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ABSTRACT

Previous research indicates that gay men's relationships with their mothers are generally more warm, supportive, and emotional than their relationships with their fathers, and that fathers are less likely to be told, less likely to be told first, and more likely to react negatively to disclosure than mothers would. Most of these findings are derived from asking sons to report on their parental relationships. As such, very little is known about the nature of the father-son relationship before, during, and after disclosure, from the father's perspective. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to uncover and explore first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons. A sample comprising six Afrikaans-speaking, white fathers, between the ages of 53 and 61 years, from a middle to upper-middle income bracket, and residing in Gauteng, South Africa, were selected purposively through the use of opportunistic or convenience sampling. Utilising an interpretivist approach located within the qualitative research paradigm, an individual in-depth interview strategy was adopted as a means of gathering data. A brief questionnaire probing demographic characteristics was also utilised to further contextualise the data obtained in the interviews. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later coding and analysis. Through the use of thematic network analysis, eight organising themes were uncovered, including (a) subliminal awareness prior to coming out; (b) epistemic rupture of internal system of beliefs; (c) personal paradigmatic shifts; (d) acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process; (e) ambiguous loss; (f) persistent history of thought; (f) wrestling with the reason why; and (g) coming out as a dual experience. Each organising theme contained several basic themes. On the whole, the themes support the view that most parents are neither totally rejecting nor fully accepting of their gay sons. The fathers are seen to navigate their way through a plethora of experiences and meanings that are not only likely to inform the development of their multidimensional identities as men and fathers, but also shape their unique relationships with their gay sons. While the fathers may have attained a level of "loving denial" in their relationships with their gay sons, most continue to struggle with the meaning and expression of same-sex sexuality, and appear to wrestle with the challenge of integrating their understanding of same-sex sexuality with their constructions of traditional Afrikaner masculinity, as well as their meanings associated with having a gay son. However, unlike prior reports of a poor father-son dyad, the fathers reported a general improvement in their relationship

with their gay son after he came out. This discrepancy may be attributed to the possibility that the particular group of fathers who volunteered to discuss their father-son relationships willingly were further along in the acceptance process. Recommendations for future research, includes an exploration of the dynamic interaction between heterosexual and gay constructions of masculinity within the father-son dyad before, during and after disclosure, examining the role that mothers play in influencing the quality of the father-son relationship before, during and after disclosure, uncovering the intra- and inter-personal variables that may facilitate the adaptive adjustment processes among fathers over the longer term, and exploring the contexts and processes associated with transitions within fatherhood across the life course of fathers of gay sons.

KEY TERMS

Heterosexual fathers, Gay sons, Same-sex sexuality, Coming out, Identity, Roles, Father involvement, Masculinity, Interpretivism, South Africa.

GLOSSARY

Afrikaners

Afrikaners refers a “group of Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans who share certain general cultural characteristics and historical experiences” (van Zyl, 2008, p. 136).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory suggests that observed behaviours are attributed to the person (internal/dispositional) or the environment (external/situational) (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Furthermore, attribution theory suggests that people are evaluated more negatively when they are observed to have caused their stigma than those who have not (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008).

Attachment

An attachment refers to an affectional bond or tie to an attachment figure. An attachment figure is “never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another, even though there may be others to whom one is also attached” (Ainsworth, 1989, p. 711).

Biological Sex

Biological sex refers to the chromosomes, external genitalia, internal genitalia, hormonal composition, gonads, and secondary sex characteristics that are associated with being male or female (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive dissonance theory posits that cognitive dissonance is induced when a person holds two contradictory beliefs, or when a belief is incongruent with an action performed freely (O’Leary, 2012). The resulting discomfort is believed to compel an individual to alter one of the beliefs or behaviours so as to avoid being inconsistent (O’Leary, 2012).

Coming Out

Coming out is viewed as a complicated developmental process by which an individual acknowledges his sexual orientation, and declares his identity to be gay to family, friends, or

others who may have assumed they are heterosexual or straight (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Waldner & Magruder, 1999).

Crisis of Masculinity

As a result of women becoming increasingly influential and involved in political, economic and domestic spheres, a crisis of masculinity is believed to have developed among many men, who feel unsettled and unsure of their place within the new order (Morrell, 2001), and therefore appear to be struggling with the very meaning of manhood (Haenfler, 2004).

Discrimination

Discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudicial behaviour or actions, usually negative, towards an individual or group of people on the grounds of race, age, sex, religion, and sexual orientation (Soanes, 2002). See prejudice.

Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism refers to the philosophy of equality, and the desirability of political, economic, and social equality (Soanes, 2002).

Family of Choice

A family of choice refers to a broader notion of family to include non-biological relations (Weston, 1991). A family of choice is largely seen as a substitute for, or an expansion of, the family-of-origin (Weston, 1991).

Family-of-origin

The family-of-origin refers to the nuclear family in which individuals spent their childhood (Delsing, Oud, de Bruyn, & van Aken, 2003). The family-of-origin is generally considered to be one of the most important groups to which a young person belongs, generally providing protection and love in times of need (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990).

Father

Being a father has uniquely different meanings to different individuals, and the ways in which men envision, enact, integrate, and differentiate their roles as fathers varies considerably (Palkovitz, 2002) across time and context (Morrell, 2006). In the Western world, it is generally recognised that a man becomes a father once he has impregnated a woman, and a child is born as a result (Morrell, 2006). However, modern technological advances such as in vitro fertilisation are challenging this traditional notion of what a father is (Morrell, 2006). In addition to these technological advances, the status of father does not always result from a biological process, as witnessed with social fathers (Morrell, Posel, & Devey, 2003) in reconstituted families, including inter alia adoptions and step-family configurations (Morrell, 2006). It has therefore become necessary to distinguish between biological fathers, and the cultural construction of fatherhood, with the former expressing a genetic link between an adult male and a child, irrespective of the biological process, and the latter referring more to the social role of fathering, irrespective of a genetic link, and stresses the importance of social relationships and personal choice (Morrell, 2006).

Fathering

Fathering is seen as a socially constructed role, and therefore “a product of the meanings, beliefs, motivations, attitudes, and behaviours of all the stakeholders in the lives of children” (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998, p. 278).

Gay

The term gay refers to a sexual orientation that includes an enduring pattern of psychological, emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to the same sex (American Psychological Association [APA], 2008). The term gay is preferable to the term homosexual.

Gender Conformity

Gender nonconformity is defined among males as the relative presence of masculine traits and relative absence of feminine traits during boyhood (Landolt, Bartholomew, Saffrey, Oram, & Perlman, 2004).

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to the psychological sense of, or primary identification with, being male or female (Pillard, 1991).

Gender Nonconformity

Gender nonconformity is defined among males as the relative absence of masculine traits and relative presence of feminine traits during boyhood (Landolt et al., 2004).

Gender Role Strain Paradigm

The gender role strain paradigm proposes that (i) gender roles are operationally defined by gender role stereotypes and norms; (ii) contemporary gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent; (iii) the proportion of individuals who violate gender roles is high; (iv) the violation of gender roles leads to condemnation and negative psychological consequences; (v) the actual or imagined violation of gender roles leads people to overconform to them; (vi) the violation of gender roles has more severe consequences for men than for women; and (vii) certain prescribed gender role traits (such as male aggression) are psychologically dysfunctional (Pleck, 1995).

Generative Fathering

Generative fathering refers to “fathering that responds to the needs of children, instead of merely conforming to the social and cultural prescriptions with regard to a father’s role obligations” (Smit, 2008, p. 6).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the cultural and social ideal of masculinity (Morrell, 2001). Hegemonic masculinity is believed to control a hierarchy of masculinities, and not only ensures men’s relative power and dominance over women but also over subordinate masculinities (Lusher & Robins, 2009).

Hetero-normativity

See heterosexism

Heterosexism

Heterosexism is defined as a reasoned system of prejudice that privileges heterosexual relations, which is generally accepted as the norm in human sexuality (Jung & Smith, 1993). As a cultural ideology, heterosexism is seen to perpetuate homo-negativism by denying and denigrating non-heterosexual forms of behaviour, identity, or relationship (Herek, 2004).

Heterosexuality

The term heterosexuality refers to a sexual orientation that includes an enduring pattern of psychological, emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to the opposite sex (APA, 2008).

Homo-negativism

Homo-negativism is largely linked to heterosexism and describes individual anti-gay attitudes or behaviours (Herek, 2004). Homo-negativism is a contemporary term derived from the concept homophobia (Britton, 1990).

Homophobia

The term homophobia literally means “fear of sameness” or “fear of the similar” (Herek, 2004, p. 9), and was originally used to refer to heterosexual’s irrational fear, revulsion, and condemnation of homosexuality, and of those who engage in homosexual behaviour (Yep, 2002). However, homo-negativism is seen as a more useful and accurate term to understand the psychological, social, and cultural processes that underlie and shape the oppression of sexual minorities (Williamson, 2000).

Homosexuality

The term “homosexuality” has been used to refer to a sexual orientation that includes an emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to someone of the same biological sex (APA, 2008). However, it is argued that the term “homosexual” is largely problematic as its root meanings are not entirely accurate, it has been associated with the diagnosis and treatment of pathology, is largely focused on behaviour or an explicit sexual act, and is simply outdated (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). Preference in this thesis is given to using more contemporary terms such as “gay”, “same-sex sexuality”, or “same-sex practicing individual”.

Identity Salience

In terms of identity theory, it is argued that identities are organised according to a salience hierarchy (Stryker & Burke, 2000). A salience hierarchy suggests that one's identities are organised into a linear column, ordered according to the differentiated probability that certain identities come into play within or across situations (Stryker, 1987), with the most salient identity at the apex (Fox & Bruce, 2001). "(T)he higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the probability of behavioural choices in accord with the expectations attached to that identity" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286).

Identity Theory

Identity theory, as informed by the symbolic interactionist perspective, argues that identity may be viewed as parts of a self, composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they adopt and play in highly differentiated contemporary societies (Stryker & Burke, 2000)

Internalised Homo-negativity

Internalised homo-negativity refers to the internalisation of "significant aspects of the prejudice experienced within a heterosexist society" (Williamson, 2000, p. 98). More specifically, internalised homo-negativity refers to the incorporating of beliefs that heterosexuality is the benchmark and that homosexuality is unnatural, immoral, deviant, and inferior (Herek, 2004).

Interpretive Approach

The interpretive approach assumes broadly that reality is a social construction, and therefore a perceived reality (Giorgi, 1994), that is continuously negotiated between people (Sandberg, 2005; Walsham, 1995; 2006). The researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Walsham, 1995).

Maternal Gatekeeping

Maternal gatekeeping can be defined as (a) a reluctance to relinquish family responsibility by setting rigid standards, (b) a desire to validate a maternal identity, and (c) differentiated conceptions of family roles (Allen & Hawkins, 1999).

Modelling Hypothesis

The modelling hypothesis posits that men may either emulate their fathers' high or low level of involvement, or compensate for their fathers' lack of involvement (Pleck, 1997).

New Fatherhood

Contemporary fatherhood has been conceptualised in different ways by different authors (Morrell et al., 2003), each foregrounding a particular aspect or feature of the new fatherhood (e.g., involved fathering, nurturant fathering, responsible fathering, generative fathering, or egalitarian fathering) (Palkovitz, 2002).

Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to the rule of the father (Coetzee, 2001), and is broadly seen as the valuing of women less highly than men, and refers to the historic system committed to the maintenance and reinforcement of male superiority and dominance in all aspects (Nel & Joubert, 1997). Further, patriarchy is also seen as being "particularly vicious towards gay males who pose a strong subversive threat to the patriarchal ideals of aggression and dominance" (Nel, Rich, & Joubert, 2007, p. 288).

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to an unjustified opinion or attitude, usually negative, towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership to a social group (Soanes, 2002). See discrimination.

Qualitative Paradigm

The qualitative paradigm assumes that no single, unitary, independent reality exists apart from the perceptions (Krauss, 2005), or mental constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), that reside entirely in the minds of people (ontological assumption) (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Furthermore, it is assumed that a researcher and the object of inquiry are interactively linked, such that both the researcher and the object of inquiry influence one another, especially when the object of inquiry is another human being (epistemological assumption) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative researchers share a commitment to naturalism, and believe that the best way to explore, examine,

describe, and understand any phenomenon is to view it in its natural real-world context or setting (methodological assumption) (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Krauss, 2005; Nolan & Behi, 1995a; Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001; Patton, 2002).

Role

In identity theory, a role is defined as “a set of expected behaviour patterns, obligations, and privileges attached to a particular social status” (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1995, p. 76).

Sexual Identity

Sexual identity consists of five interrelated, yet distinct, dimensions, which cumulatively contribute to an awareness or perception of the self as a sexual being. These dimensions include biological sex, gender identity, social gender role, sexual orientation, and sexual behaviour (Jung & Smith, 1993).

Sexuality

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2002), sexuality is broadly seen as a “central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always expressed or experienced. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors” (WHO, 2002, p. 5).

Sexual Behaviour

Sexual behaviour refers to a range of sexual activities that can occur between members of the same or opposite sex (Davies & Neal, 1996).

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is defined as an enduring pattern of psychological, emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes (APA, 2008).

Sexual Stigma

Sexual stigma refers broadly to “the negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that society collectively accords anyone associated with nonheterosexual behaviours, identity, relationships, or communities” (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009, p. 33)

Social Gender Role

Social gender role refers to the adoption of heterosexually defined cultural norms and expectations about how men and women should ideally behave within a particular culture, at a particular time (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990; Pillard, 1991)

Status

In identity theory, a status is defined as “an individual’s place or position in a social structure, or network of social relationships” (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995, p. 76).

Traditional Masculinity

Traditional masculinity is a dominant image of masculinity and includes an emphasis on heterosexuality, anti-femininity, patriarchy, mastery, competition, hierarchy, individualism, sexual prowess, physical toughness, rationality, emotional distance, dominance, aggression, and risk-taking (Morrell, 2001).

ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
SADF	South African Defense Force
SANDF	South African National Defense Force
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the aim is twofold: first, to briefly provide a context for this study and second, to provide a general orientation regarding the layout of the rest of this thesis. This chapter commences with an elucidation of the background and motivation for the study based on my personal and professional experiences. Subsequently, the specific aims of the study are explicated. Thereafter, the methodological approach adopted in this thesis is described in broad terms. Finally, a brief summary of each chapter is presented.

Background and Motivation for the Study

The motivation behind this research developed out of distinct personal and professional experiences. I have been working with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sector for a little over seven years, first in KwaZulu-Natal, then in Gauteng and more recently also in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Cape, and Limpopo. From my psychotherapeutic work as well as my social and informal interactions with gay men it became increasingly clear that many gay men experience unsatisfactory relationships with their fathers. This is in contrast to their relatively closer relationships with their mothers. The difference among these gay men generally appears to be the level of their dissatisfaction, which ranges from maintaining superficial or ceremonial contact to having little or no contact at all. It also became strikingly evident among these men how absent and uninvolved their fathers appeared to be in providing them with much needed informational, emotional and social support and guidance as they developed, and also while they were adjusting to life outside the closet and managing various forms of discrimination on a daily basis.

Based on these personal and professional observations, I conducted a preliminary literature review, which led to further evidence suggesting a poor relationship between many gay sons and their heterosexual fathers. For example, it has been found that gay sons are more likely to experience their fathers as cold, indifferent, distant, rejecting, and even hostile (Freund & Blanchard, 1983; Matthews, 2002; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003) than heterosexual sons do (Landolt et al., 2004). In studies focusing on parental reactions regarding coming out, that is, openly disclosing their being gay, it has been established that fathers are more likely to react

with denial and rejection (Ben-Ari, 1995), become verbally abusive (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998), appear less supportive or helpful (Telljohan & Price, 1993) especially in dealing with anti-gay prejudices of their own families and communities (Drescher, 2004), and demonstrate very little improvement in the father-son relationship post-disclosure, possibly due to a continued disinvestment in their sons' lives (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). The effect of these poor levels of support, acceptance, and closeness could have direct and indirect effects on the well-being of most gay men. Research has indicated that gay affirming resources, including the parents, are viewed as a significant factor in the developing sense of sexual identity for gay youth, especially in terms of the degree of comfort with, and acceptance of their sexual orientation and in their general self-evaluation (Beard & Bakeman, 2000; Savin-Williams, 1989a).

More broadly it has been found that the following variables have been linked with anti-gay attitudes and behaviours: (a) gender (as in male) (Herek & Capitanio, 1999); (b) a conservative religious ideology (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997) or fundamentalism (Barron, Struckman-Johnson, Quevillon, & Banka, 2008; Hegarty, 2002; Keiller, 2010); (c) a traditional gender role orientation (as in traditional masculinity) (Keiller, 2010; Patel, Ramgoon, & Paruk, 2009); (d) hypermasculine beliefs about gender (Barron et al., 2008; Whitley, 2002); (e) hostile sexism, including dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility (Sakalli, 2002); (f) racism (Ficarrotto, 1990); (g) low same-sex intimacy (Stark, 1991); (h) the belief that sexual orientation is controllable and therefore a matter of personal choice (Hegarty & Golden, 2008); (i) being older and being less well educated (Herek, 1996); (j) an authoritarian personality style (Altemeyer, 2001; Greendlinger, 1985); (k) a lack of empathic concern, and a tendency to use denial and isolation as coping mechanisms (Johnson et al., 1997); and (l) cognitive rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, dogmatism, and sexual conservatism (Herek, 1984). It is reasonable to assume that many of these variables may apply to fathers in general.

It has also been found that gay men generally experience more victimisation than lesbians do (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001). Not surprisingly then, is the finding that gay men are more likely to come out to their mothers rather than to their fathers (Ben-Ari, 1995) and that mothers are generally told prior to telling their fathers, suggesting a son's greater fear that his father's reactions will be negative and that he will never be close to him (Savin-Williams & Ream,

2003). This phenomenon falls in line with findings that suggest that the parent-child relationship quality before disclosure appears to be a good indicator of the parental reaction and parent-child relationship quality post-disclosure (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008).

Given these personal and professional findings, I became increasingly interested in exploring beyond the extensive body of research which is confined to parental reactions to a gay son coming out (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998), and how heterosexual fathers experience and construct their relationships with their gay sons in general. Much of the literature focuses on coming out, and is, therefore, considered end-point research in that it pays little attention to how people reach that end point (Pattatucci, 1998). Given that much of what is known is largely derived from asking sons to report on their parents (see Matthews, 2002), researchers generally gain a limited understanding of the full range of personal experiences of parents (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998), and the role they play in the coming out process (Savin-Williams, 1989a) and beyond, particularly during the extensive period before and possibly after disclosure. Very little is actually known about the typical parent who struggles alone, without the support or assistance of others (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). Further, very little is known about the determining factors that distinguish families who react positively as opposed to those who do not (D'Augelli, 2005). It is therefore important that researchers begin to ask parents directly about their lives as parents of gay children, thereby eliciting vital information that their children are not likely to discern, such as the internal processing that parents experience (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). In doing so, researchers may uncover yet un-documented experiences and associated meanings. Despite some exploration into a mother's relationship with her gay son (Yell, 2004), very little research can be found on the father's personal account of his relationship with his gay son.

By conducting this important research, I hoped to enable some South African fathers to share their experiences, both positive and negative, in their own words, and to tell their story. This will make a significant contribution to the growing body of research exploring the intergenerational relationships of gay men (LaSala, 2002; van Eeden-Moorefield & Lindsey, 2005), and the role, perceptions and experiences of fathers in general (Garbarino, 1992; Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Smit, 2008). In conducting this research, it is especially meaningful to access a range of fathers in order to explore the complexity, richness, and diversity of their experiences, both positive and negative, and further to provide some clarity on why some fathers are able to

resolve their dilemma with parenting a gay son whereas others are unable to do so (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). These accounts may prove meaningful in assisting fathers with their adjustment processes in order to build healthier long-term relationships with their gay sons, thereby contributing towards the self-acceptance and overall well-being of their sons (Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). It has been suggested that “reaching a point of unconditional love and acceptance requires flexibility in religious and moral values; open intra-familial communications; strong attachment and affection for the child; and informational, emotional and social support for both the child and the parent” (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998, p. 12). This outcome is unlikely unless researchers and practitioners explore the experiences of parents more fully and develop approaches that intervene directly with the parents, especially fathers, with the aim of challenging their own negative feelings, decreasing possible rejection and increasing sources of support and approval for their gay sons.

