan was also introduced. The research questions, goals and objectives were highlighted, together with their outcomes.

Chapter 2 focused on providing a more complete description of the selected qualitative methodology and its application in this study. The purpose of the chapter was to explain and describe the application of the research methodology. The research methodology most applicable to the nature of this study was the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic (Bless *et al.*, 2016:16; McGrath *et al.*, 2019:1002; Liu, 2016:123; Yilmaz, 2013:312), which made it ideal for this study.

I proceeded by expanding on the description provided on the nature of qualitative research, introduced in Chapter 1 (Section 1.6) and in Chapter 2 (Table 2.1) in tabulated format, indicating how the following characteristics inherent to qualitative research were applied in the research process:

- Focus at gaining an in-depth understanding and description of a phenomena under study after the exploration of multiple sources of data (D’Cruz & Jones, 2014:21).
- Attend to the context of the matter under investigation (Hennink *et al.*, 2011:110).
- Compiling the research report for qualitative research, the focus is on storylines, themes and narratives (Lichtman, 2014:45).
- Embraces reflexivity by the researcher during the research process (Palaganas *et al.*, 2017:426).
- Involve data verification (Bless *et al.*, 2016:237).

Lastly, due to the fact that the qualitative research approach is favoured for investigating under-researched topics, and through engaging vulnerable and marginalised populations in the research process, I concluded that this emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach (Bless *et al.*, 2016:16) was well-suited for investigating the topic under study.

The aims and objectives, which were set in order to answer the problem, were explored by utilising the instrumental case study and phenomenological research

designs that were coupled with explorative, descriptive and contextual strategies of inquiry (Chapter 1, section 1.8 and Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2).

Herewith, short summaries on the research designs employed and the conclusion regarding their applicability in the research study:

- **Phenomenological research design.** As a research methodology, phenomenological research design is ideally positioned to help researchers learn from the experiences of participants (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019:90). In simple terms, phenomenology is an approach to research that searches for the *essence of a phenomenon* by exploring and describing it from the point of view of those who have experienced it (Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015:669). Phenomenological design is a powerful research strategy that is well suited for exploring challenging problems in social research. It allows the researcher to use the nature of phenomenology to ensure alignment between the research question and the underlying philosophy (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:90).

In conclusion, indicating the applicability of phenomenological research design in this study, I hereby quote Creswell (2016:280) that phenomenological research design is an avenue for qualitative researchers to use in order to gain comprehensive descriptions of how the research participants experience the phenomenon under study as their lived experience.

- **Collective instrumental case study design** seeks to describe and provide meaning to experiences that participants have in terms of the topic under study (Creswell, 2014:4). I made use of multiple means of data collection, as well as participants from different areas. In collective instrumental case study design, the researcher also compares and contrasts across different cases in the study to gain insight in the differences and similarities of their experiences, endeavouring to understand qualitatively how and why variations occur (Swan, Gkeredakis, Manning, Nicolini, Sharp & Powell,

2017:18). These comparisons and contrasts are evident in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 where the findings were reported.

- **Explorative research design** was conducted with a transparent, honest and self-reflective attitude, asking questions and exploring the topic under study in innovative ways to encourage sharing from the participants (Reiter, 2017:131). Due to the scarcity in the existing literature, the explorative research design allowed me to gather in-depth comprehensive data to gain an understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+, but also to obtain suggestions from the participants for other parents and for social work support. The questions in the semi-structured interview guide encouraged the participants to share their stories.
- **Descriptive research design** has the intention to accurately and systematically describe the phenomena under study. It answers *what, when, where* and *how* questions. A descriptive research design can use a wide variety of methods to investigate variables. It is most useful when there is lack of information on the topic (McCombes, 2019:2). Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018:244) praise descriptive design in stating that it provides a wealth of data that can be easily understood and interpreted, and it might also identify problems and suggest solutions. The utilisation of the descriptive research design guided me in using words to give meaning to the content that was shared during data collection. I employed it successfully in gaining more information on the topic, but especially in penning it down in terms that makes sense to the reader and future researchers. Descriptive research design entails the recording of the data collection interview and thereafter transcribing it, and during the analysis and results, **describing** what the researcher observed/recorded (Babbie & Mouton, 2007:89, Taylor, Kermode & Roberts, 2011:138). It was thus relevant to this study in describing the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. These descriptions are contained in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this report.

- **Contextual research design** was employed as a research design, as is usually the case in qualitative research (Hennink *et al.*, 2011:288). Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2011:17) state that the researcher is actively involved with the participants in addressing real life experiences within a specific context. Therefore, a researcher cannot study a topic or issue without considering the context wherein it plays off. In this case, I considered the familial, cultural, religious and societal contexts of the participants.

In conclusion: I employed phenomenological design to investigate and understand the participants' lived experiences. In linking with phenomenological design, I used explorative design to ask questions relevant to the lived experiences of the participants. In utilising contextual design, I framed the experiences of the participants within the contexts they live in. The instrumental case study design assisted me to examine the data analysis per individual participant and compare it as a group's experience. Therefore, these research strategies guided me to gain in-depth understanding of the topic under study.

In reflecting on the population, sampling and sampling techniques, I can attest to the difficulty in finding/recruiting participants for the study. The population consisted of all the African and mixed race South African parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+ in South Africa. I made use of purposive sampling to seek out participants that fulfil the requirements for the study, being African and mixed race parents of children who have come out as LGBTIQ+ and who are fluent in English. I used purposive sampling and had no geographical boundaries as to who could participant, as long as they fitted the requirements for the study. This assisted me in finding participants from areas such as the Western Cape, rural Eastern Cape, the Free State, and outlying areas of Gauteng. I also made use of snowball sampling because the study is about a sensitive topic and, as seen in the narratives in Chapter 3, not talked about in the relevant societies. For example, **Lorinda** stated: “...*but you know, those (LGBTIQ+ matters) were things that you never talked about, right...*” People are therefore seldom open about their LGBTIQ+ status or when they are, they do not want a researcher to talk to their parents about the topic. There

was also the issue of cross-cultural research that influenced ethical matters, such as trust and cultural humility, which will be discussed under Ethics. In terms of recruitment strategy, I reached out to a number of LGBTIQ+ organisations, but only PFLAG was willing and able to assist with a list of possible participants. I also asked two of my friends, who are lesbian and have lesbian daughters, whether they would like to be part of the study and they were interested in participating. In the end, I found ten willing participants and had to motivate to include the pilot tests in the research, so that the results contained rich, descriptive data. The pilot study used in the main study did not contaminate the general data collection, as no changes were made to the interview guide after the pilot study took place, and the questions remained the same for all the participants.

In conclusion, I was able to find sufficient participants to gain rich, descriptive and comprehensive data through the interviews with them. The recruitment through PFLAG turned out to be the best method and I found that in international studies on parental reactions to children coming out, international organisations also often recruit through PFLAG in their countries.

After recruitment and finding participants for the study, a pilot study was conducted. A pilot study is a means of refining the research instrument and testing the researcher's ability to conduct research interviews (Hunt, Chan & Mehta, 2011:196). The pilot study had two participants and both interviews were held in restaurants, although different restaurants. I felt calm, but excited, about the prospective of connecting with parents whose children have come out as LGBTIQ+, and about testing my skills in research interviewing. The participants found the questions understandable and encouraging. I transcribed the interviews and made them available to my supervisor; she was also satisfied that no changes were needed to the interview guide.

In conclusion, the pilot study gave me a clear indication that the interview guide was relevant to the study and that the questions in the interview guide would direct me to be able to answer the research questions.

The methods of data collection, on reflection, were accurate for the circumstances of the study. This process was described thoroughly in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.4). Another amendment to the original plan was to the interview methods. At the outset of the project all interviews with the participants were intended to take place face-to-face, as it was thought that this method would elicit the richest data. However, I had to do telephonic interviews due to the lack of available participants and prospective participants being far from Gauteng, and neither myself, nor the participants, could travel to so that I could conduct the face-to-face interviews. Interviews, whether face-to-face, or telephonic seemed to provide equally comprehensive information. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain the participants' views on their experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their child(ren) came out as LGBTIQ+; they also proffered suggestions for social work support. As a matter of fact, in some cases, the telephonic interview seemed to create a distance that made the participants feel safe to open up and speak more freely than in the face-to-face interviews. I concluded that a study could be done taking four face-to-face semi-structured interviews and four telephonic semi-structured interviews and giving it blindly to an outside researcher/coder to determine whether there are differences in the depth of information. The independent coder used in this study, did not notice any difference in the depth of information or richness. Reflecting on the methods of data collection utilised, it can be stated that they ensured that suitable information was gathered, which could be utilised to answer the research questions. The process of data collection allowed the participants to share their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, assisting them to gain insight into the issues under discussion, and to become more self-aware regarding their children's LGBTIQ+ status, and gaining feelings of empowerment in the process (Dyregrov & Gjestad., 2011:687).