Aims of the Study

Given the absence of research data on heterosexual fathers’ personal accounts of their relationships with their gay sons, this thesis aims to address this gap by exploring and documenting fathers’ first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape their relationships with their gay sons. By thoroughly exploring and documenting the complexity, richness, and diversity of experiences and associated meanings of heterosexual fathers and in relation to their gay sons, this thesis also aims to stimulate new insights and further investigations into this unique father-son dyad. In addition, by doing so, this thesis aims to stimulate the development of appropriate models and interventions in order to challenge and support heterosexual fathers of gay sons more broadly.

Methodological Approach

In order to explore the context as well as the deeper content and taken-for-granted meaning of the lived experiences, thoughts and feelings of fathers of gay sons, an interpretive approach was adopted within the qualitative research paradigm. Drawing on the assumptions of interpretivism, it is assumed that heterosexual fathers actively interpret and give meaning to their environment and themselves. As such, it is further assumed that each father potentially experiences and constructs a different view of reality. Although these subjective experiences, or

mental constructions, reside wholly within the individual, they are nonetheless considered to be real and, therefore, meaningful and important. These interpretations and meanings are shaped by each father's particular historical, social and cultural context which in turn shapes the actions and institutions in which they participate. By adopting an interpretive approach, with an explorative, descriptive focus, I was able to interact directly with each father in order to uncover rich experiential data that could make sense of their emotions, experiences and social situations as they occur in the everyday realities of each father (Patton, 2002; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). By utilising an interpretive approach, I was able to capture a warm, rich and more nuanced elaboration of human experience (Carcary, 2009; Haslam & McGarty, 2003). While the interpretive approach is not the only qualitative approach to specifically focus on meanings, it is distinctive because of the extent to which it privileges meanings as ways to understand behaviour and actions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). The interpretive approach is also ideal for generating thick descriptions of and rich insights into unknown or vaguely known phenomena (Leininger, 1992), which are deemed relevant and could make a meaningful and significant contribution to the development of knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, cited in Matthews, 2002).

Outline of the Study

Chapter 2 provides a review of pertinent literature on gay men and multiple aspects of their development and lived experiences. In this chapter, I incorporate relevant research and develop a greater understanding of gay men's experiences, which cumulatively serve to contextualise, frame and provide the impetus for this thesis. The review begins with a consideration of the South African socio-cultural context which serves as a general backdrop against which gay men (and their heterosexual fathers) develop and live their lives. From there, specific attention is accorded to various aspects that have previously been explored in relation to the experiences of gay men, including gay identity development, coming out experiences, parental reactions and adjustment following disclosure, broader stigmatisation processes and intergroup contact experiences, and internalised homo-negativity and associated negative health outcomes.

Chapter 3 includes a review of pertinent literature on fathers, fathering and the notion of fatherhood. As in the previous chapter, I incorporate relevant theories and research that serve as a backdrop against which this thesis is developed. The review commences with a discussion of the historical and contemporary discourses and cultural representations of fatherhood;

demonstrating that social constructions of fatherhood vary across historical epochs and sub-cultural contexts; that fathers play complex, multidimensional roles as companions, protectors, care providers, models, moral guides, teachers, breadwinners; and that many patterns of paternal influence are indirect. Subsequently, specific attention is given to the manner in which father involvement has been conceptualised in the literature, along with the range of possible antecedents that have previously been identified. Thereafter, consideration is accorded to the direct and indirect influence of father involvement on children, and on fathers themselves. Finally, literature pertaining to the father-son dyad (including a consideration of fathers and sons generally, and heterosexual fathers and gay sons specifically) is explored.

Chapter 4 contains an in-depth discussion of the research design as it emerged in the course of the study. This discussion is generally framed according to both a theoretical and pragmatic perspective. This chapter commences by providing the overall purpose of the research, which is to explore first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons. To demonstrate explicitly my own process of making sense of the research design as it emerged and to demonstrate the methodological coherence of the research design as a whole, I then furnish an overview of research paradigms broadly, with an emphasis on the qualitative research paradigm. Against this backdrop, I subsequently discuss the suitability of adopting an interpretive approach. Thereafter, I provide a more detailed discussion of the actual research design, beginning with a careful consideration of my role as a researcher. Included here are personal, professional and process-related reflections that are explicated. Thereafter, I provide a description of the sample (e.g., six Afrikaans-speaking white fathers identified through the use of opportunity sampling), the data collection method (e.g., in-depth qualitative interviewing), and the approaches utilised during the data analysis (e.g., thematic network analysis). Finally, no research endeavour is complete without a careful consideration of research ethics and ensuring that the criteria of quality have been met, therefore, these issues are discussed here.

Chapter 5 presents the qualitative data obtained from the fathers according to eight main or organising themes, including: (a) subliminal awareness prior to coming out; (b) epistemic rupture of internal systems of beliefs; (c) personal paradigmatic shifts; (d) acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process; (e) ambiguous loss; (f) persistent history of

thought; (g) wrestling with the reason why; and (h) coming out as a dual experience. These main themes are broken down into various basic themes and discussed accordingly.

Chapter 6 furnishes a final summary and discussion of the themes in general. Finally, the recommendations and limitations of the research findings are mentioned.

Summary of Chapter 1

The motivation behind this research has developed out of distinct personal and professional experiences. It has become increasingly clear how dissatisfied many gay men are with their relationships with their fathers. Given that much of what is known in the literature is largely derived from asking sons to report on their parents, and to a lesser extent from mothers themselves, the aim of this thesis is to explore and document fathers' first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape their relationships with their gay sons. To achieve this aim, an interpretive approach was adopted within the qualitative research paradigm. By conducting this important research, I hoped to enable some South African Afrikaans-speaking white fathers to share their stories in their own words. In doing so, this thesis also aims to stimulate new insights and further investigations into this unique father-son dyad in order to stimulate the development of appropriate models and interventions to challenge and support heterosexual fathers of gay sons more comprehensively. To conclude, a broad outline is included for Chapter 2 through to Chapter 6.

In the next chapter, I provide a review of pertinent literature on gay men and multiple aspects of their development and lived experiences, which serves to contextualise, frame, and provide the impetus for this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE EXPERIENCES OF GAY MEN

Over the past thirty-five years, research concerning same-sex sexuality has undergone a major shift in emphasis. This is largely due to the impact of reports published by Alfred Kinsey and his associates in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Risman & Schwartz, 1988); the gay and lesbian movement that gained momentum in the late 1960s (Herek, 2000b); the emergence of homophobia as a revolutionary concept in 1972 (Herek, 2000a); the declassification of homosexuality as a sexual disorder from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973 (Mayfield, 2001); the strong subsequent endorsement of this position by other professional groups such as the American Psychological Association in 1975 (Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002), the World Health Organization in 1990 (Davies & Neal, 1996), and more recently reflected in press statements issued by the South African Society of Psychiatry (2005) and the Psychological Society of South Africa (2010); and increasing political and legal gains in certain sectors of the world in recent years (Sember, 2009). As such, a concern with etiology, clinical assessment, psychopathology, and the treatment of gay men has given way to a broader interest in understanding different experiences and multiple aspects of their lives (Ben-Ari, 1995; Hegarty, 2009). This includes inter alia a considerable focus on (a) identity formation or development (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992; Troiden, 1993); (b) coming out (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Ben-Ari, 1995; Drescher, 2004); (c) parental reactions (Ben-Ari, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1998), and subsequent adjustment following disclosure (Beeler & DiProva, 1999); (d) ongoing intergroup relationships between heterosexual and homosexual people (Conley, Calhoun, Evett, & Devine, 2001; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lemm, 2006); (e) stigmatisation processes and adjustment to heterosexist societies (Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005; Hegarty, 2009); and (f) the relationship between internalised homo-negativity and negative health outcomes among gay men (Rosser, Bockting, Ross, Miner, & Coleman, 2008; Williamson, 2000).

In line with the above mentioned shift in emphasis, the aim of this chapter is to provide a review of pertinent literature on gay men and multiple aspects of their development and lived experiences. In doing so, I have incorporated relevant research, which cumulatively serves to contextualise, frame, and provide the impetus for this thesis. Given the large volume of literature

available, I have limited and organised the review around the general focus areas highlighted above, namely *gay identity development, coming out experiences, parental reactions and adjustment following disclosure, broader stigmatisation processes and intergroup contact experiences, and internalised homo-negativity and associated negative health outcomes*.

Further, in line with the proposed research in this thesis, references made throughout this and the following chapter are gender and race specific, focusing largely on the experiences of white (Afrikaner) gay men and their fathers. However, before reviewing the literature in each of the areas indicated above, I have provided a brief overview of the South African socio-cultural context, including a consideration of Afrikaner history, culture and identity, and an overview of gay rights in South Africa, which contributes to the backdrop against which gay men develop, adjust, and live their lives.

The South African Socio-cultural Context

South Africa has a “long colonial history beginning with Dutch expansionism and consolidated in the nineteenth century as a key wealth-generating part of the British Empire” (Hearn & Morrell, 2012, p. 6). From the start of European settlement in 1652, South Africa’s landscape has been marked by violent struggles over land, systematic social control, racial segregation, and extreme political violence (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). However, with the dismantling of the apartheid regime in the early 1990s, which led to South Africa’s first democratic multi-party elections in 1994 (Mogadime, 2005; Seidman, 1999), and subsequent adoption of a progressive Constitution in 1996 (Makoe, 2006), the stage was set for rapid political, social, and economic transformation (Møller, 1998). Many South Africans at the time experienced a tremendous surge in national pride and unity (Johnson & Schlemmer, 1996, cited in Møller, Dickow, & Harris, 1999). This spirit of multi-cultural unity was encapsulated in Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s reference to the so-called Rainbow Nation, which then became a dominant stream of discourse during Nelson Mandela’s presidency (Grossberg, 2002; Roefs, 2006). International sporting events, such as the hosting and winning of the Rugby World Cup (Grossberg, Struwig, & Pillay, 2006), and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003) made further contributions towards national reconciliation and unification. Internationally, South Africa was heralded as an example of liberal democracy (Daniel, Southall, & Dippenaar, 2006), and a model of conflict

resolution (Schlemmer & Møller, 1997). But the so-called age of hope soon gave way to the age of despair (Kagwanja, 2009) as the post-election euphoria began to dissipate (Roberts, 2006).

South African society remains deeply fragmented and divided in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion (Ramutsindela, 2002; Swarr, 2004), and education (Langa, Conradie, & Roberts, 2006), with high levels of socio-economic inequality within and between race groups (Morrell et al., 2012; Schlemmer & Møller, 1997), and a skewed distribution of power (Makoe, 2006). Despite a progressive Constitution, which promotes equality, tolerance, and accommodation of differences (Makoe, 2006), many South Africans remain deeply divided and conservative – racist, sexist, homophobic, and xenophobic (Daniel et al., 2006). Furthermore, despite concerted efforts by the state to address poverty, inequality, and service delivery challenges (Pillay, 2006), many South Africans are becoming increasingly discontent with the state of the country (Daniel et al., 2006). To complicate matters, there are numerous social challenges that threaten the fragility of South Africa's burgeoning democracy and developmental prospects, namely high rates of HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2009), sexual and gender-based violence (Conley, Mullick, Teffo-Menziwa, & Selvan, 2009), child sexual abuse (Morrell & Richter, 2006), and violent crime (Cock, 2005b), to name but a few.

South Africa is regarded as a culturally plural society (Pillay, 2006), with an estimated population of approximately 49 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2009), consisting of approximately 79 % blacks, 9 % whites, 9% coloureds and 3 % Indians (Morrell et al., 2012). These racial groups are further stratified according to various ethnicities. South Africa has 11 official languages, but English dominates in commerce, education, law, government, formal communication, and the media (Coplan, 2010). Although English is becoming the lingua franca of the country, strong attachments to ethnic, regional, and community linguistic traditions appear to remain (Coplan, 2010). The population is predominantly female (52 %) and youthful, with one-third aged below fifteen years (Morrell et al., 2012).

Although it is argued that South Africans have largely developed a sense of nationhood, it is believed that the construction of this national identity remains open to redefinition and reconstruction, and is continuously shaped by race, language, and class (Grossberg et al., 2006). Given that most adults in contemporary South Africa grew up during the apartheid era (Daniel & de Vos, 2002), it can be argued that this legacy continues to play a role in the way people

socially construct their identities in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and culture, to name but a few (Epstein, 1998). According to a Social Attitudes Survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2003, almost a third (29 %) of South African respondents indicated that their identity was primarily constructed in terms of family, followed by race or ethnicity (22 %), current or previous occupation (17 %), gender (10 %), and region (6 %) (Grossberg et al., 2006). Only a small number of these respondents (8 %) identified themselves primarily as being South African (Grossberg et al., 2006). Regarding race specifically, it was determined that most black South Africans (25 %) identified most frequently with their race or ethnicity, while white (52 %) and coloured (31 %) South Africans identified most strongly with their family or marital status (Grossberg et al., 2006). On average, language identity was as strong as race identity (Roefs, 2006). These findings lend support to the view that there is no single social construction of the new South African identity (Epstein, 1995, cited in Grossberg et al., 2006), and demonstrates the complex and varied ways in which South Africans as so-called People of the Rainbow socially construct and perceive their multiple identities in relation to their cultural backgrounds, languages, religious practices, and perceptions (Elion & Strieman, 2002). Further, these findings suggest that while race continues to be a significant aspect in identity formation, this is slowly being superseded by other identities such as family (Grossberg et al., 2006).

Against the backdrop of no singular, uniform identity, the issue of racism remains an ongoing critical issue in South Africa (Grossberg, 2002). Evidence of this can be observed in public outrage expressed over a racist video allegedly created by several white students from the University of the Free State in 2008 (Grobler, 2008), and racial tensions that suddenly escalated following the murder of Afrikaans right-wing paramilitary leader Eugene Terre Blanche early in 2010, which also highlighted the ongoing plight of Afrikaners being brutally killed on their farms (Smith, 2010). Further evidence of ongoing racial division can be observed in studies conducted in South Africa. According to the Social Attitudes Survey conducted by the HSRC in 2003, it was revealed that the majority of black (80 %) and Indian/Asian (65 %) respondents perceived white people as being the most racist, while the majority of white (69 %) respondents viewed black people as being the most racist (Roefs, 2006). These findings illustrate the historical black/white schism that continues in South Africa today (Roefs, 2006). Interestingly, though, it was also determined that white (47 %) and Indian/Asian (50 %) respondents were

more likely to have experienced racial discrimination in recent times than coloured and black respondents did (Roefs, 2006). Further analysis revealed that work-related sites of discrimination (i.e., at work or when applying for work) were indicated as the most typical places where people experienced racial discrimination (Roefs, 2006). Unfortunately Roefs does not unpack the notion of discrimination, nor does she offer an explanation for these findings. It is plausible that perceptions and/or experiences of racial discrimination among white and Indian/Asian respondents may be a reaction to affirmative action policies.

In an effort to understand why, even in supposedly integrated settings, groups in South Africa continue to organise themselves along racial lines and largely minimise contact with one another (Alexander, 2007), one study explored group identification and intergroup attitudes (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998). Findings from this study suggest that the correlation between in-group identification and out-group hostility is stronger under conditions of intergroup competition, conflict or threat (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998). Given that South Africa has a relatively young democracy, and is still in a process of considerable transformation, it is largely understandable that instances of intergroup competition, conflict or threat are experienced which simultaneously reinforces in-group identification and out-group negativity. For example, it has been observed that under the demands of affirmative action, and black empowerment policies (Daniel et al., 2006), many whites, especially white men, have come to resent their assumed or actual loss of political power (Vincent, 2006), while the majority of the white working class feels increasingly vulnerable and insecure about the future (Grossberg, 2002). These negative sentiments are likely to reinforce in-group identification and out-group negativity among whites, for example.

Setting aside continued racial divisions, another dominant feature of South African society is the centrality and influence of religion. The vast majority of South Africans (86 % in 2003) consider themselves to be adherents of a particular religion (Rule & Mncwango, 2006). Most of these individuals (96 %) are believed to be Christian (Rule & Mncwango, 2006), while only one in ten people are seen to belong to other religions such as Islam or Hinduism (Rule, 2002). Other notable religious affiliations include Judaism and Buddhism (Bhaktawar, 2010). Research on religiosity in general has demonstrated both positive and negative associations (Patel et al., 2009). For example, increased religiosity has been associated with better general health status and psychological well-being (Ellison & Levin, 1998). But as Ellison and Levin (1998) point

out, this does not mean that religion benefits everyone's health. For example, religious variables have also been shown to be linked with intolerance towards persons perceived to behave in a manner inconsistent with traditional religious teachings (Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009). It has also been widely documented how religion has been utilised to justify segregation, control, violence and murder (e.g., Nazi Germany and South African apartheid). According to the Social Attitudes Survey conducted by the HSRC in 2003, it was revealed that most adults were of the opinion that premarital sex, same-sex sexual relations, and abortion are morally wrong and that the death penalty more generally is a just form of punishment in biblical terms (Rule & Mncwango, 2006). These results indicate that there is an overall high level of traditionalism in relation to moral values amongst South Africans (Rule & Mncwango, 2006). More broadly, it has been observed that sex-related issues are mostly considered private and personal and not open for discussion amongst many South Africans, and that these issues are more likely to elicit strong (negative) emotional responses when raised (Nel et al., 2007). Further, it has been argued that these conservative attitudes are as much a product of religiosity as they are of South Africa's repressive and restrictive history (Nel et al., 2007). Returning to the results of the HSRC study in 2003, it is also interesting to note the finding that an overwhelming majority of the participants (81 %) expressed a greater trust in their church than any other institution, including the police (41 %), courts (47 %), the government (55 %), and the military (56 %) (Daniel et al., 2006). These findings provide further insight into the significance and centrality of religion and related traditionalism in shaping South African society today.

Another noteworthy defining feature of South African society is the historical and continued relative dominance of men in various domains. Since the first democratic elections in 1994, the debate around masculinity has intensified (Wood, 2005). South Africa, until the end of the previous century, was regarded as a man's country in that mostly men exercised power publically and politically (Morrell, 2001). According to Epstein (1998), South African masculinities have been forged in the heat of apartheid. In families, most heterosexual men assumed a patriarchal position and therefore held the most power, essentially in playing the role of protector, decision-maker, and breadwinner (Morrell, 2001). Patriarchy, which is inherently linked to religion, is broadly viewed as the valuing of women less highly than men and refers to the historic system committed to the maintenance and reinforcement of male superiority and dominance in all aspects (Nel & Joubert, 1997). Further, patriarchy is also viewed as being

“particularly vicious towards gay males who pose a strong subversive threat to the patriarchal ideals of aggression and dominance” (Nel et al., 2007, p. 288). Of particular relevance here is research on social dominance orientation, which has consistently indicated that men, whites, and heterosexuals tend to have a higher social dominance orientation than women, blacks, and gay and lesbian people (Sidanus & Pratto, 1999). More broadly, it has been observed that, in addition to the family, men’s relative dominance is also evident in religion (Momen, 1999), business (Lusher & Robins, 2009), sports (Morrell, 2001), and the military (Cock, 2005b).