I also realised and concluded that the in-depth interviews with the parents encouraged them to take the focus away from their own feelings, in terms of the topic, and to reflect on their children's lived experiences as being LGBTIQ+ within a South African context. I deduced that the research process provided an insightful experience to the participants. As the primary instrument of data collection,

engaging with the parents of LGBTIQ+ children provided me with an exclusive first-hand opportunity to gain insight into the experiences and challenges of parents of LGBTIQ+ children, including allowing me to gain more insight into my own coming out to my parents.

In terms of the analysis of the data collected, the original plan was to utilise the eight steps, as proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186), and I did not deviate from this plan. The application of the steps was described in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.4.1.5). These steps helped me to sift and sort through the data in a systematic step-by-step manner in order to make sense of the data and arrive at the meaning participants attached to their experiences and challenges as the parents of LGBTIQ+ children. Through this analytical process, the themes emerged. An independent coder was also used for the analysis of the data to increase the trustworthiness of the study (Guba's model in Krefting, 1991:214-222). I discussed the themes with my supervisor and an agreement was reached on eight themes and 35 sub-themes, which I explored and described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

In reflection on the systematic-wise approach and the manner of data analysis, I can conclude that it assisted me in making sense of a large amount of data and coding it in ways that made sense and gave meaning to the findings.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:214-222; Shenton, 2004:63-75) of data verification was applied through the characteristics of truth-value, neutrality, consistency and applicability (as described in Chapter 2, section 2.6).

In conclusion, the data verification strategies that were incorporated and discussed in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.7) can be viewed as enhancing the credibility and validity of the study, through the triangulation of data sources, member checks, using an independent coder, reflexivity, and respecting cultural differences. I also realised that the use of Tesch's method of analysis was well-suited for tackling the enormous task of analysing the data in a systematic and manageable fashion, and the

application of Guba's model was important to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Ethics can be described as a branch of philosophy concerned with the way in which we formulate the codes and principles of moral behaviour (Wilson & McLean, 2011:599). Several ethical principles were implemented to ensure ethical practice in the research study (see Chapter One, section 1.12 and Chapter 2, section 2.7). The participants were informed of the aim of the study and what their participation would entail; their consent to participate was sought and it was clearly stated that they were under no obligation to participate and could, without any penalty, withdraw from the research at any stage. I upheld anonymity and confidentiality in as far as the participants' identities were concerned and managed the data in a confidential fashion. I ensured beneficence so that their participation did not result in any obvious harm. The debriefing of participants was also put in place should the need arise. Involving the participants with regard to the ethical principles set them at ease to participate spontaneously.

Reflecting on the ethical principles of informed consent, minimising harm, managing data in a safe and secure manner, and providing the option of debriefing, I concluded that due to these ethical principles being applied and by involving the participants in the process, I made them feel safe to openly share their feelings and thoughts about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+, as well as being able to suggest recommendations for social work support. In view of the abovementioned, I can conclude that conducting myself in an ethical matter by being honest and acting with integrity contributed to the adherence of these principles and the participants feeling safe.

I can conclude that the intentions of the study were reached and thoroughly described in Chapter 2. In the paraphrased words of Kumar (2011:12), the intention of a study is reached through a systematic, and patient process of investigating a field of interest to gain insight by undertaking scientific methodology to collect and analyse data. The analysed data is interpreted to gain understanding and

knowledge of a phenomenon. Finally, rigour is employed to ensure the validity and credibility of the outcomes of the research.

In view of the above, and related to the conclusions drawn from the application of the research methodology, I can make the following **recommendations**:

- In cases where the study intends to gain in-depth lived human experience from the participants' point of view, the research methodology that is most suitable is the qualitative research approach.
- In terms of the exploration and description of the research undertaken, the guidance of Babbie (2010:92-93) and Neuman (2012:25) on qualitative research is recommended.
- In cases such as this research topic, where the subject matter is sensitive, the emergent nature of qualitative research is appropriate.
- The explorative nature of qualitative research and the phenomenological research design are recommended where there is a lack of information on the topic, as was the case in this study.
- The fact that qualitative research allows for data collection through a variety of interview methods allowed the researcher to utilise telephonic interviews and, in such cases, the research done by Drabble *et al.* (2016) is recommended for guidance.
- It is best to start transcribing interviews as soon as the researcher has concluded an interview and not to wait until the end of the data collection period. This helps to manage the data effectively and indicates to the researcher, during the process, if more participants are needed.
- The step-by-step method proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186) for analysing the qualitative data ensured that I could break down data into manageable portions. It is therefore recommended to make use of Tesch's eight steps when conducting data analysis. In relation to data analysis, it is also recommended to use an independent coder in order to gain a wider

perspective on one's own interpretation of the data analysis process and to ensure the truth-value of the results.

5.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

The findings gleaned from the data were covered in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. These chapters dealt with the presentation of the research findings, which focused on the parents' accounts and recollections of their children coming out; these findings were complemented by a literature control.

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, rich, comprehensive descriptions of the settings and participants were provided through *verbatim* quotations of the participants' experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out. The participants also opened up in terms of suggestions to other parents in the same situation and to social workers in practice who deal with LGBTIQ+ persons and their families. The summaries and conclusions drawn from these chapters are now presented.

Concerning the biographical details, ten African and mixed race parents participated in the study, of which only two were male and eight were female, as studies have shown that men are usually less involved in their children's lives, and were therefore less available to be part of the study. Regarding the racial spread, there were seven African participants and three mixed race participants. Concerning the age spread, the participants were aged from 42 to 72, which is a wide spread, and the participants were in different stages of their life cycles.

In reflecting on the demographical information and the picture it paints, I arrived at the following conclusions:

- Diverse elements were incorporated by means of representation of all the criteria that were set for the sampling, such as, that participants must be

African or mixed race and have a child who has already come out as LGBTIQ+. Due to the difficulties in recruiting participants, it was decided to allow participants from the whole of the South Africa. The unique viewpoints, opinions, feelings, aspirations, ideas, insights, suggestions and stories of each participant was heard and collected as data. Two participants were lesbian mothers of LGBTIQ+ children, one of the children was transgender, one was bisexual, and the rest were homosexual. The participants came from a wide range of provinces within South Africa. As indicated by Bongwe (2017:24), in terms of participation in a research project, this facilitated the maximum advantage of diversity.

- The gender representation was out of line, as there were more females willing to participate than males.
- In reading through the transcripts and quotations, it can be deduced that some of the lived experiences, as related in the interviews, are the same in terms of societal and religious attitudes in both African and mixed race cultures.

Through consensus discussions between myself, the supervisor and the independent coder, I analysed the data using Tesch’s eight steps (in Creswell, 2014:198). The findings of the study were divided into three parts, with Part One (Chapter 3 – Themes 1 to 4) focusing on the themes and sub-themes, as indicated in Table 5.3 below. In Part Two (Chapter 4 – Theme 5 to 8), the focus was on themes and sub-themes, as set out in Table 5.4. The summary and conclusions based on the research findings now receive attention, according to the table below, and will be dealt with chapter-by-chapter, with those of Chapter 3 up first.

TABLE 5.3: Themes and Sub-themes Chapter 3

<p>Theme 1: Parents’ accounts of their previous experience or knowledge about LGBTIQ+ persons</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1.1: Had no prior knowledge or experience</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.2: Had previous knowledge or experience</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.3: Knew from name-calling and behaviour</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.4: Parent is a lesbian</p>
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Theme 2: Parents' descriptions of how their child told them about their sexuality	Sub-theme 2.1: Child did not disclose to parents Sub-theme 2.2: Child told parents Sub-theme 2.3: Parent asked child	
Theme 3: Parents' descriptions of their reactions when their child revealed they were LGBTIQ+	Sub-theme 3.1: Surprised and unhappy Sub-theme 3.2: Disappointed Sub-theme 3.3: Pained or Shocked Sub-theme 3.4: Discriminated or rejected Sub-theme 3.5: Fearful Sub-theme 3.6: Accepted	
Theme 4: Parents' accounts of their fears and/or challenges when their child came out	Fears	Sub-theme 4.1.1: Safety Sub-theme 4.1.2: Family will not accept Sub-theme 4.1.3: What others will say
	Challenges	Sub-theme 4.2.1: Boyfriend/girlfriend Sub-theme 4.2.2: Difficult to find a job Sub-theme 4.2.3: Bullying at school

Theme 1: Parents' accounts of their previous experience or knowledge of LGBTIQ+ persons

The first question in the interview guide dealt with whether the participants had any prior knowledge or experience of LGBTIQ+ persons before realising that their child fell under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella. The theme was divided into four sub-themes: the first sub-theme presented parents who had no prior knowledge or experience of LGBTIQ+ persons, or matters, while the second sub-theme presented those parents who had prior knowledge or experience of LGBTIQ+ persons. The third sub-theme presented those parents who became aware of LGBTIQ+ persons due

to name-calling and the person's behaviour, and the fourth sub-theme presented those parents who were lesbians themselves.

The participants described their knowledge and experience in different ways. Some participants indicated having no previous knowledge, due to LGBTIQA+ matters being taboo in conversations in their cultures. Two lesbian participants highlighted the fact that, earlier on in their lives, they did not have a name for same-sex sexuality as homosexuality/or being lesbian, and were merely sexually involved with same-sex partners without ascribing meaning to it. Their perspectives were based on the *act*, and not *being* homosexual. Some of the participants indicated that they had previous knowledge through stories of single men and women who did not marry and were only seen with someone of the same gender or who were perceived as wanting to be the opposite gender.

In conclusion: According to Motsomi, Makanjee, Basera, and Nyasulu (2016:3), certain issues influence a person's knowledge of sex and gender, such as gender roles in society, the belief that discussing sexual and reproductive health matters encourages sexual experimentation in teenager, absent parents in the household, cultural norms, as well as religion "forbidding" the act; thereby, limiting open conversations about sexuality. I concluded that these cultural, religious and societal perceptions on sexual matters add to the lack of knowledge and education, and misperceptions that exist about LGBTIQA+ persons.

Theme 2: Parents' descriptions of how their child told them about their sexuality

Theme Two focused on how the participants' children came out to them. Theme Two was divided into three sub-themes: the first sub-theme explained that the child did not disclose to the parents, while in the second sub-theme, the child told the parents, and in the third sub-theme, the participants asked their children about their sexuality/sexual identity.

The participants' recounted how their children came out to them, or how they found out about their children's sexual orientation or identity. Due to fear of rejection, some children did not disclose their LGBTIQA+ status to their parents, but just continued to live their lives and the parent "figured out" that the child was LGBTIQA+. **Gertie** explained: *"He never said anything. This child, even before he could walk, we could see, his father and I, his dad would buy him little cars to play with, but he did not want to, but he would play with the teddy bear that his dad bought me for Valentine's Day. So there we started realising..."*. In the case of **Ivy**, her son wrote a WhatsApp message to his father, who he believed would be more accepting of his sexuality and asked his father to inform his mother about his sexuality. **Ntabiseng**'s daughter also wrote a letter to inform her about her sexuality. In the case of **Hami, Joanna** and **Pamela**, they suspected their children were LGBTIQA+ and therefore they opened up a conversation about it and asked them directly about their sexuality (see Chapter 3, sub-section 3.3.2.2 and Sub-theme 2.2).

The "coming out" of a child is described as an "identity transformation process", whereby the individual who is coming out moves through the stages of coming out to openly speak about his/her LGBTIQA+ status. This identity transformation process is also an identity *affirming* process, whereby the LGBTIQA+ person confirms to those around them what his/her sexuality or sexual identity is (Smuts, 2011:24).

Williamson and Bader (2008:5) state that it cannot be said enough to parents that a child's sexuality and/or gender nonconforming identity is not a choice; instead, it is a combination of emotional, psychological and behavioural characteristics, which develop as a person grows and matures from childhood into adulthood. Sexual awareness develops as the body grows and develops. There is a difference between a same-sex sexual experience and a same-sex sexual orientation. The experience as such could be merely a physical incident and a moment of attraction, but an orientation is a deep emotional experience. "Coming out" is considered a milestone in a LGBTIQA+ person's identity and sexual development; but, at the same time, coming out to parents has also been described as stressful, or negatively affecting the parent-child relationship (Yarhouse *et al.*, 2016:2).

Wide variations exist of how parents learn about their children's sexuality and how they respond to it (Carastathis, Cohen, Kaczmarek & Chang, 2017:291). This is definitely also due to the fact that it is not a subject that is discussed in the participants' cultures due to the influence of norms and religiosity (Shilo & Savaya, 2012:312).

Conclusively, coming out to parents is a personal journey for an LGBTIQ+ person. In some instances, LGBTIQ+ persons fear negative reactions and therefore rather do not come out, but also do not deny their sexuality. In other instances, the burden of carrying the knowledge of their identity becomes too much and they come out to their parents, even if it puts strain on the parent-child relationship. Where the parents have a more liberal view of life and gender, they tend to ask openly and start a conversation about LGBTIQ+ issues with their children, without any judgement. Ultimately, a parent cannot determine how, when and where a child may decide to come out; the parent can only be ready to support him/her when it happens.

Theme 3: Parents' descriptions of their reactions when their child revealed they were LGBTIQ+

The participants were asked to describe their reaction when they realised or when their child revealed his/her LGBTIQ+ status to them. There were six sub-themes. Sub-theme 1 pertained to the participants feeling surprised and unhappy at finding out their child is LGBTIQ+, while Sub-theme 2 indicated them feeling disappointed. Sub-theme 3 referred to the participants feeling pained and shocked, and Sub-theme 4 pertained to the participants discriminating against and rejecting their LGBTIQ+ child. Sub-theme 5 described how the parents felt fearful for the sake of their LGBTIQ+ children, and lastly, Sub-theme 6 indicated how the participants accepted their children as LGBTIQ+ persons.

Feelings of surprise, unhappiness, pain and shock, as well as fear for their children's well-being were all described as initial reactions by the participants. These findings are confirmed in a variety of international studies (Reczek, 2016:648; LaDuke, 233

2016:33; Katz-Wize *et al.*, 2016:1013; Heatherington *et al.*, 2008:331). Fields (2001:1023) was one of the first researchers internationally to investigate parental reactions to children coming out. Fields (2001) found that parents' concerns about the physical, psychological and social welfare of their LGBTIQ+ children stem from the violent ways society treats those who act against the societal norms and expectations for behaviour. In terms of the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, researchers found that aspects regarding family dynamics, in terms of religiosity, family cohesion and concerns about conformity to family values, affect the parents' ability to overcome what is now perceived as a family crisis (Fields, 2001:1024). In the study by Carastathis *et al.* (2017:291-292), the researchers found that parental reactions moved on a scale of rejection and acceptance. The more a child is rejected for his/her sexuality, the more the family suffer and the child is at risk of physical and psychological health problems. The more acceptance the child experiences, the stronger the family bonds, and the more the child will display self-accepting behaviour such as high self-esteem. Some of the parents, including **Nthabiseng**, **Simon** and **Hami**, immediately accepted their children for who they are.

When it comes to parents' feelings as reactions to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+, I came to the conclusion that parents often feel mixed emotions, such as surprise, sadness and shock, along with internal questioning of themselves in terms of a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.

In relation to parental rejection/discrimination of a child's sexuality or gender nonconformity, I concluded that the following aspects play a role in the parental reaction:

- Religiosity and the norms of the church
- Societal norms and pressures – heterosexism in society
- Fears of being labelled as “parents of a LGBTIQ+ child” and being implicated as the cause of their child being LGBTIQ+
- Conservative familial norms
- Expectations of the child to be heterosexual, as they were born from heterosexual parents

When looking at parental acceptance through the lens of the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation Theory, I concluded that certain aspects within the family result in *resilience*, as indicated below:

- The perception the family/parents have of the crisis (e.g. **Joanna** did not perceive being a lesbian as a crisis. Inside the home, **Gertie** and her husband did not experience their transgender child as a crisis, as they realised his gender dysphoria from an early age);
- Resources available to the family (e.g. **Ntabiseng** is involved with workshops and educates parents and family members of LGBTIQ+ persons; therefore, she had a better understanding of her daughter being lesbian); and
- Other piled-up stressors in the life of the family (**Hami** is living a progressive and positive life as a social worker and has the skills to cope with stress factors).

Concluding the need to investigate parental reactions to a child being LGBTIQ+, while conducting research into the topic under study, I found that there was only one local study that investigated parental reactions to children coming out (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009), but it did not include African participants. Understanding and gaining insight into the parental awareness of and feelings towards their children's sexual identity therefore needed investigation. There are limited international studies, and most of them focus on how the children (youth) experience their parents' reactions, and not from the viewpoint of the parent (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.1). When parents become aware that their child is part of a sexual minority in terms of being LGBTIQ+, they tend to develop concerns for the child's safety, but also feel like a failure in terms of the heterosexual expectations they had for the child. In some instances, the parents mourn the loss of their heterosexual hopes for their child. Furthermore, the parents could feel alienated from their child (D'Amico *et al.*, 2015:414).