Women, on the other hand, were historically expected to assume a subordinate, supportive, and nurturing role in relation to men, limited largely to the domestic sphere. However, with the introduction of government initiated gender equality campaigns since the early 1990s and the advancement of women’s rights in general, women have become increasingly influential and involved in political, economic, and domestic spheres (Morrell, 2001). It is argued that this has in part led to a so-called crisis of masculinity, in which many men feel unsettled and unsure of their place within the new order (Decoteau, 2013; Morrell, 2001), and therefore appear to be struggling with the very meaning of manhood (Haenfler, 2004). This crisis has in a sense produced brittle masculinities, whereby many men appear to be defensive towards the threats and challenges (posed by women, blacks, and other men) to their traditional male hierarchical power, and therefore especially prone to react with violence (Morrell, 2001). However, it has also been argued that despite the advancement of women and the transformations that have occurred in the hetero-normative context, there is actually very little evidence of any overall change in the relative dominance by men (Segal, 1993). Elsewhere, it has been pointed out that contemporary heterosexual couples continue to encounter conflicting messages about how they should re-organise themselves within the new order, and therefore experience ongoing structural constraints which ensure that women continue to assume primary responsibility for their home and children, and men, for earning an income (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). What these different arguments appear to agree on is that men and women are under pressure to adapt, but whether these adaptations are occurring, and at what pace, remains open to debate.

Generally, it is thought that South African men are chauvinistic, misogynistic, and homophobic; but, as Morrell (2001) points out, there is no one, typical South African man. Although the majority of men “perpetuate and reproduce dominant gender relations and forms of

masculinity, there are some men who either consciously or unconsciously oppose the hegemonic prescriptions of ‘exemplary’ masculinity” (Morrell, 2001, p. 9). As such, it is generally believed that there are a range of masculinities (Morrell, 2001), both in terms of cultural representations of men and in terms of the institutionalised practices of men in gender relations (Connell, 1992). Further, it is believed that these masculinities are fluid and changeable across time, place, and context (Segal, 1993). However, it is also believed that hegemonic masculinity controls a hierarchy of masculinities in order to maintain gender relations (Lusher & Robins, 2009). Hegemonic masculinity not only ensures men’s relative power and dominance over women, but also over subordinate masculinities (e.g., gay men) (Lusher & Robins, 2009). According to Vincent (2006, p. 355), “(t)he idea of hegemonic masculinity signals the fact that at any given social moment, some men are in a position to impose their particular definitions of masculinity on others in order to legitimate and reproduce the social relations that generate their dominance”. Further, given the dominance of many Western cultural norms, middle-class, white, heterosexual masculinity remains, in many societies, the essential marker against which all other masculinities are measured (Pease, 2000, cited in Vincent, 2006). This is also largely true of South Africa. However, it has been observed that while the pre-existing hegemonic white masculinity, including an emphasis on heterosexuality, anti-femininity, patriarchy, mastery, competition, hierarchy, individualism, sexual prowess, physical toughness, rationality, emotional distance, dominance, aggression, and risk taking, continues to exert the greatest influence, black masculinities are now beginning to compete for ascendancy (Morrell, 2001). In addition, it has been noted that while South Africa is still largely experiencing a transition, where new images of manhood are continuously being constructed, contested, accommodated, transgressed, resisted, and reconstructed (Vincent, 2006), current “masculinities in southern Africa both reflect the region’s turbulent past and have been a cause of that turbulent past” (Morrell, 2001, p. 12).

Men, and certain types of masculinity, have been linked to a host of other features that seem to dominate South Africa’s landscape. South Africa reports some of the highest rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the world (Conley et al., 2009; Mullick, Teffo-Menziwa, Williams, & Jina, 2010). In the literature, SGBV has been linked to patriarchal ideologies and to the crisis of masculinity (Wood, 2005). It is widely believed that certain constructions of masculinity, based on gender hierarchy and the idealisation of toughness and risk-taking, accompanied by underlying factors such as high levels of poverty and alcohol consumption, fuel

high rates of SGBV (Conley et al., 2009). South Africa has one of the highest rates of alcohol consumption and foetal alcohol syndrome in the world (Conley et al., 2009). Drinking and violence have become very entrenched in South African society. According to the survey conducted by the HSRC in 2003, it was disclosed that nearly 20 % of South Africans have experienced violent physical assault in their domestic relationships (Dawes, 2004). Here, entrenched societal norms regarding the legitimacy of male power and the use of force were found to play a significant role in SGBV (Dawes, 2004). In addition, the study also divulged that 57 % of the respondents reported using corporal punishment on their children, of which 33 % utilised severe corporal punishment, including the use of a belt, stick or other object (Dawes, 2004). Black and white South Africans were more likely to beat their children than any of the other race groups (Dawes, 2004). The endorsement of patriarchal attitudes and practices, authoritarian style of family functioning, a violent approach to problem solving, frequent marital conflict, and the presence of a low socio-economic status were believed to constitute the common risk factors associated with the use of corporal punishment (Dawes, 2004). All of these studies seem to suggest a link between certain constructions of masculinity, which are supportive of hegemonic masculinity, and the use of brute force to maintain their authority and dominance over women and children.

South Africa is notorious for its violent history. According to Cock (2001, p. 43), the “social legacy of armed conflicts in southern Africa includes antagonistic social identities and an ideology of militarism”. Cock (2001, p. 43) continues that “violence is regarded as a legitimate solution to conflict and a crucial means of obtaining and defending power”. The interdependence of certain types of masculinity and militarism has been documented (Hearn, 2003; Klein, 1999), especially in the role that the military and war seem to play in shaping certain images of masculinity (Langa & Eagle, 2008), either as initiators or as victims. During the apartheid era, most men were expected to take up a position in the armed struggle. In fact, from the 1970s to the 1980s, being a soldier in service of the apartheid government was one of the defining traits of white manhood (Visagie, 2001). Most white men were conscripted into the South African Defence Force (SADF) between the ages of 18 and 49 (du Pisani, 2001), and were trained to defend and ensure white minority control of South Africa, both in the interior and along its borders (South African History Online, 2010). On the other hand, many black South African men were recruited into the liberation struggle via political armed wings such as

Umkhonto we Sizwe and were trained in guerrilla warfare (Ellis, 1998). Murder, torture, propaganda and subversion were instruments utilised by both sides of the struggle (Ellis, 1998). Recent trials of members of security forces and evidence uncovered at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission exposed how extensive the torture, murder and arson was during the 1980s and early 1990s (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). The armed struggle led to widespread exposure of violence across South Africa. This is likely to have played a significant role in shaping various constructions of masculinity (i.e., either as initiators or as victims).

According to a study conducted by Hirschowitz and Orkin (1997) in South Africa, a large proportion (23 %) of their respondents, across all race groups, had experienced extreme forms of political violence. Males (28 %) were more likely than females (19 %) to have experienced such a traumatic event (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). Among the male respondents, whites (41 %) and coloureds (41 %) were more likely than blacks (24 %) or Indians (24 %) to have experienced such a traumatic event (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). According to these authors, a traumatic event includes “fighting a war, living through a life threatening incident, being attacked or witnessing an attack, being raped, participating in violence, being tortured, witnessing one’s home being burnt, and being invicted from one’s home” (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997, p. 175). Furthermore, the authors ascribe some of their findings to compulsory conscription for white men during the apartheid era and the large number of gangs situated in coloured communities (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). Furthermore, 17 % of those who had experienced a disturbing or traumatic event described their emotional state as poor (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). A large proportion of females (36 %) and males (32 %) indicated that they experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression as a result of their exposure to violence (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997). These results suggest that South Africa’s violent past has indeed exerted a profound effect on the lives of many South Africans, particularly on most men.

As the apartheid era drew to a close, a process of state demilitarisation began (Cock, 2005b). Between 1990 and 1994, the SADF transformed into the more racially inclusive South African National Defence Force (SANDF), and compulsory conscription for white men, between the ages of 18 and 49, gave way to voluntary recruitment (Cock, 2005b). Furthermore, there was a substantial decrease in the armed forces from 110 000 in 1994 to 59 000 in 2003 (Cock, 2005b). As a result of this demilitarisation strategy there has been a significant increase in the number of

ex-combatants living in South Africa, who have been marred by war, trained in violent means and experienced feelings of marginalisation and dislocation (Cock, 2005b). With widespread poverty and high unemployment rates in South Africa, many have come to rely on criminal violence as a means of livelihood (Cock, 2001). According to Schlemmer and Møller (1997), the high rate of criminal violence in South Africa is a major indicator of a breakdown in social discipline and very high levels of social aggression. Consequently, with high and rising rates of criminal violence, it has been observed that old forms of militarism have given way to contemporary forms, with increasing numbers of South Africans resorting to private gun ownership and relying on private security companies (Cock, 2005b). According to Cock (2001, p. 44), small arms form the basis of a “militarised identity that is lethally connected to gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, and political affiliation”. This militarised identity has become largely normalised and even glorified through television, films, toys, games, business, and sport (Cock, 2001).

The world of business is often viewed as a civilised version of war, where companies and not countries are rivals on the battlefield. Military metaphors in business are commonplace. For example, business models operate according to a vision, mission, and strategy, and contain clear lines of authority and reporting. In sport, participants or teams are viewed as warriors who draw upon their skills and strategies to defend, attack, and compete for an advantage over their opponents. This is where winners are celebrated as heroes and losers are deemed weak, and where the real men are separated from the boys. South Africa has some of the most fervent sport fans in the world, with male-dominated rugby, soccer and cricket being the most popular. Games such as paintball stimulate the sequence of killing one’s opponent. Paintball has become increasingly popular among young, white South African men since 1985 (Cock, 2001). These cultural forms and activities constitute a kind of banal militarism that persists near the surface of social life (Cock, 2001) and serves to affirm and re-affirm certain types of masculinity.

Having described dominant aspects of the South African socio-cultural context, and its varied features, I will briefly direct the focus of this contextual discussion to two additional areas of consideration before discussing literature pertaining to the different experiences and multiple aspects of gay men’s lives. This includes a brief description of Afrikaner history, culture and

identity, and a review of gay rights and social acceptance in South Africa, to further contextualise the focus of this thesis.

Afrikaner history, culture, and identity. While it is acknowledged at the outset that Afrikaners do not represent a separate, identifiable or uniform group (Cloete, 1992), for the purpose of this thesis, the term Afrikaners will refer to a “group of Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans who share certain general cultural characteristics and historical experiences” (van Zyl, 2008, p. 136). In order to understand Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa, it is necessary to review the history and development of Afrikaner identity (Vestergaard, 2001).

According to Stokes (1975), the crucial formative period of Afrikaner society was the period between 1690 and 1835. During the early years of this period, Dutch and French Huguenot settlers established themselves along the frontiers of the Cape Province (Stokes, 1975). The Afrikaners, as they came to be known, had no monolithic identity, no common historic purpose, and no single unifying language at this time (McClintock, 1993). They lived in scattered and semi-nomadic patriarchal households (Stokes, 1975), and spoke a medley of High Dutch and local dialects, mixed with fragments of indigenous African languages (McClintock, 1993). They were mostly engaged in subsistence pastoral activity, supplemented by farming and hunting (Stokes, 1975). There was little formal social or political organisation among the Afrikaners (Stokes, 1975). However, it is believed that a major cohesive force in Afrikaner society was a shared and deeply felt Christian religion (Stokes, 1975).

Discontent with British rule, approximately 12 000 men, women and children left their land in the Cape and migrated eastward and north-eastward into the interior (Stokes, 1975). The Great Trek between 1835 and 1840, which later became a central emblem of Afrikaans historiography, eventually led to the founding of the two so-called Boer republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal (Stokes, 1975). Nevertheless, the British government pursued its quest for expanding imperial British rule, while the two Boer republics maintained their desire for independence (South African History Online, 2010). Ongoing tensions between the Boers and the British served as a major catalyst for both the Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881) and the South African War (1899-1902) (Swart, 2009).

In the aftermath of the South African War (1899-1902), the Afrikaners appeared defeated – the rural economy was shattered, family farms were destroyed, and more than 25 000 Boer women and children died in concentration camps (Swart, 2009). According to Vestergaard (2001), rapid industrialisation around this time also transformed many Afrikaners from farmers into an impoverished urban proletariat. The living standards of Afrikaans-speaking whites were significantly lower than those of English-speaking whites, and in the cities they were forced to compete with blacks for jobs (Vestergaard, 2001). In addition, with the establishment of a Union of South Africa in 1910, English was made the sole official language and the medium of instruction in schools (Swart, 2009). The future of Dutch-Afrikaans, therefore, seemed uncertain (Swart, 2009).

According to writers, the traumatic experience of the South African War, and its after effects, provided the vital stimulus for the development of Afrikaner nationalism as a mass movement during the early to middle 1900s (Dubow, 1992; McClintock, 1993; Morrell, 1998). As such, Afrikaner nationalism may be viewed as a doctrine of crisis (McClintock, 1993). Confused and insecure following their defeat by the British, Afrikaner nationalists sought to confront the power of British imperialism, and focused their energies on issues pertaining to republicanism, language equality, and the poor white question (Dubow, 1992). Soon after the establishment of the Union of South Africa, Afrikaner nationalists formed the Nationalist Party (NP) in 1913, under the political leadership of Barry Hertzog (Brits & Spies, 2007b).

Since its formation in 1913, the National Party steadily grew stronger, gaining more Afrikaner support during each subsequent election (Brits & Spies, 2007b). Hertzog was eventually elected Prime Minister in 1924 (Brits & Spies, 2007a). The following year, Afrikaans was recognised as an official language (Giliomee, 2007a). Hertzog was then re-elected Prime Minister in 1929 (Brits & Spies, 2007b). However, amidst the economic crisis caused by the Great Depression, and as a result of mounting pressure from the farming and mining industries, Hertzog was urged to form a coalition government with Jan Smuts' South African Party in 1933 (Giliomee, 2007a). In 1934, the two parties fused to form the United Party, with Hertzog as leader and Smuts as deputy leader (Giliomee, 2007a). The fusion was based on “the common acceptance of an independent South Africa, equal language rights, ‘civilised labour’ and the need for a solution of the ‘native question’” (Giliomee, 2007a, p. 285). That same year, D.F. Malan's

Gesuiwerde (Purified) National Party was established and recognised as the official opposition party (Giliomee, 2007a). South Africa's entry into the Second World War on the allied side deepened existing divisions within the Afrikaner nationalist movement and resulted in the collapse of the fusion government in 1939 (Dubow, 1992). While Smuts took South Africa into the war, Malan's National Party merged with Hertzog's supporters and became the Herenigde (Reconstituted) National Party in 1940, with Hertzog at the helm (Giliomee, 2007a). After a showdown at a party congress, Hertzog withdrew from the party and Malan assumed the role as leader of the party (Giliomee, 2007a). Although the United Party won the 1943 election, the NP had reportedly grown to the extent that it had achieved the status of an alternative government (Giliomee, 2007a).

In 1948, the NP (in alliance with the Afrikaner Party) narrowly won the elections, and assumed political control over South Africa (du Pisani, 2001; Giliomee, 2007b; Morrell et al., 2012). After the election, D. F. Malan is documented as saying: "Today South Africa belongs to us once more. South Africa is our own for the first time since Union, and may God grant that it will always remain our own" (Giliomee, 2007b, p. 310). Immediately after the 1948 election, the Afrikaner nationalist government abolished British citizenship, scrapped God Save the Queen as a national anthem, removed the Union Jack as a national flag, and assumed control over the naval base in Simon's Town from the Royal Navy (Giliomee, 2007b). The removal of these symbols was seen as a major victory for Afrikaner nationalism (Giliomee, 2007b).

In the name of identity, the Afrikaner nationalist government also created and enforced the policy of apartheid which segregated white, black, coloured, and Indian people in ever more rigid and forceful ways over the next few decades (du Pisani, 2001; Morrell et al., 2012). According to Giliomee (2007b, p. 315), "(a)partheid as a policy was directed at uniting all Afrikaners behind a policy that appealed to both racists and reformers and addressed the interests of all the constituencies in the Afrikaner people". The South African state apparatus was used to promote and maintain Afrikaner Christian nationalist morals and values, and initiate a massive affirmative action programme for Afrikaners (e.g., they staffed the government, received special funds for education, and were given preferential treatment in the awarding of business contracts) (Vestergaard, 2001). As apartheid policies took hold, it became increasingly difficult to question the authority of Afrikaner Christian nationalism (Vestergaard, 2001). While most Afrikaners

benefitted enormously from apartheid economically, they had to comply outwardly with the prevailing Afrikaner Christian nationalist credo (Vestergaard, 2001). Opposing apartheid meant opposing not only one's own people, but also, ultimately, the will of God (Vestergaard, 2001).

According to Vestergaard (2001), the NP electoral victory in 1948 and the instillation of the apartheid system were the culmination of the political success of the Afrikaner Christian nationalist movement (Vestergaard, 2001). The Afrikaner Christian nationalist identity was based on "values of God-fearing Calvinism, structures of patriarchal authority (husband and father, priest, school principal, political leaders – all of whom were representing God on earth), adherence to the traditions invented by the nationalist government, conservative values such as the fundamental importance of the nuclear family and heterosexuality, and, above all, the importance of whiteness" (Vestergaard, 2001, pp. 20-21). Over time, Afrikaner nationalism was also viewed as a racist, militaristic and authoritarian force (du Pisani, 2001).

Behind and within Afrikaner Christian nationalism were prescriptions for correct male behaviour which were woven into hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity (du Pisani, 2001). It is argued that Afrikaner masculinity assumed hegemonic form among white men following the consolidation of Afrikaner dominion in 1948 (Morrell, 1998). According to Sonnekus (2013), hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity can be described as "a gender construct that allows no exceptions and disdains all contradictions to the manliness it deems absolute. It developed from and perpetuates the heteronormative, racist paradigms of Afrikaner nationalism and is therefore exercised on a foundation of consent, acquiescence and institutional power. Despite its professed authority, hegemonic Afrikaner Masculinity is not impervious to negotiation, subversion and ultimately transformation" (p. 24). Furthermore, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity may be viewed as a manifestation of Afrikaner Christian nationalist ideology, buttressed mainly by the Dutch Reformed Church, which placed considerable emphasis on morality, asceticism, industriousness and heteronormativity (du Pisani, 2001; Sonnekus, 2013). In conjunction with these attributes, ideal displays of manliness were to be found on the rugby field and in the military – a distinct macho aesthetic (Morrell et al., 2012; Sonnekus, 2013).

It is also argued that hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was essentially puritan in nature. According to du Pisani (2001), the puritan basis of Afrikaner masculine ideals stemmed from the strong influence of religion in Afrikaner society, and the close synergy between religious,

political and cultural leadership in Afrikanerdom. Initially, the puritan ideal of Afrikaner masculinity was expressed in the image of the simple, honest, steadfast, religious and hard-working Boer (farmer) (du Pisani, 2001). This image remained a dominant representation of Afrikaans men long after the majority of Afrikaners had ceased to be farmers (du Pisani, 2001).

Puritan Afrikaners also endorsed the principle of patriarchal authority and viewed the male-headed family as the foundation of a healthy society (du Pisani, 2001). The power of patriarchy in Afrikaner social life had become firmly entrenched in gender relation patterns long before the advent of apartheid (du Pisani, 2001; Visagie, 2001). During the height of apartheid, the majority of Afrikaner women were believed to support rather than challenge male domination at home (du Pisani, 2001). The traditional notion was that a man should fully accept his responsibilities as husband and father when he entered into marriage, and that promiscuity, infidelity and divorce should be condemned (du Pisani, 2001). However, the 1970s exposed a much darker side to Afrikaner masculinity. Up to the 1960s, an image of the family and home as a safe haven prevailed (du Pisani, 2001). But then, with the publishing of dozens of letters by women who were victims of male violence at home, and daughters who were sexually abused by their fathers, the traditional image of the so-called good father was shattered (du Pisani, 2001). Domestic violence by men within families emerged as a major social problem in Afrikaner society (du Pisani, 2001). Authoritarianism and militarism have been consistent features of conservative Afrikaner masculinity (du Pisani, 2001). According to du Pisani (2001, p. 165), “(a)uthoritarian tendencies among Afrikaners are attributed to religious views based on Calvinist Protestantism, which endorse the principles of the sovereignty of God and predestination, and start from the premise that there is only one correct way of thinking and behaving”. Most Afrikaner men are guilt-driven to respect and obey leaders and authority, adhere to rules, maintain a self-image of moral superiority, and the tendency to place people in separate categories by classifying them as different or other (du Pisani, 2001). Because of the strong ethnic identification among Afrikaners individual critical thinking was not welcomed and both personal needs and group values were subjected to the cohesion of the group and its members (du Pisani, 2001).