5.3.4 Theme 4: Parents' accounts of their fears and/or challenges when their child came out

The participants were questioned regarding the fears and challenges they experienced when they realised that their child was LGBTIQ+. Theme 4 had six sub-themes, which were divided into sub-themes related to fears and sub-themes related to challenges. In Sub-theme 1, the participants described how they fear for the safety of their children, while Sub-theme 2 presented the fear that family members would not accept the participant and their LGBTIQ+ child. Sub-theme 3 pertained to the fear of what others would say about the family and the LGBTIQ+ child. The challenges were presented in Sub-theme 4 to 6. In Sub-theme 4, the challenge of a LGBTIQ+ child bringing an intimate partner home was presented, while Sub-theme 5 pertained to the challenge of finding a job when you are openly LGBTIQ+. Finally, Sub-theme 6 presented the challenge of LGBTIQ+ youth being bullied at school.

All parents in the study indicated that they fear for the personal safety of their LGBTIQ+ child, as it is unacceptable in society. There is also a direct link between being LGBTIQ+ and violent abuse, such as killings, stigmatisation and discrimination in South Africa (Cishe & Abaver, 2018:61).

Fears in terms of acceptance from family members are common because family members do not necessarily have knowledge of LGBTIQ+ matters and do not know how to talk about it, or how to act towards an LGBTIQ+ person (Zimmerman *et al.*, 2015:181). The fear of what others may say about the family now that there is a LGBTIQ+ family member is a societal fear based on culture and religious beliefs that LGBTIQ+ persons are “wrong” and act against nature; therefore, what they are (LGBTIQ+) is a sin (Pierce, 2016:3). However, LGBTIQ+ persons are found in every society, culture and context. The treatment of these individuals and their families varies across different socio-political landscapes. South Africa is known for its vast political, socio-cultural, religious and economic diversity that influences responses to LGBTIQ+ persons. Social tolerance varies from civil marriage rights and protection in the Constitution, to a lack of tolerance through

severe discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons in the form of corrective rape and the killing of LGBTIQ+ persons (Breyer, 2012:177). Such negative reactions from society *indicate* a deep void between the Constitution and the realities that LGBTIQ+ persons experience in their daily lives (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2017:208) In summary it can be concluded that fears are based, on the one hand, on experiences of discrimination in society as often portrayed in the media and through word of mouth, and on the other hand, on perceptions of people in society and personal perceptions of being the parent of a LGBTIQ+ child.

In terms of the challenges experienced, one participant indicated the difficulties when a LGBTIQ+ child brings an intimate partner home. In the study by Alpaslan *et al.* (2009:35), the researchers indicated that participants feared that their children would bring a partner home, and they were shocked when they saw the LGBTIQ+ child hugging, kissing and holding hands with a same-sex partner. **Dorcias**, in this study, related how her child only brought a partner home once because the men in the family made it clear that he may not do this as they will not accept him having a partner. It comes across that in some instances parents are fine with the child being LGBTIQ+, as long as he/she does not live the lifestyle by bringing an intimate partner home.

Dorcias also referred to her son as being flamboyant and dressing “like a gay man”; thereby, society could gather what his sexuality was. She further indicated that he preferred certain jobs, such as cutting hair or being a waiter, and that it was difficult for him to find a job that suited his preferences.

The most difficult challenge experienced was discrimination and bullying of a transgender child in the school set-up. Luecke (2011:117) states that a child’s experiences at school and with friends at school will either enhance or decrease his/her sense of self and self-confidence. Children should feel psychologically safe in their learning environment in order to have the capacity to learn; therefore, school environments should be welcoming and supportive to transgender children. There should be policies against bullying and teasing. According to Luecke (2011:119), gender variance consists of gender identity, outward presentation of gender (e.g.

behaviour, dress and speech), as well as the gender role that is fulfilled, which is the social expectations based on the birth gender. Should the birth gender and the felt gender not be the same, the child experiences gender dysphoria and may want to transition. **Gertie**'s child suffered severe bullying at school – to the extent that he had to leave the school he was attending and find another place of learning where he could dress and express the gender he felt inside.

In conclusion, the participants experienced a variety of fears and challenges based on their children's LGBTIQA+ status. These fears and challenges are the stress factors (see Chapter 1, sub-section 1.4) that disrupt the family's status quo and require adjustment and adaptation from the parents and siblings in order to overcome and accept the child and be supportive in assisting the LGBTIQA+ person in coping with his/her minority status and stress.

In this section, the focus will be on the summary of and conclusions arrived at in Themes 5 to 8, which were elaborated on in Chapter 4. Table 5.4 below indicates themes and sub-themes. Each of these will be unpacked and briefly discussed from a summarising perspective.

TABLE 5.4: Themes and Sub-themes Chapter 4

<p>Theme 5: Parents' descriptions of how they are coping with their child being LGBTIQA+</p>	<p>Sub-theme 5.1: Consulted and shared with others</p> <p>Sub-theme 5.2: Has come to terms and accepted it</p> <p>Sub-theme 5.3: Coping well</p> <p>Sub-theme 5.4: Knows child can cope</p>
<p>Theme 6: Parents' thoughts on what would help them cope better with the situation</p>	<p>Sub-theme 6.1: More knowledge</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.2: More support (support group)</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.3: Churches to be more understanding</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.4: Focus on being a person</p>

Theme 7: Parents' suggestions to parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+	Sub-theme 7.1: Accept, love and support them Sub-theme 7.2: Consult someone or obtain support Sub-theme 7.3: Need to be flexible as a parent
Theme 8: Parents' suggestions on how social workers can assist parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+	Sub-theme 8.1: Social workers must first understand themselves Sub-theme 8.2: Talk to family, give guidance Sub-theme 8.3: Empower parents with knowledge Sub-theme 8.4: Address policies

Theme 5: Parents' descriptions of how they are coping with their child being LGBTIQ+

The participants were asked to describe how they were coping with their child being LGBTIQ+. Four sub-themes emerged. Sub-theme 1 indicated that some participants consulted and shared with others, while Sub-theme 2 presented that some participants had come to terms and accepted their LGBTIQ+ child. Sub-theme 3 pertained to the participants indicating that they were coping well and, lastly, in Sub-theme 4 the participants related that they were coping because they knew that their child was coping.

Parental reactions to children coming out has a huge impact on both the parent and the child, as the relationship is formed from birth into adulthood. Understanding the impact of the "reveal" or "disclosure" of a sexual identity between child and parent, I looked at the dynamic nature of the parent-child attachment and how this attachment influenced both of them through their lives. Firstly, for the child, it is a biological necessity to have this relationship with the parent, as the child is born helpless and dependent on the parent. Through the relationship with a parent, children develop their sense of self and others, how to behave in relationships, and the ability to forge relationships. Positive reactions to a LGBTIQ+ person's

disclosure of sexuality is therefore important for the relationship between child and parent (Mills-Koonce, Rehder & McCurdie, 2017:638). In terms of the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, the parent's ability to cope with a child coming out is dependent on the parent and the family's ability to face challenges, through internal family strengths. The bond between parent and child is therefore important in the coping strategies of both the child and the parent.

Boehmer, Clark, Timm, Sullivan and Glickman (2012:195) conducted a study on the relation between parental reactions (acceptance or rejection) of the LGBTIQ+ child and that child's physical and mental health. Where parents responded with support, the health risk factors were significantly lower. Unfortunately, the opposite type of research has not yet been done: How does parental acceptance and coping with, or rejection of, the child's coming out, affect the *parent's health*? Could one say that due to a child coming out, a parent experiences stress to the extent that they suffer physical and psychological health issues/breakdowns? In this study, **Ivy** accounted how she had to see a psychologist as a means of dealing with the stress of both her children being LGBTIQ+.

Therefore, I can conclude that at least in one case in the study, the participant experienced mental stress to the extent that she needed psychological intervention. When considering coping mechanisms, one is referring to family strengths, such as resources, family cohesion and attachment.

In the present study, the parents had the following coping strategies:

- Some parents consulted psychologists or pastors, or shared with others (family members) in order to gain support and perspective. **Dorcas** stated, *“Yes, I do cope. I go to the pastor and told him that I have got something like this in my life and he consoled me...”*
- Some of the parents have come to terms with their child's sexuality and accepted it, although they had to go through a process of stress management, adjustment and adaptation. **Ivy** went through stages of shock and pain to reach the point where she adjusted and adapted to her children being gay and lesbian: *“You know, now it is wonderful, both my children are*

married, and I found healing, because I walked the road with my psychologist.”

- Some parents noted that they were coping well, as they accepted their child’s sexuality from the moment it was disclosed to them. They were accepting, and the attachment between the parent and the child grew stronger due to the opening-up and disclosing of the child’s sexuality.
- Some parents were coping because their children were coping well. The fact that the child was self-accepting and independent in their lifestyle and LGBTIQQA+ status was an encouragement to the parent to cope with his/her disclosure.

To sum up: It cannot be denied that the revealing of sexual orientation or identity puts strain on the relationship between a parent and a child, testing the coping strategies of both parties. The parents of a child who has come out as LGBTIQQA+ find different ways and means to deal with the disclosure, from reaching out to others, to finding acceptance within themselves for their child’s LGBTIQQA+ status and being able to cope, because their child is able to cope with their own sexual identity.

Theme 6: Parents’ thoughts on what would help them cope better with the situation

The participants’ responses on what would have helped them to cope better with their child coming out can be divided in four sub-themes. Sub-Theme 1 presented the need to have more knowledge about LGBTIQQA+ persons and issues, while Sub-theme 2 related to the participants indicating that they needed more support. In Sub-theme 4, it was presented that churches should be more supportive, and lastly, in Sub-theme 5, the participants indicated that society should see the person behind the LGBTIQQA+ label.

I will now discuss the sub-themes as follows:

- *The participants required more knowledge on the topic of LGBTIQQA+ persons* (see Chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.2.1, Sub-theme 6.1). One participant

specifically referred to sharing knowledge in terms of LGBTIQ+ persons not choosing their sexuality. Sexuality is often constrained by the way in which it is placed within the realm of suffering, male sexual violence, and the forcing of women and girls to be subordinate to men. Good quality sexual education and information will be a vital source of redressing these assumptions about sexuality and to change the adverse approaches of society, cultural norms and religious convictions to LGBTIQ+ persons (Bhana *et al.*, 2019:56). As the participants attested to the state of indirect cultural “rules”, where conversations about and on LGBTIQ+ issues are taboo, it is understandable that they requested more knowledge on the subject. This would include access to knowledge, such as pamphlets and booklets in languages they understand, as well as access to persons/professionals with the correct knowledge and expertise on the topic.

- *The participants indicated that they needed more support* (see Chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.2.2, Sub-theme 6.2). In referring to support, I would like to mention the ²⁶Buffering of Stress Model, as described in Roe (2017:56). The Buffering Model states that support from friends, family and society serve as a *buffer* against stressor events. Therefore, should the participants have experienced stress due to their child’s LGBTIQ+ status, support could buffer the extent to which stress was experienced, and in the end, lighten the effect thereof. The opposite is also true, should a parent provide support to a child coming out, it could be a buffer against the Minority Stress that the LGBTIQ+ child could experience. In this instance, parent-to-parent support in the form of a support group would be ideal. Parent-to-parent support in a face-to-face context means that a parent who has knowledge and has accepted their LGBTIQ+ child is placed with a parent who still needs help adapting. In general, family support programmes can have a variety of components, such as strengthening the parent-child relationship or developing a relationship with families who are going through a similar experience (McCabe, 2008:56).

²⁶ Buffering of minority stress experienced by LGBTIQ+ persons may serve to “buffer”/protect them from the consequences of stigma and lead to better psychological outcomes or wellbeing (LaDuke, 2016:10).

- *Churches to be more understanding* (see Chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.2.3, Sub-theme 6.3). In a study on being gay and Catholic, Wedow, Schnabel, Wedow and Konieczny (2017:290) shed light on the sociological processes of the formation of self, identity negotiation when you are LGBTIQ+, practices of inequality in the church, and how one maintains wellbeing in the context of religious constraints. The authors (2017) further state that church policies tend to foster “Godly” heterosexual masculinities and femininities; hence, being LGBTIQ+ would mean the person is going against “God”. Freitas (2015:190) concluded that in the case of each religious student she interviewed for her study, their sex lives and religious identities were “inextricable intertwined”, but in a way that was frightening to them. LGBTIQ+ persons who grew up in a religious community report that they experienced homophobia and discrimination from the community in terms of negative attitudes and beliefs, which became internalised against themselves and led to depression and suicidal ideation (Barnes & Meyer, 2012:506). In the context of the aforementioned studies, I concluded that the church has a lot to answer for in terms of the confusion and depression that LGBTIQ+ persons experience within churches. The participants indicated that the church was openly unsupportive and judgemental of LGBTIQ+ persons.

In conclusion, the church’s attitude contributes negatively to the Christian and/or religious LGBTIQ+ person’s physical and mental health, whereas it could serve as a buffer against Minority Stress.

- *Another aspect that would help parents cope better is if society focussed on the person who is LGBTIQ+ and not the fact that they are LGBTIQ+* (see Chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.2.4, Sub-Theme 6.4). What the participants meant was that society and other people should see their child’s identity as more than his/her sexuality. Morgan (2012:53) states that in a wide context identity is defined as personally and socially meaningful intentions in terms of one’s goals, values, belief systems and life roles. Identity is, however, more

complex and can further be defined in terms of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

In conclusion, a LGBTIQ+ person could have multiple domains of identities that interact with each other; therefore, a person is more than their sexual orientation or identity, even though being LGBTIQ+ is part of who they are.

Theme 7: Parents' suggestions to parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+

The participants' suggested the following points contained in three sub-themes. Sub-theme 1 pertained to the participants declaring that one should love, support and accept your child, while Sub-theme 2 presented that parents should consult someone or seek support, and Sub-theme 3 referred to parents having to be flexible in terms of their children's sexuality.

Lee and Lee (2006:2) assert that sometimes in parents' lives an event occurs that requires them to go beyond their usual coping and understanding strategies and needing to find new ways of knowing and believing. A child coming out is such an event. Some families successfully adjust and adapt to the coming out process of a child's disclosure of being LGBTIQ+; others may not be able to cope and thereby end up not supporting the LGBTIQ+ child. The ultimate and ideal outcome is for the family and LGBTIQ+ child to have self-acceptance and pride. Unfortunately, negative outcomes, such as rejection, could lead to family members becoming estranged from each other (Lee & Lee, 2006:3). Parents who have already gone through the adjustment and adaptation phases of a child's coming out may be in a better position to advise and support other parents going through the same event.

The participants suggested the following important guidelines that other parents could follow:

- *Accept, love and support your LGBTIQA+ child*

LGBTIQA+ children, being a youth or an adult, feel supported and loved when parents openly took action on their behalf to show support. In a study by Roe (2017:59), the participants (LGBTIQA+ children) indicated that they felt valued, especially when a parent gave explicit verbal support. The more direct and unconditional the support, the more powerful the message of love, acceptance and support became. Steward (2002:8) states, in terms of parents speaking on behalf of a LGBTIQA+ child, that the parents offer compelling new ways to the general community of dealing with LGBTIQA+ persons. The parents and friends of an LGBTIQA+ person have to contend with a “courtesy stigma”, meaning that they handle the stigma as a courtesy to their child or their friend’s LGBTIQA+ status.²⁷ *Straight* mothers and fathers lend moral credibility as spokespersons for the LGBTIQA+ community.

In conclusion, the importance of parental support is therefore highlighted, in terms of the self-acceptance of the family and the LGBTIQA+ child, but also in terms of what open parental support can mean to the wider community.

- *Consult someone or obtain support*

The parents indicated that acquiring information and reaching out to professionals for help assisted them in understanding their children better, but also in knowing how to deal with their children in a more supportive way. Unfortunately, none of the parents actually reached out to social workers, as they did not think that social workers had the openness or knowledge to handle such a conversation. The participants found great support in their involvement with PFLAG.

To sum up: support is needed on a personal level, but also in terms of group work and general awareness in the community.

²⁷ *Straight* is a slang word for cisgender or heterosexual.

- *Need to be flexible as a parent*

Gonzalez, Rostosky, Odom and Riggle (2013:326,329) conducted a study in terms of the positive aspects of being the parent of a LGBTIQ+ child. The authors (2013) postulate that parents shape the development of their children and while children learn from their parents, parents also learn from their children. It is a process of exchanging. Being the parent of a LGBTIQ+ child is a unique learning opportunity in terms of personal growth and life skills. Many studies – D’Amico and Julian’s (2012) *Disclosure of Sexual Orientation and Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths’ Adjustment: Associations with Past and Current Parental Acceptance and Rejection*; Grafsky’s (2014) *Becoming the parent of a GLB Son or Daughter*; Katz-Wise *et al.*’s (2016) *LGBT youth and family acceptance*; and Carastathis *et al.*’s (2017) *Rejected by Family for being gay and lesbian* – focus on the struggles parents have with children coming out, but in effect parents also transform during the process and could experience positive self-awareness when they step out of their comfort zone. Realising that their LGBTIQ+ child experiences discrimination and minority stress leads them to evaluate their own judgements and prejudices.

To sum up: if a parent of an LGBTIQ+ child is willing and flexible, they have the ideal opportunity to broaden their knowledge and grow personally.

Theme 8: Parents’ suggestions on how social workers can assist parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+

The last question to the participants involved suggestions by them on how and with what social workers can assist parents in coping with children coming out as LGBTIQ+. Four sub-themes came to the fore, which will be discussed below:

- Sub-theme 8.1: *Social workers must first understand themselves*

The participants in this study indicated the need for social workers to be self-aware and aware of their prejudices, values and opinions, because they have dealt with community members and/or church leader(s) who were prejudiced and judgemental against LGBTIQ+ persons, due to misinformation. The idea is that social workers

must be aware of how they think and feel about LGBTIQ+ persons and what constraints they have in assisting them.