Three arguments can be distilled from the literature on the exact nature of contemporary Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity and its direction. The first argument holds that hegemonic

Afrikaner masculinity has shifted over time to accommodate social change and gender challenge, largely from sources such as the youth, women, global culture, and class transformation (du Pisani, 2001). For example, the rural-based symbol of masculinity has been modified and supplemented by modern, and more urban-based masculine symbols (du Pisani, 2001). In addition, some Afrikaner men are believed to have joined the ranks of the so-called “new men”, by accepting changing gender roles, striving to be non-sexist, non-autocratic, and more involved in domestic responsibilities, attempting to be emotionally more responsive, and more willing to criticise their own position and practices (du Pisani, 2001).

The second argument holds that while some shifts may have taken place, many Afrikaner men still refuse to let go of patriarchal norms that once positioned them at the apex of power in South Africa (Sonnekus, 2013). The father in Afrikaans culture remains the local, familial embodiment of political authority (Visagie, 2001). Their attitudes towards women also reflect the sentiments and practices of any other patriarchal society (Cloete, 1992; Visagie, 2001). Furthermore, many Afrikaner men continue to revere the ideals of Puritanism (manifested in values such as hard work, sacrifice, and dedication) and heteronormativity (du Pisani, 2001; Pretorius, 2013; Sonnekus, 2013). As such, it is argued that hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity has not lost its essential puritan character (du Pisani, 2001), and is still perpetuated within Afrikaner society (Sonnekus, 2013). For example, sports heroes still convey the message that through dedication, self-application, discipline and hard work one can become successful (du Pisani, 2001). Furthermore, the basic idea that a man and woman can only find complete fulfillment in a heterosexual relationship in a context of domestic stability and security is still upheld (du Pisani, 2001).

According to the third argument, the end of apartheid in 1994 signalled the end of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity (Pretorius, 2013). For decades, being a white male meant being kept from poverty, with jobs in the traditional Afrikaner preserves like the mines, railways, the police, and the civil service being passed down from father to son (Swart, 2001). However, since the ending of apartheid white fathers are being retrenched and their sons face competition from blacks in the workplace (Swart, 2001). As such, the template for Afrikaner manliness now struggles for authority and legitimacy among other empowered individuals (Sonnekus, 2013). The loss of hegemony has therefore resulted in a need for Afrikaner men to re-invent themselves in order to

adapt to the changing situation (Swart, 2001). While it is not easy to determine the exact nature of contemporary Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity and its direction, as indicated by the arguments above, it does appear though that perceptions and metaphors of masculinity are transforming, as is evident in the diverse expressions of masculinity over the last few decades (du Pisani, 2001).

Looking at contemporary shifts among white Afrikaners more generally, the end of apartheid also marked the end of white political, economic and cultural supremacy in South Africa (Sonnekus, 2013; van Zyl, 2008), and introduced a host of new uncertainties among white Afrikaners (Vestergaard, 2001). According to van Zyl (2008, p. 138), “(m)uch of their traditional identity and historic thinking based on the close identification between the Afrikaans language, white domination, cultural supremacy and Afrikaner nationalism (became) obsolete within the new South Africa”. The changing status of national Afrikaner symbols reflects a general delegitimisation of Afrikaner national history, which included the narrative that Afrikaners were the Chosen People, and that their right to rule South Africa was an expression of the will of God (Vestergaard, 2001). As such, it appears that most Afrikaners have been left feeling marginalised and without formal political power (van Zyl, 2008). Furthermore, persisting stereotypes continue to associate the white Afrikaner identity with apartheid, racism and exclusivity, and therefore remains a sinister signifier of suppression for many South Africans (Cloete, 1992; van Zyl, 2008).

The end of apartheid therefore made it necessary for white Afrikaners to establish a new, depoliticised Afrikaner identity in order to adapt to the new context (van Zyl, 2008; Vestergaard, 2001). As such, it appears that most white Afrikaners prefer not to associate themselves with an ethnic identity at all (Vestergaard, 2001). Rather, they are seen to retreat to the cultural sphere where they are more inclined to adopt a culturally-based identity (van Zyl, 2008). In addition, most white Afrikaners appear more concerned about issues such as education, the economy, jobs, and above all, crime (Vestergaard, 2001). These concerns are shared by most other groups in South Africa (Vestergaard, 2001).

While many heterodox Afrikaners adjusted to the new situation, the orthodox have rejected, and continue to reject, it (Swart, 2001; Vestergaard, 2001). Some Afrikaner intellectuals still uphold the importance of whiteness and Afrikaner ethnic identity, and even argue for an

independent volkstaat for Afrikaners (e.g., Orania in the Northern Cape) (van Zyl, 2008); Vestergaard, 2001). Elsewhere it has been argued that the economic and political emasculation of white (Afrikaans) men as South Africa abolished apartheid and asserted the rights of women, blacks and gays, has resulted in increased instances of domestic violence, rape and homophobia as some men attempt to reclaim their lost power (du Pisani, 2001; Sonnekus, 2013). Although trends in Afrikaner culture have followed general Western trends, globalising influences have not led to the wholesale abandonment of former racial, religious and class distinctions underlying Afrikaner ethnic and masculine identities (du Pisani, 2001).

In short, no matter their political views, all Afrikaners would agree that the new multiracial democratic dispensation in South Africa has radically transformed their social world (Vestergaard, 2001). While many Afrikaners are adapting relatively well to the new South Africa, others feel increasingly alienated (Goosen, 2005; Vestergaard, 2001).

Gay rights and social acceptance in South Africa. Legislation to penalise same-sex sexual behaviour existed from the nineteenth century in the territories that were joined to form the Union of South Africa in 1910 (du Pisani, 2012). Initially, when the NP came into power in 1948, incidents of same-sex sexual activity were regarded as isolated, and priority was therefore given to the racial rather than the gendered order of society (du Pisani, 2012; Retief, 1994). However, as white gay men became increasingly visible in urban settings, the apartheid government redirected its attention and resources to the issue of white gay men in the late 1950s and early 1960s (du Pisani, 2012). It is significant to note that while the apartheid government sought to tighten the control of same-sex sexuality, through criminalisation, intimidation and silence, this was mainly in terms of white same-sex sexuality (du Pisani, 2012; Sonnekus, 2013). For instance, black miner's same-sex sexual behaviours were common enough to be acknowledged, and even encouraged, by the state (Swarr, 2004). Same-sex sexual practices on the mines were viewed as an outlet for black male sexuality (Swarr, 2004). As such, black same-sex sexuality was supported by the apartheid government to the extent that it facilitated control over black labour (Swarr, 2004). White gay men, on the other hand, were regarded by the ruling elite to be "a weakness in the fabric of white society and a threat to hegemonic masculinity and white supremacy in the country" (du Pisani, 2012, p. 188).

The Immorality Act (later known as the Sexual Offences Act) was passed in 1957 (du Pisani, 2012; Retief, 1994). Although the Act dealt mainly with prostitution, brothels, and sex across the colour bar, certain sections of the Act also applied to same-sex sexual activities (du Pisani, 2012; Retief, 1994). Although sodomy was a common law offence, sex between consenting adult men in private was not criminalised (du Pisani, 2012; Kennedy, 2006). Following a police raid on a party at a private home in Forest Town, attended by more than 300 white gay men, the South African Police proposed amendments to the Immorality Act in order to punish all same-sex sexual acts, whether public or private, and to introduce harsher punishment (du Pisani, 2012; Kennedy, 2006; Retief, 1994). In 1968, draft legislation was proposed in the form of the Immorality Amendment Bill, with the express purpose to assemble a select committee to investigate the issues properly, with inputs from experts and submissions from the public, and then to formulate new legislation (du Pisani, 2012; Retief, 1994). Evidence presented by medical and legal experts made it clear that stricter legislation was neither justifiable nor practicable (du Pisani, 2012). In light of the evidence, the parliamentary select committee made the following recommendations: (a) increase the age of consent for same-sex sexual practices from 16 to 19 years of age; (b) outlaw dildos; and (c) outlaw any homo-erotic act at a party (i.e., a gathering of more than two people) (Kennedy, 2006). The narrow focus on a party meant that public homo-erotic acts would be considered illegal (du Pisani, 2012). Although the clause excluded sex that occurred between consenting adult men in private, it still conveyed the strong message that white gay men should remain hidden so that South Africa could continue its conservative, Christian tradition without any visible threat to its power and well-established hegemonic masculinity (Sinclair, 2004, cited in du Pisani, 2012). As a result, gay men were forced to live a life of stealth (du Pisani, 2012). As long as they kept to themselves, and didn't attract too much attention, and didn't try to corrupt so-called normal persons, especially young boys, they were left to do their own thing (du Pisani, 2012). Although the proposed bill in its entirety was not turned into law, Cabinet did approve the recommended amendments made by the parliamentary select committee and passed these clauses into law in 1969 (du Pisani, 2012; Kennedy, 2006; Retief, 1994). During the 1970s, there were almost 4 000 prosecutions, and more than 2 000 convictions for same-sex sexual activities (du Pisani, 2012). State repression of same-sex sexuality was also evident in the programme initiated by the South African Defence

Force that ruthlessly stigmatised and abused suspected gay and lesbian conscripts in training and troops in the permanent force (Conway, 2009; du Pisani, 2012; van der Merwe, 2006).

However, in the 1980s, the police stopped the constant harassment of gay bars and social gatherings, and adopted a lower profile with respect to the gay community (Retief, 1994). Furthermore, anti-gay legislation was seldom applied, gay couples openly lived together, the Gay Association of South Africa was established (1982), and the first National Gay Convention was held (1985) (du Pisani, 2001). A possible reason for the state withdrawing its campaign against white gay men can be found in the argument by Conway (2009, p. 852) that “(t)he destabilisation of apartheid and the fragmentation of white unity created the need to incorporate hitherto excluded whites in an effort to reformulate the white community, isolate white dissidents and stave off further division”. Parallel with these developments, the 1980s also saw the emergence of the AIDS crisis, which emphasised the dangers of promiscuity and lifestyles contrary to societal mores, resurrected homophobia, and seemed to harden attitudes of those with an anti-gay stance (du Pisani, 2001).

The 1990s marked a significant turning point for gay men and lesbian women in South Africa (Croucher, 2002). Since the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1996, which is regarded as a first in the world to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gay and lesbian activists have systematically challenged the constitutionality of discriminatory laws, lobbied for legislation that guarantees equal rights, organised voter education drives, established outreach programmes for gays and lesbians in townships, and maintained alliances with national institutions such as the Commission on Gender Equality and the Human Rights Commission (Croucher, 2002; Kennedy, 2006; Swarr, 2004). Furthermore, gays and lesbians have also brought populist litigation before the South African courts that has led to the decriminalisation of sodomy, the right of foreign partners of gay South Africans to the same immigration exemptions as heterosexual spouses, the right of gays and lesbians to secure employer benefits for their partners, the right of same-sex couples to adopt children, and more recently, the right of gays and lesbians to get married (Croucher, 2002; Sember, 2009).

Although South African gay men (and lesbian women) have succeeded in claiming their citizenship (Reddy, 2002), it is argued that legal recognition has not automatically translated into social acceptance (Hames, 2007; Kennedy, 2006; Reid, 2010). “Gay-bashing” and the so-called

“corrective rape” of lesbian women is a disturbing occurrence in South Africa, especially in townships (Kennedy, 2006). According to the Social Attitudes Survey conducted by the HSRC in 2003, disapproval of same-sex relations was at the 64% level amongst coloured, 70% amongst white, 75% amongst Indian/Asian, and 81% amongst black respondents (Rule & Mncwango, 2006).

While it is argued that same-sex sexuality has always existed within Afrikaner society, the silence about and denial of its existence in Afrikaner society persisted for the greater part of the twentieth century (du Pisani, 2012). Not only was same-sex sexuality regarded as sinful and unnatural, but also that it should not be spoken about as this might inadvertently corrupt society and result in moral decay (du Pisani, 2012). Elsewhere, it is observed that many Afrikaners maintained the discourse that same-sex sexuality is foreign to, and inconsistent with, true Afrikaner identity (Croucher, 2002). However, since the emergence of the *verligtes* (more open-minded moderates) within the inner circles of Afrikanerdom during the 1960s, it is argued that conservatism gradually lost ground and a liberalisation of the moral values underlying Afrikaner cultural identity took place (du Pisani, 2012). Nevertheless, the majority of Afrikaners’ attitudes towards same-sex sexuality have not changed significantly and prejudice persists (du Pisani, 2001; 2012). Furthermore, while the Afrikaans churches’ view of same-sex sexuality has softened since the 1970s, it has not changed fundamentally (du Pisani, 2012). Same-sex sexuality is still regarded as being in conflict with the biblical doctrine (du Pisani, 2012). However, church members are encouraged to be tolerant and assist same-sex individuals to be healed by the grace of God (du Pisani, 2001). As such, the majority of Afrikaans same-sex individuals have not come out because they still fear condemnation by society, rejection by their families, and victimisation in the workplace (du Pisani, 2001; 2012).

Gay Identity Development

In line with the shift away from the traditional psychiatric view of homosexuality as a form of pathology towards the contemporary view of homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987), there has been a proliferation of articles exploring the concept of gay/homosexual identity formation (Cass, 1983/4), with a variety of developmental stage models being proposed since the early 1980s (Davies, 1996; Elizur & Ziv, 2001). However, before discussing identity development in greater depth, it is perhaps useful to clarify a number of

related key terms and concepts first in order to ensure a deeper conceptual understanding of the development of gay identity as a whole.

According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) working definition of sexuality, sexuality is broadly viewed as a "central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always expressed or experienced. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, and religious and spiritual factors" (WHO, 2002, p. 5). This definition is very broad, but is useful in that it illustrates the complexity and variability of human sexuality.

Although utilised interchangeably with the broader term sexuality, a person's sexual identity consists of five interrelated, yet distinct, dimensions which cumulatively contribute to an awareness or perception of the self as a sexual being. According to Jung and Smith (1993), these dimensions include biological sex, gender identity, social gender role, sexual orientation, and sexual behaviour. The view that sexuality consists of these five interrelated, yet distinct dimensions is significant in the light of the ongoing conflation of these dimensions within our culture which essentially maintains the heteronormative assumption that, for example, male = masculine = heterosexual (Tillman, 2010). As presented here, the relationship between these dimensions are indeed complex and somewhat unclear (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987), as the degree of correspondence between them can appear inconsistent, and at times even contradictory (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Biological sex refers to the chromosomes, external genitalia, internal genitalia, hormonal composition, gonads and secondary sex characteristics that are associated with being male or female (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). These aspects are mostly present from birth and become more pronounced with advancing age. Children learn what sex they are at around ages three or four, and are able to accurately identify other people's sex soon thereafter (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987). Gender identity refers to the psychological sense of, or primary identification with, being male or female (Pillard, 1991). The conviction that a person is either male or female is usually present at around age two to three (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). The knowledge that gender

identity remains stable over time is present at approximately age four and the knowledge that one's gender remains constant across situations is present at around age five to seven (Louw, van Ede, & Louw, 1998). An individual's gender identity may or may not correspond accurately with their assigned biological sex.

Related to, and in part derived from, gender identity is social gender role, which refers to the adoption of heterosexually defined cultural norms and expectations about how men and women should ideally behave within a particular culture, at a particular time (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990; Pillard, 1991). The adoption of these cultural norms and expectations manifests as a set of narrowly defined and mutually exclusive behaviour patterns and attitudes that are largely considered appropriate or typical for either a male or female. An individual's gender role may be gender-typical (i.e., male/masculine or female/feminine), gender-neutral (i.e., androgynous), or gender-atypical (i.e., male/feminine or female/masculine), and may therefore appear congruent or incongruent with societal expectations of their core gender identity or biological sex (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). A person's gender role is built up through the course of their life experiences (Sadock & Sadock, 2003) and is generally reinforced by family members, peers, the media, and religious and political institutions (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990). Failure to conform to society's traditional gender roles may result in ridicule, rejection, harassment or even violence (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990). As soon as children are able to identify themselves as boys or girls, at approximately ages two to three, they also become increasingly aware of the prevailing gender stereotypes (Louw et al., 1998). As such, they will begin to demonstrate clear preferences in gestures, toys, and activities (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987), which will become even stronger after age six, once gender constancy has been formed (Louw et al., 1998). Interestingly, from around age four, boys generally become increasingly more gender-typed in their behaviours than girls and children (and parents) of both sexes generally become less tolerant of gender-atypical behaviour in boys (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987). In general, boys are ingrained with cultural expectations to be emotionally unaffected, restricted or distant, interpersonally dominant, aggressive, and competitive (Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998).

The next component is sexual orientation, which is defined as an enduring pattern of psychological, emotional, romantic or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes (APA, 2008). It is widely accepted that sexual orientation is understood in terms of three categories:

heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Although there are a number of theories and models formulated to explain the relationship between these different sexual orientations, the most widely accepted understanding is that these sexual orientations exist along a continuum, ranging from exclusive heterosexuality on the one end to exclusive homosexuality on the opposite end, with varying degrees of bisexuality in between (APA, 2008; Troiden, 1993). One out of every ten South Africans is believed to have a predominantly homosexual orientation (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). While there is no consensus among scientists on the factor or factors that determine one's sexual orientation (APA, 2008), there are some scholars that argue that a person's sexual orientation is determined by around four years of age (Jung & Smith, 1993), well before the age at which conscious choice would indicate (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). A study conducted by Isaacs and McKendrick (1992) in Cape Town revealed that two-thirds of their ninety respondents first became aware of their same-sex attraction between the ages of ten and nineteen years, with a mean age of thirteen years. This is largely in line with international findings that suggest males first become aware of their same-sex attraction on average between the ages of thirteen and fourteen years (Davies, 1996). Here too, it is argued that a person's biological sex, gender identity, and gender role have no clear linear relationship with their sexual orientation. For example, although most gay men have a firm identification of themselves as being male, most appear to be more androgynous than gender typical or atypical (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987).

The last component relating to sexual identity is sexual behaviour, which refers to a range of sexual activities that can occur between members of the same or opposite sex (Davies & Neal, 1996). Boys generally become sexually active at a younger age during adolescence than girls do (Louw et al., 1998). Again, sexual activity does not dictate or imply one's sexual identity (Mosher, 2001), as sexual behaviour may or may not appear congruent with what broader society may expect from one's biological sex, gender identity, gender role or sexual orientation.

Although distinct from one another, these components cumulatively inform and shape a person's overarching sexual identity, and essentially their perception and presentation of themselves as male or female, masculine or feminine, and gay, lesbian, straight or bisexual in relation to intimate, romantic, erotic, or sexual contexts.

Many sexual identity theorists have long maintained that homosexual identity is a synonym for sexual identity, which can arguably be traced back to the traditional psychoanalytic view of homosexuality as a manifestation of fixation at the oedipal stage of sexual identity development (Cass, 1983/4). However, Cass (1983/4) argues that sexual identity and homosexual identity should be treated as separate concepts as the structure and concepts of each may refer to different phenomena (Cass, 1983/4). In line with this argument, sexual identity is viewed as an individual's overall conception of self as a sexual being, whereas homosexual identity may include both sexual and non-sexual elements (e.g., being a member of a minority group) (Cass, 1983/4). In addition to these identity-based arguments is the ongoing debate around the appropriateness of referring to a homosexual identity versus a gay identity. It has been argued that the term homosexual is largely problematic as its root meanings are not entirely accurate, it has been associated with the diagnosis and treatment of pathology, is largely focused on behaviour or an explicit sexual act, and is simply outdated (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). However, it has also been argued that the term gay, which actually predates the term homosexuality by several centuries (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992), is also problematic as it generally describes a particular identity rooted in the socio-political history and context of the West, connotes frivolousness and triviality (Gonsiorek & Weinberg, 1991), and is only applicable to individuals who identify with and are affiliated to a particular gay sub-culture (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). Nonetheless, it would seem that a gay identity is a more advanced identity that transcends behaviour and reflects an individual's development of strategies for managing a stigmatised minority status. It is against the back-drop of these ongoing debates and tensions that I am inclined to agree with propositions that a homosexual identity is not necessarily a synonym for sexual identity and that the term gay is preferred above the term homosexual, as it is generally considered more contemporary, less clinical, more inclusive, and more widely accepted among most self-identified gay men themselves. However, in certain instances the term homosexual or the more recent terms same-sex sexuality or same-sex practicing individual may be used to refer more generally to both gay men and lesbian women, depending on the particular context of usage.

As mentioned previously, various theoretical developmental models of gay identity formation have been proposed over the last forty years (Davies, 1996). Although these models differ in terms of the number of stages proposed (Troiden, 1993), and the differential emphasis

accorded to critical issues such as identity disclosure (Rowen & Malcolm, 2002), each of these models attempts to describe the complex ongoing developmental process by which an individual first comes to consider and later acquire the identity of being gay as a relevant aspect of the self (Cass, 1979). Broadly, it has been suggested that gay identities develop as individuals work through internal conflicts and stresses related to being gay (Elizur & Ziv, 2001). By resolving feelings of inner confusion, ambivalence and a fear of possible rejection, gay men gradually consolidate an affirmative sense of self that enables them to accept and express their same-sex sexual orientation (Elizur & Ziv, 2001). The consolidation of an affirmative gay identity is considered by most researchers and theorists to be associated with mental health (Elizur & Ziv, 2001). A number of these developmental models have identified the following critical milestones for developing an integrated sense of self as a person with a gay orientation: a) first sexual experiences; b) self-labelling as a gay man; and c) disclosure to family and friends (Maguen, Floyd, Bakeman, & Armistead, 2002).

From the range of developmental models proposed, the model developed and refined by Vivienne Cass (1979; 1996) appears to be one of the most researched and widely cited models in sexual identity literature (Eliason, 1996, cited in Mosher, 2001). Although largely developed within a Western Anglo-American socio-cultural context, these models represent useful frameworks for ordering concrete observations in a logical manner, thereby providing meaningful descriptions that can be subjected to further analysis and comparison (Troiden, 1993). And where variations exist, it is argued that these variations can be examined and possibly explained, leading to further refinements in these models so that they correspond more closely to the empirical reality they attempt to explain (Troiden, 1993). It is also acknowledged, that over time, changes in societal attitudes and expectations may require that further changes be made to these models (Cass, 1979). A study conducted by Graziano (2004) has demonstrated the applicability of Cass' model with the South African context.

The model of identity formation, developed by Cass, rests on two basic assumptions, namely that identity is acquired through a developmental process, and that behaviour is shaped by a dynamic interaction between the individual and his or her environments (Cass, 1979). The said interactionist model proposes six non-age-specific stages, with a pre-stage before stage one, to describe the developmental process individuals appear to move through in order to acquire a

fully integrated gay identity (Cass, 1979, 1996). According to this model, individuals possess the opportunity to advance through each of the stages, or stop at any point along the way, until incongruence motivates them to move on again (Davies, 1996). Growth is viewed to occur when the individual is able to “resolve the inconsistency between their perception of self and others at both a cognitive and affective level” (Davies, 1996, p. 76). The stages are presented as follows: Pre-stage one; Stage one – Identity Confusion; Stage two – Identity Comparison; Stage three – Identity Tolerance; Stage four – Identity Acceptance; Stage five – Identity Pride; and Stage six – Identity Synthesis. Cass (1996) argues that these stages are useful insofar as they identify significant shifts that occur in an individual’s cognitions and interactional relationships. Within each stage several pathways of development or strategies of action are described illustrating the uniqueness of each individual and the potential differences that exist in relation to personal and socio-cultural factors, including the degree of negative and positive perceptions towards same-sex sexuality, the specific personal needs of individuals, different levels and types of support available, personal styles in conflict management and communication patterns, and gender-related experiences (Cass, 1996). As such, the developmental process, and the length of time taken to proceed through these stages, may differ from person to person, depending on the context (Cass, 1979).

Although it is beyond the scope of this review to demonstrate the complexities of each stage of Cass’ (1979; 1996) model, a brief description of the first stage, identity confusion, is furnished in order to illustrate the various pathways that individuals may follow. Identity confusion begins when an individual becomes increasingly aware that there is something different about their behaviour (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and behaviours), and that the label of being gay may be personally relevant as a descriptor. If strong enough, this growing awareness may compel the individual to reflect on the following questions: “Does this mean I am gay?”, “Am I really straight?”, or “Who am I?”. These powerful questions may result in further curiosity, confusion or intense conflict. Three pathways can be observed at this point leading to two alternative outcomes.

Pathway one occurs when an individual accepts the meaning of being gay as an accurate and desirable account of their feelings and behaviour. There is no attempt to alter this meaning. Rather, the previously assumed heterosexual identity comes into question. They begin searching

for further information to reduce any confusion that may be experienced. The more certain the individual becomes about their own feelings and behaviour, the more acute the incongruence becomes. Attempts to resolve this increasing incongruence compels the individual to advance to the next stage of identity comparison.

Pathway two occurs for individuals who accept the correctness of the meaning of their behaviour, but find this meaning undesirable. These individuals may attempt to inhibit all questionable behaviours and restrict or deny relevant gay-related information in order to remove the undesirable element. If successful at this point, conflict and confusion are removed and identity foreclosure will occur. Identity foreclosure ensures that they deny any past same-sex behaviour, return to an account of their behaviour as being non-homosexual and adopt a strong anti-gay stance. The degree to which an individual can maintain the inhibitions depends on his or her ability to withdraw from potentially provocative situations, his or her ability to effectively use denial as a defence mechanism, and his or her ability to adopt and maintain either an asexual or a heterosexual stance. However, for most gay men a heterosexual role may be difficult to sustain and increasing family pressure may challenge an asexual image. If unsuccessful, the possibility of being gay is slowly acknowledged, albeit unwillingly, and often from a negative perspective. This may mark the beginning of a resulting negative or self-hating identity.

Pathway three occurs when the meaning of one's behaviour is considered neither correct nor desirable. These individuals are strongly motivated to re-define their behaviour to mean non-gay. This re-definition is achieved by changing either the meaning of the actions engaged in (e.g., "I was only fooling around"), or the context in which the behaviour occurred (e.g., "I was drunk and taken advantage of"). If successful, foreclosure occurs and the original meaning of being heterosexual is restored. However, if unsuccessful, individuals are forced to accept that the meaning of being gay is applicable and they will then continue along pathway two.

For gay men, the successful resolution of each stage ideally brings with it the following changes: (a) increasing use of the concept of gay to account for and understand the self; (b) increasing use of the term gay as an explanation of the self within a wider number of interpersonal interchanges; (c) development of increasingly positive feelings about being a gay man; (d) increasing belief that one belongs to the gay social group and strengthening of social ties with other gay men; (e) gradual acceptance of positive values about same-sex practising

individuals as a social group; (f) increasing independence from broader heterosexual norms and values; and (g) a gradual shift in the use of the concept of gay as a means of labelling the self towards a description of an inner belief in the self (Cass, 1996). In the literature, the consolidation of an affirmative gay identity is associated with mental health, including self-worth, well-being, psychological adjustment, and adult attachment security (Elizur & Ziv, 2001).

It is clear from the above and other models that identity formation is both complex and multivariable, demonstrating an ongoing dynamic interaction between psychological, physiological and socio-cultural influences (Cass, 1996; Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). Identity formation does not occur in isolation from other processes and issues taking place in one's life (Cass, 1996), such as an adolescent's stage-related general development, which includes a particular focus on self-esteem, sense of identity, and social skills (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987). As a group, it is believed that adolescents today face greater risks to their current and future health than ever before (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). For gay youths, particularly, all of these developmental processes occur against a back-drop where a dominant hegemonic masculinity persists (Morrell, 2001), heterosexuality is portrayed as the only acceptable outlet for sexual expression, same-sex sexuality is de-valued and widely presented as a stigmatised status (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1993), and there is an apparent lack of gay models of sexual appropriateness; thus, creating a void for gay individuals exploring their sexuality (Mosher, 2001). All gay men develop and live in heterosexual contexts, including heterosexual families, peer groups, and educational systems, and as a result, grow up with the same stereotypes, moral judgements, and homo-negative responses as most others do (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). Developing and living in such a context inevitably presents a range of challenges and stressors (e.g., not wanting to be part of a hated group) that can make it especially difficult for gay men to establish and maintain a sense of self-esteem and positive identity, which may result in a variety of negative health outcomes and self-defeating behaviours (Grossman, 1997; Hunter & Schaecher, 1990). Generally, an adolescent with "a history and repertoire of successful adaptation skills as well as a history of secure attachment will navigate the[se] process[es] – all things being equal – more successfully than the adolescent with a history of poor relational and coping abilities" (Tharinger & Wells, 2000, p. 162). These challenges and stressors are likely to become more acute during the coming out process. According to Cass (1979, 1996), to family and friends coming out is

considered a significant, albeit stressful and sometimes traumatic, event during the identity formation process of gay men.

Coming Out Experiences

Coming out has been defined in the literature as a complicated developmental process by which an individual acknowledges his sexual orientation and declares his identity as being gay to family, friends or others who may have assumed that he is heterosexual or straight (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Waldner & Magruder, 1999). As indicated above, the process of coming out is part of, and follows on from, a complicated developmental process (Davies, 1996; Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). It is widely believed amongst mental health professionals that, as a prerequisite for the development of a positive and integrated gay identity, coming out can foster greater well-being and mental health (APA, 2008). It has been argued that coming out to one's family potentially enables "an individual to integrate gay and straight lives, assert maturity, renegotiate power within family relationships, and test the strength of blood ties" (Beeler & DiProva, 1999, p. 444). Further, being out can potentially bring relief from the burden of hiding, validate same-sex relationships, and enable the couple to access some intergenerational support such as inclusion of both members of the couple in family events (LaSala, 2000a). According to Maguen et al. (2002), the process of coming out can only occur once the individual is able to formulate a personal understanding of being different from others, and how this difference relates to a sexual orientation identity. Further, according to Herdt and Boxer (1993), coming out is seen as an ongoing process that requires a gay person to (a) unlearn the principles and assumptions of essentialist heterosexuality; (b) unlearn the stereotypes and myths surrounding same-sex sexuality; (c) learn the ways of the gay culture they are entering; and (d) decide on a daily basis whether to disclose and to whom to disclose. In addition to the process of unlearning, is the equally important process of actively incorporating positive beliefs about their sexual orientation, which is usually achieved through affirmative positive social interaction and intimate self-disclosure (Hanley-Hackenbruck, 1988).

Although widely recognised as an important psychological step for young gay men, coming out remains a struggle for most (Maguen et al., 2002; Savin-Williams, 1989a), and many hesitate to come out because of the potential risks involved (APA, 2008). The same can be said about gay men in South Africa. As already discussed, South Africa is generally viewed as a

conservative, divisive, and traditional society, with a patriarchal culture of male dominance and machismo (Hames, 2007; Nell & Shapiro, 2011). In general, this dominant culture is viewed as not being supportive of same-sex sexuality (Cock, 2005a; Nel & Joubert, 1997; Reid, 2010; Rule & Mncwango, 2006). As a result, gay men in South Africa continue to face oppression, marginalisation, and discrimination because of their sexual orientation (Nel et al., 2007). Noting these potential risks, some young gay men choose to hide their sexual orientation, while others choose to confront the potential risks and come out either to a limited audience or in a very public manner (APA, 2008). Although disclosure can occur at any point in the life-span, it has been determined that, on average, most gay adolescents in the United States first report their gay orientation to another person between the ages of sixteen and twenty years (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Similarly, a study conducted by Isaacs and McKendrick (1992) in Cape Town revealed that the majority of young gay men came out between mid-adolescence and early adulthood, with a mean age of twenty-two years. The process of coming out usually occurs several years after the first awareness of a same-sex attraction (Maguen et al., 2002).

Research has revealed that gay-affirming resources are important for an emerging gay identity (Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991). The options available to a young gay individual struggling with their gay identity or coming out, in terms of accessing appropriate information, support, and validation, were rather limited in the past (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987). Despite certain arguments in the past that available information and support in South Africa was sorely lacking in comparison to many developed countries (Nel et al., 2007), the situation has improved considerably over the last two decades (Nell & Shapiro, 2011). In South Africa today, there are a number of established LGBT non-profit support organisations available (namely OUT LGBT Well-being situated in Tshwane, Gauteng; Gender DynamiX and The Triangle Project situated in Cape Town, Western Cape; The Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre situated in Durban, KwaZulu Natal). These organisations provide a range of much needed psychosocial support services, including face-to-face and telephonic counselling as well as various community building initiatives. It is argued, however, that the reach of these organisations remains limited to those who know of their existence and are able to access their services. However, for many, the internet has also become a valuable resource, not only in terms of accessing information about lifestyle issues, but also in providing immediate access to other

gay individuals. Many book shops now provide a wide variety of gay and lesbian related books and magazines.

Given that South Africa's dominant culture remains largely unsupportive of same-sex sexuality (Cock, 2005a), as already mentioned, it has been observed that a gay sub-culture has developed as a result and serves to affirm and validate a certain type of same-sex sexuality (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). Although largely built upon the foundations of a well-developed bar and club culture (Nel et al., 2007), and in the absence of a broader sense of community, it is argued that this sub-culture (or gay scene) provides access to various gay role-models, albeit of a certain kind, serves as a buffer against heterosexism, encourages the acceptance of one's same-sex sexuality, and allows for the development of relationships, self-confidence, and gay-affirmative attitudes (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). However, this sub-culture has also been noted as being inextricably linked with a spirit of sexual indoctrination (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992), which has been largely implicated in the maintenance of negative peer norms encouraging promiscuity and sexual risk-taking (Livingston & Nel, 2008). Beyond this sub-culture, it is recognised that available socialisation experiences for young gay men remain largely limited (Nel & Joubert, 1995). In many cases, young gay men are simply not allowed to explore and develop their identity and patterns of behaviour congruent with their sexual orientation (Nel & Joubert, 1995).

Despite the relative increase in available information and support for many gay men, coming out in a heterosexist culture continues to isolate and stigmatise individuals, which can invariably lead to further distress (Mosher, 2001). The family-of-origin is considered to be one of the most important groups to which a young person belongs, generally providing protection and love in times of need (Hunter & Schaefer, 1990). However, the family-of-origin of gay men is deeply immersed in a broader heterosexist culture, and therefore shares many of its heterosexist assumptions and biases (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). As a primary socialisation agent that is largely supportive of broader heterosexual values and norms (Waldner & Magruder, 1999), the family-of-origin is seen to provide a gay child with a continuous direct or indirect message that heterosexuality is assumed and encouraged (Stein & Cabaj, 1996), while same-sex sexuality should be concealed or is condemned outright (Savin-Williams, 1989b; Smith, Kippax, & Chapple, 1998). With this message, parents generally see no need, and have no desire, to

educate their children about same-sex sexuality (Stein & Cabaj, 1996; Waldner & Magruder, 1999). This heterosexist message is communicated long before a child realises he may be gay, and is subsequently internalised, especially as an adolescent, and later on as an adult. Never hearing about the positive aspects of being gay, many gay men experience a void in terms of with whom they can identify (Hunter & Schaefer, 1990). As such, many “gay men as children learn to disconnect and dissociate from their true selves and sexual orientation and adapt to parental expectations by creating and presenting a false self or behaviours that are not genuine reflections of the true self” (Stein & Cabaj, 1996, p. 416). However, coming out in a heterosexist context means revealing one’s new identity, acting against current family roles and assumptions and negating the assumed heterosexual identity with which they are endowed (Strommen, 1990). While these authors do not elaborate on the meaning of a true self or identity, Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt and King (2009) offer some insights. According to these scholars, “inherent in the idea of a true self is that people see themselves as having both an outer layer and an inner core that is not necessarily reflected in the outer layer” (p. 473). The authors propose that the true self-concept (or a person’s avowed true self) serves as an important source of meaning in life (Schlegel et al., 2009). Furthermore, the more cognitively accessible this self-concept is to the individual, the more the individual should benefit from the perspective it fosters (Schlegel et al., 2009). From their review of research that examined the expression of the true self through the construct of authenticity, which is defined as the unimpeded functioning of one’s true self in daily life, they found that self-reported authenticity is positively related to outcomes such as self-actualisation, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem, and negatively related to psychological distress (Schlegel et al., 2009). If we relate this understanding of a true self back to the experiences of gay men, we begin to understand the potentially harmful effects of having to dissociate or disconnect an unsupported, yet authentic, part of the self that includes a gay identity.

The family-of-origin is typically considered to be a significant source of anti-gay attitudes and behaviours (Drescher, 2004). Anti-gay attitudes and behaviours, ranging from subtle to overt forms, are largely evident in homophobia (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Herek, 1996), heterosexism (Burn et al., 2005; Herek, 1996), sexual stigma and prejudice (Herek, 2004), and moral condemnations of same-sex sexuality (Rule & Mncwango, 2006). Children from families holding negative views generally experience a more difficult time coming to terms with their same-sex sexuality and disclosing it to others (Mohr & Fassinger, 1993;

Waldner & Magruder, 1999). It has been demonstrated that exposure to negative attitudes and behaviours, whether direct or indirect, can affect the self-esteem of the gay child (Savin-Williams, 1989b). Beyond exposure to these negative attitudes and behaviours is a real concern about being rejected and a fear of losing support from the family-of-origin (Valentine, Skelton, & Butler, 2003). The timing of coming out invariably occurs at a time when the family-of-origin is still regarded as a major source of financial, psychological, and social support (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). For many gay men, given the irreversibility of the revelation, parents are often the last to find out about their child's sexual orientation (Willoughby, Malik, & Lindahl, 2006), and disclosure to them generally represents a final exit from the proverbial closet (Ben Ari, 1995). Once out, it has also been observed that most families rarely provide appropriate support in dealing with anti-gay prejudices (Drescher, 2004). This point is illustrated in a recent on-line article entitled *My Gay Bashing*, where the writer, Scott Swan, shared how his mother reacted to his gay bashing by suggesting that he should perhaps start acting more like a man (Mambaonline, 2010). Given the numerous perceived or potential risks (Savin-Williams, 1989a), disclosure of one's sexual orientation is widely considered a major psychological hurdle for many gay men (Beeler & DiProva, 1999), which can invariably provoke considerable fear and anxiety (Ben Ari, 1995; Drescher, 2004). Understandably, having control over who does and who does not know about their sexual orientation therefore remains a primary concern for most gay men (Smith et al., 1998).

Certain researchers have explored the reasons why gay men decide either to come out or not. Broadly, it has been suggested that gay men are motivated to come out to their parents with "the hope that disclosure will reduce the cost of 'passing' so that people can be honest and not live a lie, open up communication, strengthen family bonds, deepen love, and provide opportunities for mutual support and caring" (Ben-Ari, 1995, p. 91). However, a predominant fear of rejection, a sense of guilt, fear of being forced to get cured (Ben-Ari, 1995), provoking parental guilt, worsening the relationship with parents, being blamed, hurting or disappointing parents (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003), and becoming estranged and being expelled from the home (Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006) can ultimately cause a delay in coming out to parents. In many instances some of these fears can become a reality for gay men. Consequently, many gay men report having limited or no contact with their family-of-origin, or describe their contacts as being merely ceremonial (Nel & Joubert, 1997).

The cost involved in concealing one's sexual orientation appears to carry significant psychological consequences. According to Nel and Joubert (1997), concealment of one's sexual orientation typically begins at an early age and can develop into a defensive pattern of behaviour if maintained over the longer term. Concealment can become enormously destructive for the individual because strong feelings remain invalidated, bodily sensations and reactions are denied, suppressed or under-experienced, resulting in a sense of alienation from their own body (Nel & Joubert, 1997). Furthermore, concealment may lead to a sense of distance in relationships, loneliness, and social anxiety as well as depression, guilt, shame, and general anxiety (Hattingh, 1994, cited in Nel & Joubert, 1997). The need for concealment, along with the constant fear of exposure, can make it especially difficult for gay men to be intimate and spontaneous while socialising with others (Nel & Joubert, 1997).