Kwan and Reupert (2019:256) conducted a study on the relevance of social workers' personal sense of "self" in practice. The authors (2019) state that usually the technical and procedural factors of social work practice are dominating discourses in social work, while little attention is paid to looking into the "self", or the person of the social worker, and how this "personhood" influences the relationship between professional practice and personal experience, values or opinions. Part of becoming knowledgeable about oneself is through a process of self-reflection. Developing reflection and awareness of one's own values and attitudes is important to the development of social workers, and it should be part of social work teaching elements (Gardner, 2001:27).

I concluded that the participants feared rejection and ignorance from social workers when they requested assistance, and that it would result in further hurt and misunderstanding regarding their children's LGBTIQ+ status. I will discuss this in more detail below under the Recommendations section (see Table 5.5).

- Sub-theme 8.2: *Talk to family, give guidance*

One of the best ways of assisting people is to allow them to talk about their lived experiences and then respond to their concerns and feelings. The participants indicated that, should they go to a social worker for support, he/she must have the ability to guide them and respond to their concerns, much like ²⁸"unconditional positive regard". This concept is described by Rogers (1951) as a necessary condition for effective therapy, where the social worker will listen without judgement or reprimand. In terms of suggestions regarding guidance, I will describe and discuss this in more detail under the Recommendations section (see Table 5.5).

²⁸ Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) is a concept by Rogers (2015) in terms of both psychotherapy and for interpersonal relations. Rogers postulated that a person has a universal need for positive regard by others from the moment they begin to experience self-awareness. In therapy, UPR is a quality of the therapist's experience toward the client in fully accepting him/her without judgement, no matter what he/she says or does (Iberg, 2006:155).

Sub-theme 8.3: *Empower parents with knowledge*

In an article on social work intervention with LGBTIQ+ clients by Teh, Munisamy, Wong, Tan, Huang and Yong (2018:51), they state the following: competent social work practice demands problem-specific knowledge from the social worker in order to deal effectively with the issue at hand. Thus, knowledge in terms of practice with LGBTIQ+ clients includes multiple dimensions, such as understanding the stages of coming out, being aware of socio-cultural issues, understanding the negative biases caused by heterosexism, and gaining knowledge on the unique norms and sub-cultures within the community. The social worker must therefore equip him/herself with the necessary knowledge to be capacitated to work with LGBTIQ+ clients and their relatives.

In order for a social worker to empower a client-system with knowledge on a subject matter, the social worker must therefore have a wide range of knowledge and experience regarding the subject matter, especially in terms of LGBTIQ+ issues. Social workers should be sensitised to the needs of LGBTIQ+ persons (Matthews, Clemons & Avery, 2017:287). Client-systems who are LGBTIQ+ or related or concerned about LGBTIQ+ persons clearly expect the social worker to have the necessary knowledge, education and training in terms of working with LGBTIQ+ persons.

In conclusion, social workers are expected to be knowledgeable about the subject matter of LGBTIQ+ issues and clients expect guidance that will empower them with the necessary knowledge to assist the family and the LGBTIQ+ person. I will address this topic in more detail under Recommendations for social work support (see Table 5.5).

- Sub-theme 8.4: *Address policies*

Hami, the participant who is a social worker, brought up an important matter. Whereas the Department of Health and the Department of Education have developed important policies and legislation for the treatment and education of communities in terms of sex education and LGBTIQ+ matters, the Department of

Social Development, who should be the lead department in these matters, has not yet come up with policies for the protection of LGBTIQ+ persons or for dealing with LGBTIQ+ clients. Sadowski (2017:9) states, in terms of policies at schools or places of education, there should be more than merely anti-bullying policies; the policies must include affirming and accepting LGBTIQ+ students' sexuality and providing support to create a positive environment for these learners. The same could be said for social work. Working with LGBTIQ+ persons should include creating a safe and supportive environment where the LGBTIQ+ person should feel comfortable to enter a social workers office to share his/her emotions and thoughts. **Hami** stated the following: *"I think if we were to have policies, it could be policies regarding how institutions should deal with LBGTI. They must start at school..."*

I concluded that it should therefore be the role of the Department of Social Development, in cooperation with universities and the South African Council for Social Service Professions, to come up with relevant policies concerning the treatment and protection of LGBTIQ+ persons in terms of client services provided by social workers. I will also return to this topic below under Recommendations (Table 5.5).

Based on the research findings and the conclusions arrived at, recommendations were formulated and are presented after the limitations inherent in this research study are dealt with next.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations inherent to this study are:

- **Sample size and generalisation of findings**

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.4.1), I had difficulty in finding participants, as this is such a sensitive and "closed" topic. The sample size consisted of ten participants, of which the pilot study's two participants were added to the study to enrich the data. The information gained could be relevant to other contexts of the

same cultures, but I did not include white or Indian participants, as the focus of the study was on African and mixed race participants.

- **Data collection methods**

Due to financial costs and not having time off to travel to meet the participants, I made use of telephonic interviews in four instances and followed-up with telephone calls in two instances. I decided to add it as a limitation, merely because most researchers are of the opinion that the quality of data is not as rich as when a face-to-face interview is held. However, I did not personally experience it as a stumbling block and can argue that in some instances it created a safe space for sharing sensitive information.

- **Cultural background**

The participants were from different cultural backgrounds and eight of the participants and I did not speak the same language. The interviews had to be conducted in English, which was not always easy for the participants when relating emotional issues. An interpreter could have been valuable, but I did not have the budget to hire one.

- **Availability of local literature and studies**

I mostly referred to international literature on the subject matter, as there is scant literature available from South Africa. It is important to note that since I started the study in 2017, until now (2019), there has been a marked increase in research on LGBTIQ+ persons in the fields of Education and Health. I used PubMed, Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Online, EBSCOhost and Unisa's library website to search for articles and information on social work services to LGBTIQ+ clients in South Africa. I was able to find one article on *Namibian* social work students' attitudes towards the LGBTIQ+ community. Most research was conducted in the fields of Education and Psychology. This indicates that research and knowledge on how social workers should work with LGBTIQ+ children and their families is limited and not easily available in South Africa. It is therefore a valid question to ask whether social workers are adequately trained to work with sexual diversity clients.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE, TRAINING AND EDUCATION, AND AN AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQA+, including suggestions for social work support. Based on the conclusions drawn from the research findings and the literature consulted, the following recommendations for social work practice, further education and training, and future research are proposed.

5.5.1 Recommendations for social work development

The recommendations are specifically based on the informed suggestions from the participants on how they would like social workers to support them. Table 5.5 below summarises these recommendations and is linked to the themes and sub-themes of the study:

TABLE 5.5 RECOMMENDATION(S) FOR SOCIAL WORK DEVELOPMENT

It is recommended that:	Cross-reference to empirical research findings informing the stated recommendation
Self-awareness and value clarification training for social workers	Sub-theme 8.1 Social workers should know themselves
CPD Point training – Guidelines on supporting parents of LGBTIQA+ children and dealing with LGBTIQA+ clients	Sub-theme 8.2 Talk to parents, give guidance Sub-theme 8.3 Empower parents with knowledge
CPD Point training – Gay Affirmative Therapy	Sub-theme 8.1 Social workers must know themselves

	Sub-theme 8.2 Give guidance to parents
Including LGBTIQ+ matters in Child Protection Week	Sub-theme 8.3 Empower community with knowledge
Awareness campaigns to make the community aware that social workers are available	Sub-theme 8.3 Empower parents and community members
Develop policies or a White Paper on the social work approach to LGBTIQ+ clients	Sub-theme 8.4 Developing social work policies

In conclusion, the research findings led me to offer recommendations for social worker development in terms of LGBTIQ+ clients and their families that would add to their professional repertoire of skills, education and training in counselling and outreach to a diverse, inclusive client-system.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Social Work Support to Parents of LGBTIQ+ children

TABLE 5.6: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT

It is recommended that:	Cross-reference to empirical research findings informing the stated recommendation
Develop guidelines for social work support to LGBTIQ+ persons and their families, based on academic research and social work experience.	Sub-theme 8.2 Give guidance.
Developing pamphlets and booklets to display in social work offices	Sub-theme 8.3 Empower parents and community with knowledge
Social media awareness campaigns	Sub-theme 8.3 Empower community with knowledge

Connecting with religious organisations for the positive regard of LGBTIQ+ youth/adults	Sub-theme 6.3 More support from churches
Connecting with existing organisations to collaborate on issues pertaining to LGBTIQ+ community members and those related to them	Sub-theme 5.1 Consulted and shared with others (PFLAG)
Start support groups for parents of children coming out (parent-to-parent and counsellor-to-parent support strategies)	Sub-theme 6.2 More support (support groups)
Start support groups for parents of children who came out as LGBTIQ+	Sub-theme 8.2 Give guidance.
Apply Gay Affirmative Therapy in the treatment of LGBTIQ+ persons and their families	Sub-theme 8.2 Give guidance. Sub-theme 8.3 Empower parents and community with knowledge

To sum up: The research outcome indicated the need within the different Social Work Departments and law makers, and deterrents for legislation and policies, to become inclusive of LGBTIQ+ clients, their families and the wider community, as personal and societal awareness will ensure that social workers and South African communities uphold the progressive Constitution and legislation.