Despite the potential risks involved, many gay men do, however, experience an urgent internal need to disclose their sexual orientation rather than conceal it (Smith et al., 1998). With evidence of growing tolerance towards same-sex sexuality (Altemeyer, 2001; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993), it has been affirmed that a greater percentage of young gay men are coming out to their families and at earlier stages too (Savin-Williams, 1998; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Broadly speaking, much of the literature on coming out is considered end-point research in that it pays little attention to how people reach that end point (Pattaticci, 1998). However, there is a growing consensus that an accepting family can play a positive role during the coming out process (Savin-Williams, 1989a). Higher parent-child relationship quality has been associated with a greater likelihood of disclosure (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). This is illustrated in the consistent finding that most gay men are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation to their mother (Ben-Ari, 1995; Boon & Miller, 1999; Matthews, 2002; Savin-Williams, 1989a; Toomey & Richardson, 2009). Gay men usually find it more difficult to come out to their father and generally anticipate a more negative response from them (Green, 2000; Valentine et al., 2003). According to a study conducted by Savin-Williams and Ream (2003), more mothers than fathers knew of their child's sexual orientation, and in general mothers found out before fathers did. It was also established that direct, face-to-face disclosure methods were utilised more often with mothers than with fathers (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). The decision to be more direct with mothers further reflects a greater investment in the maternal relationship than the paternal relationship (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Further support for

this view stems from the finding that a son's willingness to reveal his sexual orientation to his mother is influenced by a desire for honesty and openness especially within a warm, emotionally vibrant, and trusting mother-son relationship (Boon & Miller, 1999).

In a qualitative South African study conducted by Matthews (2002), the majority of participants described their mothers as being open, close, involved, sensitive, and supportive. Only a small portion of participants reported a difficult mother-son relationship (Matthews, 2002). Most of the participants also indicated very little change in their relationship with their mother following disclosure (Matthews, 2002). It is suggested in this study that the decision to disclose firstly, or solely, to mothers is possibly due to a lack of closeness that exists between gay sons and their fathers (Matthews, 2002). The majority of participants described their fathers as being uninvolved, critical, conservative, rigid, autocratic, and homo-negative (Matthews, 2002). In stark contrast to the mother-son dyad, only a few respondents indicated that they enjoyed a good relationship with their fathers (Matthews, 2002). However, participants generally felt that their relationship with their father could improve, especially in terms of communication (Matthews, 2002).

These findings are consistent with the general view that relations "before and after disclosure are more likely to be positive for gay sons and their mother than for gay sons and their father" (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003, p. 430). It is suggested that a lack of improvement in the father-son relationship following disclosure may be due to the father's continued disinvestment in his son's life (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). It would appear from the literature that fathers find out about their son's sexual orientation indirectly, either through accidental discovery or when told by someone else (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Where gay men did disclose directly to their fathers, they were most often motivated by the hope that the disclosure would elicit direct support from them (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Although the finding that fathers are perceived by their gay sons to be less supportive than their mothers is well documented (Isay, 1996; Savin-Williams, 1998), very little research can be found that explores the nature of the father-son relationship before, during, and after disclosure has been documented, especially from the father's perspective. Furthermore, very little research can be found that examines the quality of the relationships of parents with their adult children over the longer term (Valentine et al., 2003).

Before continuing, it may be of interest to also consider gay men's relationships with their siblings. It has been estimated that approximately 50 to 60 % of gay adolescents disclose their sexual orientation to a sibling at some point, although only about 5 % of first disclosures are to a sibling (Savin-Williams, 1998). Limited published empirical data are available on their relationships with their siblings, especially pertaining to the process of coming out to a sibling (Toomey & Richardson, 2009). However, it has been suggested that the sibling relationship affords many gay individuals an opportunity to test the reactions of siblings in preparation for disclosing their sexual orientation to other family members (Jenkins, 2008). In a study conducted by D'Augelli et al. (1998), approximately 50 % of siblings appear to accept the news that their sibling is gay. It was also determined that brothers of gay male youth are more likely than any other family member to react with physical violence towards a gay sibling (D'Augelli et al., 1998). More recently, it was recognised that sisters are the second most frequent target of self-disclosure in the family, following mothers (Toomey & Richardson, 2009). Furthermore, in line with previous research, sisters are more likely than brothers to be perceived as accepting a sibling's same-sex sexual orientation (Toomey & Richardson, 2009).

Studies of parent-child relationship quality and associated health outcomes indicate that there is a growing body of research exploring the nature of parent-child attachments. This body of research is based on the basic tenets of attachment theory, which asserts that humans have an innate tendency to seek and form attachments to others (Bowlby, 1980; Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). An attachment is an affectionate bond or tie to an attachment figure; this attachment figure is "never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another, even though there may be others to whom one is also attached" (Ainsworth, 1989, p. 711). In attachments, "there is a need to maintain proximity, distress upon inexplicable separation, pleasure or joy upon reunion, and grief at loss" (Ainsworth, 1989, p. 711). Through repeated experiences with attachment figures early in life it is believed that individuals develop working models of attachment, in relation to the physical environment, attachment figures, and the self, which may be characterised as either anxious, avoidant or secure (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). Parental attachment figures are believed to remain important throughout an individual's lifespan (Ainsworth, 1989). However, it has also been argued that parents exist on the periphery of many gay men's lives and that parental attachment is generally superseded in importance by reciprocal attachment bonds that are formed with romantic partners and peers during adolescence and

adulthood (Green, 2000; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999), especially in instances where gay men are rejected or become emotionally detached from their family-of-origin (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). This falls in line with the popular view that gay men generally establish a family of choice as a substitute for their biological family (Weston, 1991). Interestingly, it has also been observed that many gay men who remain connected to, and in contact with, their biological family also appear to establish a family of choice (Weston, 1991). Weston (1991) argues that because of a heightened awareness of the volitional nature of adult kinship ties, gay men generally become more psychologically open than heterosexuals to broadening the notion of family to include non-biological relations. The propensity to establish a family of choice, as a substitute for, or as an expansion of, the family-of-origin may hold true for many gay men, but that is not to say that all of these relationships or friendships possess an attachment component or constitute enduring affectionate bonds (Ainsworth, 1989; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Further, the establishment of a family of choice should not imply that the family-of-origin does not play a central role in the lives of youths (D'Augelli, 2005), that the family-of-origin does not have an effect on the well-being of gay men (Elizur & Ziv, 2001) or that their potential contributions to the lives of gay men should be ignored or dismissed (Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001). These arguments are especially relevant for gay men who consider their family-of-origin to offer a significant source of social support (Green, 2000).

In accordance with the family-of-origin theory, most of one's current self-image, values, behaviours, attitudes, and relationships with others are shaped largely by one's family-of-origin experiences (Seutter & Rovers, 2004). Further, it has been established that family support and acceptance can buffer gay adolescents against mental health problems associated with victimisation (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995). Elsewhere, it has been demonstrated that the quality of the parent-child attachment relationship predicted peer competence (i.e., a set of social skills, values, and expectations that are applied in social interactions with peers) (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992), which may be especially salient for many gay men establishing a family-of-choice. Given some evidence indicating the continued relative importance of family, it has been suggested that the relationship between family support and acceptance, and psychological adjustment may be mediated by the salience of family ties (Green, 2000). As such, as already indicated, the effect of family on the health and well-being on gay youth may only be significant insofar as the youth regard the family as being important to themselves.

Where family ties have been explored, the quality of parental attachment appears to constitute a crucial variable in the development of a secure and stable sense of self. For example, it is believed that an accessible, sensitive, supportive, responsive, and reliable, yet non-interfering parent becomes a child's secure base, from which he can explore the environment and develop a sense of confidence, personal competence, and environmental mastery (Bowlby, 1973). Broadly, research has demonstrated that secure parental attachments are associated with emotional well-being and identity development during late adolescence and early adulthood (Holtzen, Kenny, & Mahalik, 1995). Among adults who report secure childhood attachments, it has also been determined that these adults generally turn to others for support in times of distress (Kobak & Sceery, 1988). Research conducted by Mohr (1999) demonstrated that secure individuals who experience anti-gay violence, or threats of anti-gay violence, generally seek direct support for their distress and appear to experience less symptomatology than their insecure counterparts. In research carried out by Holtzen et al. (1995) it was revealed that participants with a secure attachment during childhood were significantly more likely to have disclosed and more likely to have been out to parents for longer. In addition, according to a review by Hazan and Zeifman (1999), it was found that adolescents from absent-father homes displayed precocious sexual interest, relatively early sexual maturation, more negative attitudes towards potential partners, and less interest in long-term relationships than their counterparts reared in present-father homes.

In a study conducted by Mohr and Fassinger (2003), it was determined that attachment avoidance and anxiety were associated with difficulties in self-acceptance, and attachment avoidance was associated with low levels of disclosure. Further, paternal support and not maternal support, was directly associated with disclosure and self-acceptance (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). The data, however, did not offer any clear insight to account for this interesting finding. Another finding was that gay men from families affiliated with anti-gay religious institutions were more likely than others to become emotionally disconnected from parents (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). In another study, it was found that among gay men with a secure attachment style, the participants generally reported more positive attitudes towards their same-sex sexuality (Jellison & McConnell, 2003). Furthermore, these positive attitudes appeared to mediate the relation between a more secure attachment style, increased levels of self-disclosure, and greater self-esteem (Jellison & McConnell, 2003).

These studies seem to challenge the popular view that gay men are necessarily disconnected from their family-of-origin, as they highlight the significance of a secure parent-child attachment, not only in terms of increasing self-acceptance and facilitating disclosure, but also given the finding that a positive relationship between parent and child prior to disclosure is likely to assist with a healthy adjustment following disclosure (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). Further research is needed to explore secure parental attachments as a variable that may facilitate self-acceptance and disclosure, elicit parental support (Holtzen et al., 1995), and promote healthy long-term relationships between parent and child. Additionally, it may be useful to investigate the challenges and barriers to developing a secure parent-child attachment, in the context of a gay son. This view is echoed by Savin-Williams and Dubé (1998), who advocate strongly for a better understanding of how the parent-child relationship before disclosure affects initial and subsequent reactions that follow disclosure.

Parental Reactions and Adjustment Following Disclosure

Most of what has been written about the family context has focused largely on parental reactions and parents' subsequent degree of adjustment following disclosure of a same-sex identity (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). Furthermore, much of what is known about gay men's relationships with their parents is mostly derived from asking sons to report on their parental relationships (e.g., Matthews, 2002). As such, researchers generally have a limited understanding of the full range of personal experiences of parents (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998), and the role they play in the coming out process (Savin-Williams, 1989a), and beyond, particularly during the extensive period before and possibly after disclosure. Very little is known about the typical parent who struggles alone, without the assistance of others (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). Further, very little is known about the determining factors that distinguish families who react positively as opposed to those who do not (D'Augelli, 2005). It is therefore suggested that researchers begin to ask parents directly about their lives as parents of gay children in order to elicit potentially vital personal information that their children are not likely to discern (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). By doing so, researchers may uncover yet un-documented experiences and associated meanings. Despite some exploration into a mother's relationship with her gay son (e.g., Yell, 2004), very little research can be found on the father's personal account of his relationship with his gay son. This apparent gap in understanding, particularly in South Africa,

is significant given consistent reports of the poor relationship that appears to exist between many fathers and their gay sons.

As already indicated, considerable attention has been accorded specifically to parental reactions and subsequent adjustments to disclosure. Given that most parents are heterosexual, with worldviews shaped by prevailing heterosexist biases and values, many have had little or no previous contact with gay or lesbian people (Ben-Ari, 1995). A child's disclosure is likely to send a shock wave through the family system, at both individual and interpersonal levels (LaSala, 2000b), and call into question many of their values, including their beliefs with regards to sex, sexuality and religion (Willoughby et al., 2006). It is therefore widely believed that the discovery that a child is gay may lead to considerable emotional distress or a family crisis of sorts, where a range of unpredictable and negative consequences is likely to occur. As indicated earlier, given the heterosexist context, disclosure can potentially lead to rejection, estrangement, and maltreatment (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). Evidence of this appears in a South African study that reported on a number of participants who had experienced isolation and rejection, while some had been evicted from their parents' homes (Nell & Shapiro, 2011). However, with some evidence of growing tolerance towards same-sex sexuality (Altemeyer, 2001; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993), it is argued that estrangement from family appears to be the exception rather than the norm (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). However, that does not mean that families do not react negatively or appear unwilling to make any effort to accommodate and support their gay family members (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). It has been acknowledged that although there appears to be an increase in general tolerance towards same-sex sexuality, parents in general appear more resistant to the idea that their child may be gay (Altemeyer, 2001). It has also been suggested that despite consistent findings that indicate that families of gay men are not more likely to be pathological, it is possible that the history of blaming poor parenting for "the problem" of homosexuality may continue to play a contributing role in negative parental reactions in general (LaSala, 2000b). On the whole, however, it has been observed that the reactions of parents are rarely neutral and remain highly personal, varied, and unpredictable, as is evident in the mixed picture presented by available research in this area (Connolly, 2005; du Plessis, 1999).

Authors have generally employed grieving as a central metaphor to represent the experience of families subsequent to disclosure (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett,

2006). Generally speaking, parents of gay men are seen to “grieve the loss of an image they had of their child, an image that they had built and socialized with over the years” (Ben-Ari, 1995, p. 93). In line with this notion of grieving, most writers have expanded upon Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’ stages of mourning to describe the stages parents may go through upon hearing that their son is gay, namely shock, denial and isolation, guilt, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Ben-Ari, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1998). Implicit in these stage models is the notion that a resolution of the grieving process will ultimately lead to acceptance (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). However, it has been argued that although grieving appears to be an important and natural component of a family’s response, efforts to integrate the gay family member, especially over time, should not be overlooked as this is an equally important element of their response (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). Further, it is argued that we cannot assume that the resolution of grief will automatically result in integration or that grief must first be resolved before efforts to accept or integrate can be made (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). However, in the absence of an empirically proven model of adjustment, these stage models remain a useful tool for describing the range of possible experiences of many parents who discover that their child is gay.

The first reactions of parents are generally shaped by what they know or do not know at the time of the disclosure as well as their individual strategies for handling stressful situations (Muller, 1987). Not all parents initially react with shock (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). There is some indication in the literature that many parents suspect that their son is gay long before discovery or disclosure (Aveline, 2006). The presence of gender atypical behaviour while growing up may lead some parents to suspect that at an early stage their son may be gay (Aveline, 2006; Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). This early awareness may allow some parents time to work through their feelings. However, some parents still report that the disclosure was stressful or shocking (Aveline, 2006). This appears to indicate that the suspicions of many parents remained at a subliminal level for a long time (Aveline, 2006). This is illustrated in the qualitative South African study conducted by Matthews (2002), wherein gay sons suspected that their mothers had known about their sexual orientation for a long time. However, their disclosure to their mothers still elicited immediate feelings of shock and sadness (Matthews, 2002).

Generally speaking, parents appear to experience greater difficulty adjusting to the disclosure when caught off guard. In such cases, parents may initially react with shock and disbelief. It is this initial stage of shock that typically frightens most gay children. While in shock, there is the potential for parents to make hurtful statements, physically lash out at the child, withdraw financial support or even evict the child from the home (Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). Some parents may, however, simply react with silence, while others may dismiss the revelation as a phase, adjustment reaction or mere experimentation (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987). In other cases, parents may subtly apply more pressure on their child to engage in heterosexual relationships (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990). After the first week following the disclosure it has been documented that many parents experience predominant feelings of shame and guilt (Ben-Ari, 1995). Many parents seem to feel as though they failed as parents (du Plessis, 1999). Parents generally see their children as an extension of themselves and are therefore likely to become concerned about the impact the revelation will have on their own images (du Plessis, 1999). It has been observed that mothers are more likely to report stronger feelings of guilt and anger, while fathers are more likely to deny and reject their gay son (Ben-Ari, 1995). When one parent is told (most often the mother) and the other is not (most often the father), tension between the two may develop over time, which may escalate into arguments and possibly result in a breakdown in communication (Hunter & Schaecher, 1990). In many of these cases, the entire family may become caught in conflict which could erupt and disrupt the family system over time (Connolly, 2005).

In a study conducted on both parents' and children's perspectives, Ben-Ari (1995) found that parents generally reported feeling shocked during the first week after disclosure. After the initial shock, it appears that the happiness and well-being of the children became the main concern of their parents (Ben-Ari, 1995). And so, in time, negative reactions may give way to recognition and later, acknowledgement, but not necessarily acceptance (Ben-Ari, 1995). This falls in line with earlier findings by Wirth (1978), who declared that while very few parents fully accept the fact that their child is gay, most parents learn to acknowledge it. Elsewhere it has been noted that "the majority of families are neither totally rejecting nor totally accepting" (Beeler & DiProva, 1999, p. 454), as is illustrated in the finding that many parents convey a double message towards their gay son: he is accepted as a member of the family, but any discussion of his lifestyle is avoided or prohibited (Schoeman, Ferreira, & Botha, 1993). This was also evident

in the study conducted by Matthews (2002) in which most of the respondents reported that beyond disclosure, discussions between parent and child about being gay were largely avoided (Matthews, 2002).

In the literature, both child-oriented and parent-oriented concerns have been identified among parents in order to account for their reactions (Ben-Ari, 1995). Child-oriented concerns include concerns that the child will grow old unhappy and alone, will not have any children, will be rejected by other family members and friends, will be victimised, will be exposed to sexually transmitted infections, and will lose their religious beliefs and values (Ben-Ari, 1995). Parent-oriented concerns include concerns about not having any grandchildren, being a failure as a parent, becoming alienated from the child and rest of the family, experiencing conflict between their love for the child and their own moral and religious beliefs and values, experiencing difficulties integrating a same-sex partner into the family and having to confront their own sexuality (Ben-Ari, 1995).

In exploring parental adjustment subsequent to disclosure, it was conceded among respondents that the most common relationship type resulting from disclosure was characterised as “loving denial”, which involved a largely positive relationship between the parents and their child, but where the parents themselves remained closeted about their child’s sexual orientation and their acceptance seemed conditional in that little overt recognition of their child’s sexual orientation was tolerated (Muller, 1987). This relationship style seems to resemble the findings of both Schoeman et al. (1993) and Matthews (2002) as mentioned above. A loving relationship was reported between parent and child prior to disclosure among this group of respondents (Muller, 1987). Another common relationship type among respondents was characterised as “resentful denial”, which involved a lack of acknowledgement of their child’s sexual orientation as well as limited contact between parents and their child (Muller, 1987). The relationships of only a small portion of the respondents were characterised as being “loving open”, whereby parents were accepting and open about their child’s sexual orientation (Muller, 1987). As in the case of “loving denial”, a loving relationship was reported between parent and child before disclosure, but with the difference that these parents seemed open and positive about their child’s sexual orientation (Muller, 1987). And lastly, the relationships of an even smaller number of

respondents were characterised as “hostile recognition”, which involved both non-acceptance and estrangement (Muller, 1987).

As already noted, research on families has typically affirmed that fathers are less likely to be told, less likely to be told first and more likely to react negatively to disclosure than mothers would (Ben-Ari, 1995; D’Augelli et al., 1998). Furthermore, in the experience of gay men, fathers and brothers are more likely to be verbally abusive than mothers and sisters would be (D’Augelli et al., 1998). Relationships, both before and after disclosure, are more likely to be positive between mother and son than between father and son (Matthews, 2002; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). The father’s continued disinvestment in his children’s lives is suggested as a possible reason for little improved relations between father and son following disclosure (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003).