5.5.3 Recommendations for further research

The motivation to undertake this study was initially based on my personal experience of coming out and the experience I gained as a social worker who dealt with LGBTIQ+ persons. I was further motivated to find out what the different experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents would be in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. It was also important to me to look at suggestions on how social workers could support the

parents of LGBTIQ+ persons effectively; if not done, it could lead to the mismanagement of cases. Given the facts that limited studies have been done nationally on parental reactions to children coming out, I could find only one in South Africa (Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009).

- It is **recommended** that more research be undertaken, specifically on matters relating to a greater participation group including all races and ethnic groups in the country.
- The following topics are **recommended** to be placed on the agenda for further research on LGBTIQ+ issues and parental experiences, challenges and coping strategies when their children come out as LGBTIQ+:
 - Coping strategies of parents whose children came out as LGBTIQ+ in relation to the Resiliency Theory of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation: what mechanisms do parents employ to adjust and adapt to their child's LGBTIQ+ status.
 - Parental experiences of children coming out: guidelines for support and Affirmative Therapy.
 - Experiences of parents in support groups for parents of LGBTIQ+ children. Parent-to-parent support strategies.
 - Experiences of acceptance or rejection in terms of the LGBTIQ+ status of children of Christian parents.
 - Social worker approaches to LGBTIQ+ client-systems.
 - Positive parental growth experiences in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+.
 - Being LGBTIQ+ and being Christian: experiences, challenges and coping strategies.

- LGBTIQ+ experiences, challenges and coping strategies within the Indian culture.
- LGBTIQ+ youth and suicide ideation: strategies for parental support.
- Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of LGBTIQ+ youth with a parent who is also LGBTIQ+.
- Parents re-envisioning themselves as the parents of LGBTIQ+ parents: coming out as a parent of a LGBTIQ+ child in the South African context.
- LGBTIQ+ client-systems in South African social work: policy guidelines.

5.6 FINAL SUMMARY

The primary aim of this chapter was to provide a summary of the study by summarising the main elements covered in the preceding chapters and the conclusions drawn, which culminated in the recommendations presented in this chapter. I highlighted the limitations and made recommendations in terms of social work practice, training and education. The final part of the chapter was in terms of recommendations for further research into the subject matter.

In conclusion, I can state that parental reactions to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+ cannot be predicted and will most probably change over time as the parent(s) use their family strengths/resilience to adjust and adapt to the idea of themselves being parents of LGBTIQ+ children. Family attitudes in terms of cultural and religious norms influence parental reactions, but can change as parents start to question these belief systems. Parents go through stages of adjustment and adaptation to their child's LGBTIQ+ status, and access to support groups or therapy assist them in the adaptation process. Parents who suspected that their child was LGBTIQ+ handled their coming out better and did not experience the same shock and loss as parents who had heterosexual expectations for their child. Culture, religion, family values and beliefs, and being conservative or more liberal are all factors influencing

the parental experiences, challenges and coping strategies in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+. As these parents have first-hand experience of a child coming out, they were able to make suggestions for social work support that can, in future, be implemented to assist other parents and LGBTIQ+ persons.

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ADDENDA:

ADDENDUM A: ETHICAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant

I, Marelize Hobbs-Russell, am a social worker employed by Unisa, Department of Social Work as the National Practicum Coordinator. I am also a part-time Master's student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the master's degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic:

Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, queer, questioning and A-sexual: suggestions for social work support.

In order for you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate in this research study, I will furnish you with information that will help you understand the study (i.e. what the aims of the study are and why there is a need for this particular study). Furthermore, you will be informed about what your involvement in this study will entail (i.e. what you will be asked/or what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study).

The following goals have been identified for the study:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to children coming out as LGBTIQ+
- To proffer suggestions for how social workers can support mixed race and African South African parents in relation to children coming out as LGBTIQ+.

The following topical questions will be asked:

Request:

Please tell me about your experiences when your child came out

Questions:

- What previous experience or knowledge did you have about LGBTIQA+ persons prior to your child coming out?
- How did your child tell you about them being LGBTIQA+?
- What did you feel when they told you about being LGBTIQA+?
- How did you react when they told you they were LGBTIQA+?
- What were your challenges and fears when your child came out?
- How are you coping with their being LGBTIQA+?
- What do you think will help you to better cope with the situation?
- What are your suggestions to parents of a child coming out as LGBTIQA+?
- How can social workers assist parents when finding out that their child is LGBTIQA+?

With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses in the interview (both the taped and transcribed versions) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotape will be coded to protect any identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a locked office in the safe at the place of residence of the researcher and only I will have access to them. The transcripts (without any identifying information) will be made available to my research supervisor, a translator (if they need to be translated into English), and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking.

My research supervisor, the translator and the independent coder will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner. The independent coder is someone who is well versed and experienced in analysing information collected by means of interviews and is appointed to analyse the transcripts of the interviews independently of the researcher to ensure that the researcher will report the participants' accounts of what has been researched. The

audiotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and presentation of the research findings.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away.

If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner. As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study without regard to your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have to divulge is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if participating in the study at any time jeopardises your safety in any way, you will be dismissed for your own safety. Should I conclude that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, or perturbed, I am obliged to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling (should you agree). You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time.

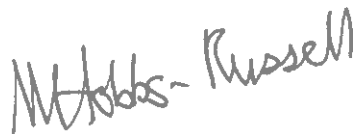
Should you have any questions or concerns about the study, contact me, the researcher, Marlize Hobbs-Russell, at the following number: 072 563 4816.

Please note that this study can only be conducted following approval by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work, Unisa. Without the approval of this committee, the study cannot be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the researcher, you

are more than welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. His contact details are as follows: Prof. AH (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number: 012 429 6739, or email alpasah@unisa.ac.za

If, after you have consulted the researcher and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at Unisa, their answers have not satisfied you, you may direct your questions/concerns/queries to the Chairperson, Ethics Committee, College of Human Science, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003. Based upon all the information provided to you above, and being aware of your rights, you are asked to give your written consent should you want to participate in this research study by signing and dating the information and consent form provided herewith and initialling each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

Thank you for your participation.



Marlize Hobbs-Russell

hobbrm@unisa.ac.za; 61463736@mylife.unisa.ac.za

ADDENDUM B: INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to a child coming out as LGBTIQ+: suggestions for social work support.

REFERENCE NUMBER: 61463736

INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: MARLIZE HOBBS-RUSSELL

ADDRESS: 842 24TH AVENUE, RIETFONTEIN, PRETORIA, 0084

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER: 072 563 4816

DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANT

I (NAME) _____, THE UNDERSIGNED,

ID NUMBER _____ (THE PARTICIPANT)

OR ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT IN MY CAPACITY AS
_____ OF THE PARTICIPANT OF ADDRESS:

A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:

1. I/ the participant was invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by MARLIZE HOBBS-RUSSELL of the Department of Social Work in the School of Social Science and College of Humanities at the University of South Africa.

2. The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant:

2.1 Aim: The researcher are researching the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents in relation to their children coming out as LGBTIQ+.

The information will be used to proffer suggestions for social work support to mixed race and African parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+.

2.2 I understand that I have been selected as a part of this research study due to my knowledge and experience regarding the topic being researched. I am also cognisant of the importance of this research study and will do my best to furnish the researcher with accurate and useful information.

3. Risks: I understand that the researcher has taken great care in ensuring that her research study is not harmful to my being and that the researcher will ensure that I receive counselling/debriefing should it be necessary. With this knowledge, I am confident that my participation will not result in any increased risk and that there are plans in place to mitigate any potential risks that may arise.

4. Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in this study, there are no financial benefits that will accrue to me and that my participation is voluntary.

5. Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators/researchers.

6. Initial access to findings: Any new information/benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me.

7. Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation: My participation is voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect me now or in the future.

The information above was explained to me/the participant by _____ in Afrikaans/English/Sotho/Xhosa/Zulu/other _____ (indicate other language) and I am in command of this language/it was translated to me satisfactorily by _____.

I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.

8. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participate and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage from the study without any penalty.

9. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me.

I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE PROJECT.