In an attempt to better understand consistent findings on the poor father-son dyad (pre- and post-disclosure) among many gay men, there is a small body of research that suggests that sexual orientation per se does not causally lead to the development and maintenance of this poor relationship in childhood, as one’s sexual orientation only becomes apparent at a later stage (Freund & Blanchard, 1983; Landolt et al., 2004). Rather, a strong association has been acknowledged between boyhood gender nonconformity, defined as the relative absence of masculine traits and relative presence of feminine traits, and lower quality of father-son relationship among gay men (Freund & Blanchard, 1983; Landolt et al., 2004). As such, the difficult relationship possibly has less to do with being gay than it has to being perceived as different and therefore possibly threatening. From birth, knowledge of the sex of the child generally elicits a set of expectations among parents that are usually consistent with beliefs about gender-appropriate traits, also referred to as gender-role stereotypes (Wiberg, 1988, as cited in Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999). Parents generally prefer that their children adhere to traditional gender-roles and cross-gender behaviour is discouraged, especially amongst boys (Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999). Studies have revealed that boys who engage in traditionally feminine behaviours or activities are generally viewed more negatively than girls who engage in typically masculine behaviours or activities (Alanko et al., 2008; Lippa, 2008; Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999). This difference is evident in the derogatory terms accorded to gender non-conforming boys (i.e., sissies) and girls (i.e., tomboys) (Alanko et al., 2008). Three possible explanations

have been furnished to account for the differential evaluation of boys and girls, namely that movement into the more highly valued male role is generally more acceptable than movement into the less valued female role, the belief that girls, but not boys, will grow out of their cross-gender behaviour, and lastly, an underlying fear that boys will grow up to be gay (Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999). Further, it has been recognised that fathers generally appear to be less accepting and supportive of children's cross-gender behaviour than mothers (Beard & Bakeman, 2000). As such, the relationship between fathers and gender atypical sons is largely considered more distant than the relationship between fathers and gender typical sons (Landolt et al., 2004).

It is generally accepted in the literature that childhood gender non-conformity or atypical behaviour is associated with the later emergence of an adult gay identity (Lippa, 2008). "As these boys develop, their fathers tend to respond to their gender nonconformity with less acceptance and support than would be accorded to a more gender conforming boy...As a result, these boys may learn to view themselves, at least in part, as shameful and unworthy of love" (Beard & Bakeman, 2000, p. 93). According to Stein and Cabaj (1996), when parents are unable to respond to or give support for what is unfamiliar or uncomfortable for them, gay men become ashamed not only of their sexuality, but also of their bodies, their social interactions, and other aspects of the self. These childhood experiences, combined with later parental reactions upon disclosure, can have a significant impact on the self and adult attachment patterns of gay men. According to a study conducted by Landolt et al. (2004), paternal rejection, but not maternal rejection, predicted adult attachment anxiety and avoidance. This interesting finding appears to fall in line with a growing view that paternal influence uniquely and independently explains child and adult outcomes (Rohner, 1998). It has been emphasised that paternal relationships play an important role during the development of a gay identity and that paternal rejection may explain why some gay men may experience difficulty forming loving and trusting relationships in adulthood (Isay, 1990). Just as opposite-sex parents influence expectations about, and dynamics within, opposite-sex relationships, it is argued that same-sex parents may exert the same influence over expectations and dynamics within same-sex relationships (Landolt et al., 2004). As such, poor relationships with fathers during childhood are likely to impact gay men's level of attachment security in their adult romantic relationships (Landolt et al., 2004).

Although it is generally believed that a positive relationship with parents prior to disclosure is likely to assist with a healthy adjustment post disclosure (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998), very little in-depth research has been conducted on families that adapt well following disclosure. It is argued that families with adequate resources in place prior to disclosure seem to respond better to the disclosure (Willoughby et al., 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested that “reaching a point of unconditional love and acceptance requires flexibility in religious and moral values; open intra-familial communications; strong attachment and affection for the child; and informational, emotional, and social support for both the child and the parent” (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998, p. 12). These views are supported by findings that gay men perceived their parents to react less negatively when the family as a system demonstrated high levels of balanced cohesion and adaptability (Willoughby et al., 2006). Among these participants it was also determined that parents perceived to have authoritarian parenting styles were more likely to react negatively than parents who were perceived to be authoritative (Willoughby et al., 2006). These researchers concluded that families with high levels of cohesion, adaptability, and warmth prior to disclosure are more likely to demonstrate a family bond stronger than the forces of society and respond to the disclosure with unconditional acceptance (Willoughby et al., 2006). According to a study conducted by Lee and Lee (2006), it was determined that adaptive parents took responsibility for their emotional processes and were resourceful in seeking help from others. Further, they were capable of talking constructively, open to listening to new points of view, and able to integrate these points of view into their own analysis of the crisis (Lee & Lee, 2006). It is generally believed among authors that parents who adapt well can play a significant and supportive role in the life of their gay son. In exploring the significance of parents in their child’s coming out process and self-evaluation, Savin-Williams (1989a; 1989b) found that if parents are considered to be important to the son’s sense of self-worth, then the parent’s perceived acceptance of his same-sex sexuality predicted his comfortableness with being gay, which in turn predicted his level of self-esteem. Interestingly, it was also determined that being out to the mother but not to the father predicted high self-esteem, while infrequent contact with the father predicted positive self-esteem (Savin-Williams, 1989a). This finding can be interpreted according to the general observation that gay men’s relationships with mothers are generally more warm, supportive, and emotional than their relationships with their fathers (Steinberg, 1985).

Broader Stigmatisation Processes and Intergroup Contact Experiences

In order to understand the context of gay men's experiences even more fully, it is necessary to look beyond gay men's family-of-origin to research conducted on stigmatisation processes and intergroup relationships more broadly.

Although there is evidence of growing tolerance towards same-sex sexuality (Altemeyer, 2001; D'Augelli & Hersherberger, 1993), heterosexism remains a problem (Burn et al., 2005). In addition to the family-of-origin, most of gay men's interpersonal contacts are with individuals (e.g., extended family, friends, co-workers, neighbours, service providers, etc.) who are deeply immersed within a broader heterosexist culture, where heterosexist assumptions and biases tend to dominate. Heterosexism is defined in the literature as a reasoned system of prejudice that privileges heterosexual relations, which are widely accepted as the norm in human sexuality (Jung & Smith, 1993). Largely unrecognised and unquestioned by most heterosexual people, this heterosexual privilege allows them to experience their daily life and identity as routine, normal, and all encompassing (McIntosh, 1988, cited in Simoni & Walters, 2001), without fear of disruption or disturbance. As such, heterosexism denotes prejudice in favour of heterosexual people and connotes prejudice against gay people (Jung & Smith, 1993). Stated differently, heterosexism is the cultural ideology that perpetuates homo-negativism by denying and denigrating non-heterosexual forms of behaviour, identity or relationship (Herek, 2004). Inherent in patriarchy, heterosexism serves as a measure against which all other sexual orientations are judged and responded to. Hostility, discrimination, and in certain circumstances violence are justified as appropriate and even necessary to uphold this organising system of heterosexual privilege (Herek, 2004). Heterosexism, viewed as a coherent, natural, fixed, and stable (Richardson, 2006) cultural structure developed to keep people in place, appears deeply connected to sexism, racism, and classism (Jung & Smith, 1993). As a pattern of discrimination, heterosexism pervades and shapes most spheres of our lives, including our "legal, economic, political, social, interpersonal, familial, historical, educational, and ecclesial institutions" (Jung & Smith, 1993, p. 14).

Heterosexism is often accompanied by homo-negativism (Jung & Smith, 1993). Whereas heterosexism describes a cultural ideology that is largely manifested in society's institutions (e.g., language, religion, education, and the law), homo-negativity specifically describes

individual attitudes and behaviours that may be derived from this ideology (Herek, 2004). Homo-negativism (also utilised interchangeably with anti-gay attitudes or behaviours) is a contemporary term derived from the concept homophobia (Britton, 1990). First coined in 1967 by George Weinberg (Britton, 1990), the term homophobia literally means “fear of sameness” or “fear of the similar” (Herek, 2004, p. 9), and was originally utilised to refer to heterosexual’s irrational fear, revulsion, and condemnation of homosexuality and of those who engage in it (Yep, 2002). Although the term homophobia played a significant role in framing the prejudice experienced by many gay men, and crucially locating the problem of homosexuality not in homosexual people, but in heterosexuals deemed intolerant of gay men, a number of writers have pointed out the limitations and inappropriateness of this term in describing modern day anti-gay antipathy (Herek, 2004; Williamson, 2000).

It has been noted that the emotional component of a phobia is clinical fear and avoidance, whereas the emotional component of homophobia is presumably anger and hatred (Haaga, 1991, cited in Herek, 2004; Mayfield, 2001). In addition, it has been argued that an emphasis on the affective component of prejudice serves to detract from accompanying anti-gay cognitions (Williamson, 2000). Furthermore, the broad assertion that homophobia is a pathology rooted in the individual is unfounded and typically overlooks the larger social and cultural context that perpetuates widespread fear and hostility in response to perceived differences in human sexuality (Herek, 2004; Yep, 2002). In an effort to develop a more useful and accurate term to understand the psychological, social, and cultural processes that underlie and shape the oppression of sexual minorities, various writers have suggested concepts such as homo-negativity (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980, cited in Patel, Long, McCammon, & Wuensch, 1995; Williamson, 2000); and more recently, sexual stigma (Herek, 2000b) and sexual prejudice (Herek, 2004). The term homo-negativity is considered a more inclusive term as it refers to all possible negative attitudes and behaviours towards gay men (Mayfield, 2001). The term sexual prejudice is also more inclusive as it refers to all negative attitudes based on sexual orientation, and generally encompasses negative attitudes toward same-sex sexual behaviour, people with a same-sex sexual or bisexual orientation, and communities of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (Herek, 2000b). Furthermore, sexual prejudice has three main features: it is an attitude, it is directed at a social group and its members, and it is negative (Herek, 2000b). Additionally, the term sexual stigma refers broadly to “the negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that

society collectively accords anyone associated with nonheterosexual behaviours, identity, relationships or communities” (Herek et al., 2009, p.33). According to Herek (2009), sexual prejudice refers to internalised sexual stigma that may result in the negative evaluation of sexual minorities. Although nuanced, the terms homo-negativity and sexual prejudice will be utilised interchangeably in this thesis.

Homo-negativism can manifest as direct verbal or physical behaviour that serves to injure, interfere with or intimidate gay men (Burn et al., 2005). In a study conducted by D’Augelli and Grossman (2001), two thirds of participants indicated that they had been verbally abused, more than a quarter had been threatened with violence, and 16 % had been punched, kicked or beaten. It was also acknowledged that gay men were more likely to report experiencing victimisation than lesbians would (D’Augelli & Grossman, 2001). According to research conducted by OUT LGBT Well-being in Gauteng in 2002/2003, it was established that among gay men, 40 % reported verbal abuse, 15 % reported physical abuse, and 15 % reported attacks on their property (Wells & Polders, 2004).

Homo-negativism can also manifest indirectly such as through the use of heterosexist language, including jokes, comments (Burn et al., 2005), and expressions of stereotypes (Swim, Johnston, & Pearson, 2009). According to Thurlow (2001), heterosexist language occurs as frequently as other derogatory terms indicative of racism, sexism, and phallocentrism. In South Africa, the following Afrikaans and English derogatory words appear in heterosexist language: gay, fag, queer, cocksucker, poofter, fairy, moffie, sissie, and hol-naaier. Not only are these pejorative words utilised as direct insults towards gay men, but they have also been observed in everyday conversations across various contexts, especially among heterosexual men. For example, the word gay is also utilised to refer to something or someone that is stupid or undesirable. Further, the words fag or moffie are also used in response to any person, irrespective of their sexual orientation, seen to violate traditional gender-role behaviour (e.g., a grown man seen crying). In many of these instances, it has been suggested that these individuals are not necessarily heterosexist nor intentionally prejudiced towards gay men (Plummer, 2001; Thurlow, 2001). In fact, it has been argued that homo-negativity “targets anything that signifies a lack of allegiance to the collective expectations of male peers” (Plummer, 2001, p. 21). However, even if not utilised to intentionally harm gay men, this language is part of a heterosexist culture that

contributes to the stigmatisation of non-heterosexual orientations, and may therefore be experienced as anti-gay harassment, contributing to further psychosocial stress (Burn et al., 2005). This point is especially relevant to the context where the individual is still in the process of forming a positive gay identity and on the verge of coming out, while anticipating hostility and rejection as a result of this. However, it has been determined that gay men appear to be less offended by heterosexist statements than lesbian women are (Burn et al., 2005). This difference may reflect, in general, gay men's habituation to such behaviour, in that this language appears to be a common feature of male culture (Burn et al., 2005). In contrast, though, it has been found that when gay men believe others are aware of their sexual orientation, they are less likely to be receptive of such so-called mistakes (Conley et al., 2001). Further, these authors suggest that gay men are more likely to accept the mistakes of heterosexuals when they appear to be less comfortable with their own sexual orientation (Conley et al., 2001).

Internationally, empirical research has demonstrated that anti-gay attitudes are associated with (a) a lack of personal contact with gay men (Barron et al., 2008; Cullen, Wright, & Alessandri, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1996); (b) a conservative religious ideology (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Johnson et al., 1997) or fundamentalism (Barron et al., 2008; Hegarty, 2002; Keiller, 2010); (c) gender (as in male) (Herek & Capitanio, 1999); (d) a traditional gender role orientation (as in traditional masculinity) (Keiller, 2010; Patel et al., 1995); (e) hypermasculine beliefs about gender (Barron et al., 2008; Whitley, 2002); (f) hostile sexism, including dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility (Sakalli, 2002); (g) racism (Ficarrotto, 1990); (h) low same-sex intimacy (Stark, 1991); (i) the belief that sexual orientation is controllable and therefore a matter of personal choice (Hegarty & Golden, 2008); (j) being older and being less well educated (Herek, 1996); (k) an authoritarian personality style (Altemeyer, 2001; Greendlinger, 1985); (l) a lack of empathic concern and a tendency to use denial and isolation as coping mechanisms (Johnson et al., 1997); and (m) cognitive rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, dogmatism, and sexual conservatism (Herek, 1984). Although identifying these variables is a crucial step towards understanding the processes that shape homo-negative attitudes, no study was found that attempts to pull these disparate results together and explore them in relation to gay men's fathers more specifically. As already noted, consistent findings suggest that a poor father-son dyad exists among many gay men.

Regarding some of these variables, research has revealed that heterosexual men's attitudes towards gay men are consistently more hostile than their attitudes towards lesbians or heterosexual women's attitudes to both gay men and lesbians (Cullen et al., 2002; Herek, 2000a; Johnson et al., 1997; Kerns & Fine, 1994). This has also been demonstrated in a non-western context (Lim, 2002). These sex differences may exist because men and women are likely to have had different experiences associated with the principle correlates of homo-negativity such as ideologies of family and gender, perceived attitudinal norms, religiosity, and personal contact with gay people (Herek, 1988; Lock & Kleis, 1998). Similarly, it has been established that individuals' negative attitudes towards gay men are not necessarily based on their biological sex but rather on their gender role attitudes (Kerns & Fine, 1994). According to Herek (2000a), heterosexual men appear to be more concerned about demonstrating their heterosexuality and, at the same time, their gender role conformity than heterosexual women. It is believed that males are constantly under considerable social and psychological pressure to establish, affirm, and defend their traditional heterosexual masculine identity (Cullen et al., 2002; Epstein, 1998; Herek, 1996). These contemporary observations are in line with the gender role strain paradigm, which was first proposed by Joseph H. Pleck in the early 1980s (Pleck, 1995). Briefly, the gender role strain paradigm proposes that (a) gender roles are operationally defined by gender role stereotypes and norms; (b) contemporary gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent; (c) the proportion of individuals who violate gender roles is high; (d) the violation of gender roles leads to condemnation and negative psychological consequences; (e) the actual or imagined violation of gender roles leads people to overconform to them; (f) the violation of gender roles has more severe consequences for men than for women; and (g) certain prescribed gender role traits (such as male aggression) are psychologically dysfunctional (Pleck, 1995). According to Pleck (1995), implicit in these propositions are three broader ideas about how cultural ideals for masculinity have potentially negative effects on individual males: (a) "a significant portion of males exhibit long-term failure to fulfil male role expectations" resulting in "low self-esteem and other negative psychological consequences" (referred to as gender role discrepancy); (b) "even if male role expectations are successfully fulfilled, the socialisation process leading to this fulfilment is traumatic or the fulfilment itself is traumatic, with long-term negative side-effects" (referred to as gender role trauma); and (c) "the successful fulfilment of male role expectations can have negative consequences because many of the characteristics viewed as desirable or

acceptable to men have inherent negative side-effects, either for males themselves or for others” (referred to as gender role dysfunction) (Pleck, 1995, p. 12). Essentially, these propositions mean that most men rigidly enact a range of masculine roles in order to live up to the societal ideal, either in response to, or to prevent negative feelings such as shame and anxiety, which are experienced from not meeting these masculine ideals (Mahalik et al., 1998). However, invariably this rigid enactment leads to both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict (Mahalik et al., 1998). According to Pleck (1995), the concept of masculinity ideology is central to male gender role strain. The concept of masculinity ideology refers to “beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behaviour” (Pleck, 1995, p. 19). While this concept does not assume a single, unvarying, universal standard for masculinity, it does, however, propose that within the diversity of possible and actual standards about men and masculinity in contemporary society, there appears to be a particular constellation of standards and expectations that individually and jointly have various kinds of negative concomitants (i.e., traditional masculinity) (Pleck, 1995).

Traditional masculinity, as a hegemonic cultural ideology, is seen to consist of personal characteristics such as success and status, toughness and independence, and aggressiveness and dominance, and is largely demonstrated by most adult heterosexual males through exclusively social relationships with other men and primarily sexual relationships with women (Herek, 1986). Here, heterosexuality is considered an essential condition of being a true man (Herek, 1986). These traditional masculine qualities are generally valued above feminine characteristics, as they are widely perceived to be more socially effective and rewarding (Theodore & Basow, 2000). Not only is a traditional heterosexual masculine identity defined according to what it is, but also according to what it is not; a traditional heterosexual masculine identity means not being feminine (i.e., anti-femininity) and not being homosexual (i.e., anti-gay) (Herek, 1986). As such, as boys, these males learn to be real men primarily by learning not to be women or sissies. As adults, these males internalise society’s gender expectations and norms and generally develop traditional views of gender and family roles (Herek, 1986), which are then largely supported by their male peers (Cullen et al., 2002). It is reasonable to assume that fathers in general are not immune to the pressure of conforming to heterosexual (traditional) masculinity.

Broadly speaking, homosexuality is typically seen as a negation of traditional masculinity (Connell, 1992). As such, gay men are generally viewed as a direct threat to sex-typed perceptions, expectations, and roles (Lim, 2002), forcing many men to question their own sexuality (Cullen et al., 2002). This questioning may give rise to a great deal of anxiety (Herek, 1986). It has also been suggested that gay men are seen to violate traditional gender role expectations and are therefore considered a threat to heterosexual men's social privilege and power (Kerns & Fine, 1994). Nevertheless, the resulting anxiety leads many males with a traditional heterosexual masculine identity to respond negatively towards gay men. According to Herek (1986), the negative expression of attitudes towards gay men serves a dual psychological need to assert who they are not (i.e., homosexual), while simultaneously affirming who they are (i.e., heterosexual men). As such, homo-negativity is seen to mark "an intragender boundary between masculine stereotypes and the male other" (Plummer, 2001, p. 21). In a study conducted by Herek (2000b), it was determined that when heterosexual men were asked questions first about gay men and then about lesbians, their attitudes towards both groups were considerably more negative than when they were asked about lesbians first. This finding demonstrates that, for many heterosexual men, being asked about gay men activates "feelings and beliefs associated with a heterosexual masculine identity and it's imperative to prove oneself by rejecting gay men" (Herek, 2000b, p.263). This may be especially true for men who do not feel that they are living up to cultural expectations of traditional masculinity, as was demonstrated in a study by Theodore and Basow (2002). Further evidence appears in a study that determined that once being told that they had achieved a high feminine score on a personality test, the male participants exhibited an increased negative affect towards effeminate, but not masculine, gay men (Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner, & Weinberg, 2007). It has been demonstrated that defensive reactions are typically directed towards target groups who are considered to possess the traits perceivers wish to disown or deny in themselves (Govorun, Fuegen, & Payne, 2006). As such, it would appear that for these men, any form of contact with gay men is likely to elicit negative thoughts and feelings about the self, which is likely to result in a pattern of defensiveness directed towards the other. On the whole, though these studies seem to suggest that an increased negative affect towards gay men, especially effeminate gay men, appears to constitute a response to a personality-based masculinity threat and not a sexuality-based masculinity threat as initially believed (Glick et al., 2007). However, it is

unclear to what extent these findings apply to the experiences of many heterosexual fathers, given the consistent findings of a poor father-son dyad found to exist between them and their gay sons.