Signed/confirmed at _____ on _____ 20__

Signature or right thumbprint of participant _____

Signature of witness _____

ADDENDUM C

CONSENT FORM REQUESTING PERMISSION TO PUBLISH INFORMATION

As part of this project, I have made an audio recording of you. I would like you to indicate (with ticks in the appropriate blocks next to each statement below) what uses of these records you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will use the records only in ways that you agree to. In any of these records, names will not be identified.	Place a tick [✓] next to the use of the record you consent to
The records can be studied by the research team and quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used in the research report.	
The quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used for scientific publications and/or meetings.	
The written transcripts and/or records can be used by other researchers.	
The records and quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be shown/used in public presentations to non-scientific groups.	
The records can be used on television or radio.	
_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date

Addendum D

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR(S)	
I,, declare that	
I have explained the information given in this document to _____ (name of participant);	
he/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;	
this conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.	
Signed at _____ on _____ 20__	
..... (place).....(date)	
_____	_____
Signature of investigator/representative	Signature of witness

Addendum E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1 What is your age?
- 2 What is your marital status?
- 3

Request:

Please tell me about your experiences when your child came out as gay/lesbian

Questions:

Questions:

- What previous experience or knowledge did you have about LGBTIQ+ persons prior to your child coming out?
- How did your child tell you about them being LGBTIQ+?
- What did you feel when they told you about being LGBTIQ+?
- How did you react when they told you they were LGBTIQ+?
- What were your challenges and fears when your child came out?
- How are you coping with their being LGBTIQ+?
- What do you think will help you to better cope with the situation?
- What are your suggestions to parents of a child coming out as LGBTIQ+?
- How can social workers assist parents when finding out that their child is LGBTIQ+?

Addendum F: REQUEST FOR DEBRIEFING SERVICES

Dear Mrs D. Sokhela

Re: Request for debriefing services

My name is, Marlize Hobbs-Russell, and I am currently registered for a Master of Social Work degree at the University of South Africa, student number **61463736**. As part of my studies, I am required to conduct research and write a research report. In that regard, I am humbly requesting that you assist me with the debriefing of my research participants, should it become necessary for them to receive such debriefing. The research title is: *Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents of child(ren) coming out as LGBTIQ+A+: suggestions for social work support.*

The research study will be qualitative in nature and will employ the use of interviews as a data collection method.

The research goals are:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of mixed race and African South African parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+A.
- To proffer suggestions to assist mixed race and African South African parents of children coming out as LGBTIQ+A.

The research study will only be conducted following the approval of the Unisa Research and Ethics committee, which follows strict ethical guidelines and ensures that research participants are protected from harm. Your wealth of experience in the social work field makes you a suitable individual to conduct the debriefing of research participants, as you are familiar with the methods and strategies employed in debriefing.

Should you be willing to assist me in this regard, please accept my request in a formal letter as I have to prove that I have engaged you in this regard. If you have any further enquiries, please contact me on the contact details given below. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards

M Hobbs-Russell
MA (Social Work) Student
hobbrm@unisa.ac.za

ADDENDUM G: ACCEPTANCE LETTER FROM DEBRIEFER

ENQ: D SOKHELATEL:(012) 352 4369

sokhedm@unisa.ac.za

Date: 05 October 2017

Dear Mrs Hobbs-Russell

Re: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPANTS' DEBRIEFING SERVICES

This letter serves as a confirmation that I Duduzile Sokhela with SACSSP registration no: **10-17003** have accepted your requisition regarding the debriefing services. I am willing to support your research participants with such services without any charge.

You are requested to remind me at least a week before data collection begins so that I may be prepared to receive your participants when the need arise.

Wishing you great success with your studies.

Kind regards

Mrs D Sokhela

Office line: 012 352 4369

**ADDENDUM H:
RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL**

RESEARCH ETHICS – RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL			
5.1	Does your research include the direct involvement of any of the following groups of participants? (refer to Section 4 in the SOP)	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in the tick box [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
a)	Children or young people under the age of 18		X
b)	Persons living with disabilities (physical, mental and/or sensory)		X
c)	Persons that might find it difficult to make independent and informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons		X
d)	Communities that might be considered vulnerable, thus finding it difficult to make independent and informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons		X
e)	People who might be vulnerable for age-related reasons, e.g. the elderly		X
f)	Unisa staff, students or alumni		X
g)	Persons whose native language differs from the language used for the research	X	
h)	Women considered to be vulnerable (pregnancy, victimisation, etc.)		X
i)	Plants		X
j)	Molecular or cell research		X
k)	Animals		X
l)	Environmentally related research		X
m)	Other. please describe.		

5.2	Does your research involve any of the following types of activity?	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in the tick box [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
a)	Collection, use or disclosure of information WITHOUT the consent/assent of the individual or institution that is in possession of the required information, i.e. will be conducted without the knowledge of the participants (with the exception of aggregated data or data from official databases in the public domain)		X

b)	Causing discomfiture to participants beyond normal levels of inconvenience		X
c)	Deception of participants, concealment or covert observation		X
d)	Examining potentially sensitive or contentious issues that could cause harm to the participants		X
e)	Research which may be prejudicial to participants or may intrude on the rights of third parties or people not directly involved		X
f)	Using intrusive techniques e.g. audio-visual recordings without informed consent		X
g)	Study of or participation in illegal activities by participants that could place individuals and/or groups at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships.		X
h)	Innovative therapy or intervention		X
i)	Personal information collected directly from participants	X	
j)	Personal (identifiable) information to be collected about individuals or groups from available records (e.g. staff records, student records, medical records, etc.) and/or archives		X
k)	*Psychological inventories/scales/tests		X
l)	Activities which may place the researcher(s) at risk		X
m)	Collecting physical data from the participants such as body measurements, blood samples, etc.		X
n)	Collecting physical samples from animals such as blood, etc.		X
o)	Harvesting indigenous vegetation		X
p)	Harvesting vegetation or soil from privately owned land		X
q)	Other. please describe.		X
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The researcher will be investigating a sensitive topic which could cause the participants some emotional discomfort regarding their relationship with children who came out as gay/lesbian.</p>			

**Please add details on copyright issues related to standardised psychometric tests and registration at the HPSCA of test administrator if test administration is in South Africa or of an equivalent board if administration is non-South African.*

5.3	DOES ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT?	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in the tick box [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
a)	Reimbursement or incentives to any participants.		X
b)	Financial obligations for the participants as a result of their participation in the research.		X
c)	Financial gains to be anticipated by any of the involved researchers.		X
d)	Any other potential conflict of interest for any of the researchers (real or perceived personal considerations that may compromise a researcher's professional judgement in carrying out or reporting research, such as conducting research with colleagues, peers or students).		X
e)	Research will make use of Unisa laboratories.		X
f)	Research will be funded by Unisa or by an external funding body.	X	
Comments: The researcher will apply for funding from Unisa.			

5.4	Guided by the information above, classify your research project based on the anticipated degree of risk. [The researcher completes this section. The ERC critically evaluates this benefit-risk analysis to protect participants and other entities.] <i>Place an 'x' in the tick box</i>						
Category 1 Negligible		Category 2 Low risk	X	Category 3 Medium risk		Category 4 High risk	
(a) Briefly justify your choice/classification The researcher has identified only three possible areas of risk and measures are in place to minimise harm, therefore the study can be categorised as low risk.							

(b) In medium and high-risk research, indicate the potential benefits of the study for the research participants and/or other entities.

(c) In medium and high-risk research, indicate how the potential risks of harm will be mitigated by explaining the steps that will be taken (e.g. referral for counselling, debriefing, etc.).

ADDENDUM I



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND ETHICS REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

4 December 2017

Ref#: R&EC: 27/1017/61463736 06 Name of Applicant: Hobbs-Russell, M Student#: 61463736
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Dear Mrs Hobbs-Russel

DECISION: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Name: Mrs M Hobbs-Russell

Address & contact details: 842 24th Avenue, Rietfontein, Pretoria,
0084

Contact No: 072 563 4816

Supervisor: Dr AG Adlem

Co-supervisor: Prof AH Alpaslan

Title of Proposal: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND
COPING STRATEGIES OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN PARENTS
IN RELATION TO A CHILD COMING OUT AS GAY OR
LESBIAN: SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT

Qualification: Master of Social Work

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the
Department of Social Work Research and Ethics Review Committee.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics by the abovementioned Committee at a meeting conducted on 27 October 2017.

Final approval is granted for the duration of the project.

The proposed research may now commence with the provision that:

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Social Work's Research and Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested of there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the participants.
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Kind regards,

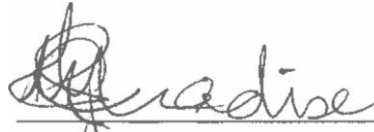


Signed by: _____ Date: 4 December 2017

Professor AH Alpasah

Chair: Department of Social Work Research and Ethics Review
Committee alpasah@unisa.ac.za

Signed



Paradise

Date: 4 December 2017

Manager Postgraduate Studies: College of Human Sciences

University of South Africa
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Tshwane

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