Considering certain personality variables more broadly, it has been observed that people with homo-negative attitudes also tend to be racial or ethnic bigots who appear to be relatively prejudiced towards many out-groups (Altemeyer, 2001). Altemeyer (2001), therefore, argues that an anti-gay orientation has very little to do with gays per sé, but rather with the individual's personality. In the literature, two types of personality have been identified: the right-wing authoritarian (Altemeyer, 1996, cited in Altemeyer, 2001), and more recently, the social dominator (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Authoritarian individuals organise their social world into power hierarchies or hegemonies, in which dominant social groups (designated as in-groups) are seen to exercise and maintain their superior status over other social groups (designated as out-groups) (Altemeyer, 1988; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). In line with this organisation, these individuals support and submit to recognised traditional power structures and the traditional social norms established by these authorities, and accept uncritically what these authorities expect of them (Altemeyer, 2001; Whitley & Lee, 2000). Individuals who are high in authoritarianism tend to be ethnocentric, self-righteous, religiously fundamentalist, conforming, sexist, and dogmatic (Altemeyer, 2001), and therefore likely to impose their will on others, while resisting any change or threat to their belief systems (Cullen et al., 2002). They appear to be particularly fearful that certain out-groups (such as gay men) will violate the traditional values they hold dear (Whitley & Lee, 2000). The derogation of out-groups by dismissing them as unimportant, and therefore no real threat, helps to defend their value system (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). However, when this strategy fails and the member of an out-group is perceived as a direct threat, many feel morally justified in their hostility and use of brute force to defend and protect their conventions and values (Altemeyer, 2001). The link between right-wing authoritarianism and anti-gay attitudes and behaviours has been demonstrated in literature (Wilkinson, 2004). In particular, it has been revealed that in the absence of having any prior contact with gay men, those considered to be high in authoritarianism appear to rely on cultural stereotypes about gay men (e.g., being sexually abnormal, perverted, mentally ill, and effeminate) in order to justify their negative

treatment of them (e.g., gay-bashing) so as to defend and ensure the superiority and purity of their dominant in-group (Altemeyer, 1996, cited in Altemeyer, 2001).

A social dominance orientation refers to the extent to which a person desires that their in-group dominates and is superior to out-groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). The desire to maintain the power and social status of their in-group motivates certain people high in social dominance orientation to embrace hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and policies (Pratto et al., 1994), and predisposes them to believe in hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths and reject hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myths (Walls, 2008). These hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths function as cultural scripts that seem to link individual beliefs to social practice, generally serving to justify an in-group's superior status and its members' denigration and discrimination of members of perceived out-groups (Pratto et al., 1994; Walls, 2008). Given that gay men (and women more generally) are perceived as an out-group, people considered to be high in social dominance orientation are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards gay men (Whitley & Lee, 2000). Studies have demonstrated the link between a social dominance orientation and various forms of prejudice (Whitley & Lee, 2000). As a point of clarification, a social dominance orientation differs from an authoritarian perspective in that authoritarianism focuses on submission to in-group authority figures (i.e., an intragroup phenomenon), whereas social domination focuses on dominance over out-groups in intergroup relations (i.e., an intergroup phenomenon) (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000; Whitley & Lee, 2000).

Another concept that has received considerable attention in literature is intergroup contact. It has been repeatedly documented that having prior contact with gay people could have a significant effect on people's anti-gay attitudes (Altemeyer, 2001; Cullen et al., 2002). Originally described by Gordon Allport in 1954, the contact hypothesis holds that "many forms of prejudice can be reduced by equal-status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals" (Herek & Capitanio, 1996, p.412). Studies exploring interpersonal contact have repeatedly found that among its heterosexual participants, those who reported prior interpersonal contact with gay men expressed significantly more positive attitudes towards gay men than respondents without any previous contact (Conley, Evett, & Devine, 2007; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Lemm, 2006). In one study, it was also established that the relationship between prior contact and positive attitudes was stronger when respondents reported having

multiple contacts, more intimate contacts, and contacts that involved direct disclosure (Herek & Capitano, 1996). This suggests that the type of contact, not contact per se, shapes intergroup attitudes (Herek & Capitano, 1996). Stated differently, closer interpersonal relationships, characterised by intimacy, and shared values and goals, are more likely than superficial or distant relationships to be associated with positive attitudes towards gay men (Herek & Capitano, 1996). In another study that explored imagined and actual contact experiences between heterosexual and gay people, it was determined that there appeared to be very little correspondence between the anticipated reactions of highly prejudiced participants to imagined encounters with gay people and their actual reactions (Conley et al., 2007). In fact, experience of these participants during the actual encounter was substantially more positive than those who only imagined the encounter (Conley et al., 2007). This finding supports the view that attitudes are not necessarily stable and consistent, but rather influenced by social situations and relationships (Conley et al., 2007). Further support for the contact hypothesis was evidenced in a study conducted by Lemm (2006). This study also determined that a greater motivation among participants to be non-prejudiced was associated with more favourable implicit (i.e., unconscious) and explicit (i.e., conscious) attitudes towards gay men (Lemm, 2006). This distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes is important given the finding in an earlier study that while explicit attitudes appeared positive towards gay men, the implicit attitudes of the male participants remained relatively negative (Steffens, 2005). This finding suggests that while some male participants appear to have positive attitudes towards gay men, they may still harbour unacknowledged negative feelings towards them. Although these preliminary studies offer some insight into the contact experience between heterosexuals and gay people, it is argued that further qualitative enquiry is needed to develop a more in-depth understanding of the nature and quality of personal contact in order to extend the current understanding of how gay-supportive attitudes are formed (Castro-Convers, Gray, Ladany, & Metzler, 2005). For example, it is not entirely clear how prior contact might affect a parent's attitude towards his or her son in the process of coming out (Castro-Convers et al., 2005).

The belief that sexual orientation has a biological origin has been shown to have a significant effect on people's anti-gay attitudes (Altemeyer, 2001). This is in line with the attributional theory of stigma, which holds that people are more likely to help a person whose distress is attributed to an uncontrollable cause, rather than a controllable cause (Haider-Markel & Joslyn,

2008). There is considerable support for this theory in the literature (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008; Hegarty & Golden, 2008; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). However, in a study conducted by Hegarty and Pratto (2001) it was revealed that while biological determinist arguments may influence anti-gay attitudes, prior beliefs may ultimately affect whether such evidence is accepted or dismissed. This appears to fall in line with the finding in an earlier study that men were more inclined than women to hold onto the belief that same-sex sexuality is a lifestyle choice and not biologically determined (Johnson et al., 1997). In another study, the manipulation of attributional beliefs had no effect on participant's attitudes towards stigmatised groups, thus indicating very little support for the attributional theory of stigma (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). Rather, consistent with the justification-suppression model, which holds that individuals both possess and suppress genuine prejudices, which if expressed, are justified with a range of cognitive rationalisations (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), it was identified that prejudiced participants spontaneously produced a greater number of causal thoughts implying that the stigmatised traits were controllable (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). These results appear to support the idea that while attributional thoughts may in certain cases affect attitudes, previously prejudiced attitudes may influence the attributional thinking process (Hegarty & Golden, 2008).

Lastly, it is argued that there is a substantial subset of heterosexual men and women who generally hold positive attitudes towards gay men (Castro-Convers et al., 2005). Variables associated with lower levels of homo-negativity among both men and women include: "gender (i.e., being female); non-acceptance of traditional gender roles; infrequent church attendance; non-membership in a conservative or fundamentalist religious denomination; being highly educated; and/or liberal political affiliation" (Castro-Convers et al., 2005, p. 48). In a qualitative study exploring the nature and quality of relationships that seem to exist between supportive heterosexual women (typically referred to as fag hags) and men, and gay men, it was acknowledged that an early awareness of gay men (e.g., a friend or family member who is gay), direct contact with gay men (e.g., being in a setting with an increased likelihood of coming into contact with gay men), and being raised in an open, formative environment (e.g., where human diversity is embraced rather than rejected) seem to play a role in the participants' forming gay-supportive attitudes (Castro-Convers et al., 2005). As already indicated, it is not clear to what extent these findings apply to the experiences of many heterosexual fathers, given consistent findings of a poor father-son dyad between them and their gay sons.

Internalised Homo-negativity and Associated Negative Health Outcomes

With widespread agreement that same-sex sexuality is not a psychosexual pathology, many researchers have begun exploring the effects of internalised homo-negativity and cultural victimisation, often depicted as minority stress (Meyer, 2003), in order to provide a better account of the finding that gay men in general are at substantial risk of poorer mental and sexual health outcomes (Cabaj, 1996; Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). According to Stein and Cabaj (1996), the complex processes of physical, psychological, and social development among gay men during childhood and adolescence are generally complicated by the countervailing forces of internalised homo-negativity, pressuring them to reject an essential and integrative part of their identity (Stein & Cabaj, 1996). Furthermore, if the effects of internalised homo-negativity are compounded by incidents of overt discrimination or violence in response to their differentness, “the personality may be severely damaged, leading to serious impairment in the capacity for psychological, social, and work adaptation” (Stein & Cabaj, 1996, p. 415).

Internalised homo-negativity refers to the internalisation of “significant aspects of the prejudice experienced within a heterosexist society” (Williamson, 2000, p. 98). More specifically, internalised homo-negativity or self-stigma (Herek et al., 2009), refers to the incorporating of beliefs that heterosexuality is the benchmark and that homosexuality is unnatural, immoral, deviant, and inferior. According to most writers, internalised homo-negativity is a “normative and inevitable consequence because all children are exposed to heterosexist norms” and assumptions while growing up (Williamson, 2000, p. 98). These heterosexist norms and assumptions are adopted early in children’s developmental histories and subsequently reinforced during adolescence and adulthood, through exposure to repeated heterosexist messages and various forms of prejudice and discrimination, ranging from subtle (e.g., threatening stares, sexual comments, and derogatory jokes) to more overt behaviours (e.g., being victimised, bullied, and harassed) (Burn et al., 2005). It is argued that internalised homo-negativity may flourish or not, depending on the individual’s psychological resources and capacity to resist predominant heterosexist messages as well as various forms of discrimination. Other protective factors highlighted in the literature include secure attachment, good intellectual functioning, self-efficacy, self-confidence, high self-esteem, close relationship to a caring parent

figure, and authoritative parenting (warmth, structure, high expectations) (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). Broadly, internalised homo-negativity is believed to result in a spoiled identity (Grossman, 1997), with explicit or implicit self-devaluation, self-loathing, and self-sabotaging.

Research has provided strong support that internalised homo-negativity adversely impacts on the health of many gay men (Rosser et al., 2008). One study has revealed that high levels of internalised homo-negativity is associated with a less developed gay identity, lower self esteem, poor self-concept, and higher sex guilt (Rowen & Malcolm, 2002). In another study, it was determined that internalised homo-negativity appears to be a critical predictor of depression among gay men (Rosser et al., 2008). This study also found that the greater the internalised homo-negativity, the more likely participants were to describe their sexuality as a curse, and as something that they hated or rejected (Rosser et al., 2008). Furthermore, internalised homo-negativity has been associated with being psychosexually less mature, less comfortable with their sexuality, and more isolated (Rosser et al., 2008). It has been demonstrated that internalised homo-negativity can affect gay men's coping strategies, intimate relationships, and level of self-disclosure (Jellison & McConnell, 2003). In another study it was acknowledged that a pronounced relationship exists between internalised homo-negativity and internalised shame (Allen & Oleson, 1999). Regarding the effects of internalised homo-negativity on relationship quality specifically, it has been found that internalised homo-negativity leads to greater relationship problems among gay men, especially in the presence of increased depressive symptoms (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Further, it has been found that internalised homo-negativity is indirectly associated with contracting HIV, through its direct associations with decreased self-esteem and increased sexual risk-taking (Williamson, 2000). In addition, internalised homo-negativity has been linked with a range of self-injurious behaviours such as substance abuse, eating disorders, self-mutilation, and suicidal behaviour (Williamson, 2000). In a study exploring attempted suicide, it was disclosed that approximately one third of gay and bisexual youth reported at least one intentional suicide attempt, of which almost half repeated these attempts (Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991). Family problems were the most frequently cited reason for attempted suicide amongst these participants (Remafedi et al., 1991). Poor family interaction is widely believed to be a suicide risk factor for young gay men (Proctor & Groze, 1994).

In addition to internalised homo-negativity, it has been argued that the effect of ongoing cultural victimisation, discrimination or oppression could also have a significantly negative impact on gay people (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009). It is believed that these effects largely mirror the effects of sexual and physical abuse (Neisen, 1993, cited in Rosser et al., 2008). Although gay youth share many risk factors with other vulnerable adolescents, it is widely believed that they also face psychosocial challenges unique to their experience as members of a stigmatised group (Elze, 2002; Safren & Heimberg, 1999; Savin-Williams, 1994). Results from a study conducted by Lewis, Derlega, Berndt, Morris, and Rose (2001) demonstrated a range of these unique stressors as experienced by gay men, including “visibility issues (difficulty being ‘out’ both with one’s family as well as in a more public arena), family conflict (difficulties encountered with one’s family due to one’s sexual orientation, including family reactions to a partner), discrimination at work (concerning possible and actual job loss and other economic stressors as well as discriminatory practices), general discrimination (involving social services and housing), violence and harassment (concerning verbal and physical attacks or threats due to one’s sexual orientation), ... and misunderstanding (society’s ignorance about and lack of acceptance of gays)” (pp. 81-82). Similarly, Savin-Williams (1994) observed that a common theme in the literature is the chronic stress that is created by peers and family members through their verbal and physical abuse of gay youth. In a review conducted by Savin-Williams (1994) it was found that peer and family harassment was associated with a range of negative outcomes among gay youth, including school related problems (i.e., high rates of truancy, failure, and drop-outs), homelessness (i.e., as a result of being evicted or running away), substance abuse, criminal activity, prostitution, and suicide. More recently, in a study conducted by D’Augelli and Grossman (2001), it was acknowledged that participants who had been physically attacked were more likely to demonstrate lower self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation, and increased feelings of isolation than participants who had not been victimised or who had experienced only verbal abuse. Further, these participants were more likely to report poorer current mental health (D’Augelli & Grossman, 2001). In a study conducted by Rotheram-Borus, Hunter, and Rosario (1994), 39 % of gay and bisexual youths indicated that they had attempted suicide, indicating the significance of gay-related stressful life events, such as disclosing to one’s family or being discovered as being gay. In another study, it was found that perceived stress, which was associated with both internalised homo-negativity

and experiences of discrimination, exerted a significant impact on perceptions of relationship quality among gay couples (Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, & Hamrin, 2006). In a study exploring attachment patterns among gay men, it was established that gender nonconforming behaviour in childhood was associated with parental and peer rejection (Landolt et al., 2004). Furthermore, childhood paternal and peer rejection mediated the association between childhood gender nonconformity and adult attachment anxiety (Landolt et al., 2004). And lastly, according to a study by Safren and Heimberg (1999), gay youth revealed statistically higher elevations in present suicidal ideation, depression, and hopelessness than their heterosexual counterparts. These authors observed that these elevations are attributed to the effects of stress, social support, and coping through acceptance (Safren & Heimberg, 1999). In conclusion, these authors suggest that the environmental and psychosocial variables that predict various forms of distress are ones that are modifiable through psychosocial interventions (Safren & Heimberg, 1999).

Internalised homo-negativity may never be completely overcome, thus affecting many gay and lesbian individuals long after coming out (Gonsiorek, 1988). Overcoming internalised homo-negativity is viewed as being essential to the development of a healthy self-concept (Rowen & Malcolm, 2002). This can be a considerable challenge for many gay people as they must continue to participate in a heterosexist system that consistently de-values them. It is therefore important that we begin to address institutional and cultural heterosexism directly rather than treat the symptom as if it simply resides in the gay individual (Williamson, 2000). A good starting point appears to be the family, especially fathers. Despite arguments that families perform a rather peripheral role in the lives of many gay men, it remains the contention of this thesis that families can play a more positive role in terms of their identity formation and psychological adjustment (Elizur & Ziv, 2001) as well as help to protect them against the harmful effects of other risk factors (Anhalt & Morris, 1998).

Summary of Chapter 2

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of pertinent literature on gay men and multiple aspects of their development and lived experiences. The South African socio-cultural context plays a significant role in the lives of gay men in that it maintains the dominant view that heterosexuality is the norm and same-sex sexuality is unnatural, immoral, deviant and inferior, and perpetuates the expression of intolerance, discrimination, and in some cases hostility towards

gay men, particularly among men who maintain rigid constructions of traditional heterosexual masculinity. Against this backdrop, the sexual identities of gay men are formed in complex and varied ways, often without much encouragement, support or guidance, and subsequently disclosed, to family, friends, and others. Without adequate encouragement and support, many gay men internalise society's negative view towards same-sex sexuality, which is likely to result in serious longer-term health and well-being consequences. Noting these broader processes, it is necessary to consider the role and influence of gay men's family-of-origin, which is also regarded as a significant source of society's anti-gay attitudes and behaviours. Research indicates that gay men are more likely to come out to their mothers, that fathers in general are less likely to be told, and less likely to be told first, that fathers are more likely to react negatively, and that relationships before and after disclosure are likely to be more positive between mothers and gay sons than between fathers and gay sons. Despite these consistent findings, very little research can be found that explores the nature of the father-son relationship before, during, and after the disclosure, especially from the father's perspective. These apparent gaps are significant given research findings that suggest that paternal influence uniquely and independently explains certain child and adult outcomes, that fathers could have a significant impact on the self and adult attachment patterns of gay men, and the potential role fathers could play in buffering gay adolescents against mental health problems associated with internalised homo-negativity and victimisation.

As an extension of this chapter, the following chapter will provide a review of the literature on fathers more specifically in order to further inform and contextualise this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON FATHERS AND FATHERHOOD

Cultural constructions of fatherhood in general, and in the United States, especially prior to the 1970s, can be viewed according to two general strands of thought (Rohner, 1998) that have essentially associated fathers and fathering with a so-called deficit paradigm (Smit, 2004) or role inadequacy perspective (Dienhart, 1998). According to the first strand of thought, fathers were typically viewed as ineffective, often incompetent, and even biologically unsuited to the job of childrearing (Rohner, 1998). Here, the maternal counterpoint was that women are genetically endowed for childcare (Rohner, 1998). The second strand asserted that the influence of fathers on child development was unimportant, or at most, peripheral or indirect (Rohner, 1998). The maternal counterpoint to this strand of thought was that motherly love and competent maternal care provided everything that children needed for normal, healthy development (Rohner, 1998). Largely as a result of these two streams of thought, fathers and fatherhood as a socio-cultural phenomenon, were largely ignored or dismissed by mainstream behavioural science until well into the twentieth century (Barclay & Lupton, 1999; Rohner, 1998).

It is only since the 1970s and 1980s that increased recognition has been given to fathers, with a specific interest in the meaning of fathering for men, and the influence of fathering on the lives of men and their children (Dienhart, 1998; Pasley, Futris, & Skinner, 2002; Rohner, 1998). This trend has also been observed in certain instances in South Africa (Morrell et al., 2003). Since the 1990s, scholars have increasingly recognised the “need to move beyond simplistic analyses of fathers’ presence or absence in the household, family or both; noting the complexity, fluidity, and cultural variations associated with fathers’ multifaceted connections to particular households, families or individual household members” (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000, p. 1181). As a result, numerous studies in the United States have been conducted on fathers, focusing on a broad spectrum of interests, including “diverse ethno-cultural experiences (e.g., Chicano, black, Asian fathers), different age cohorts of fathers (e.g., adolescent father, middle-aged first-time fathers), and different family forms (e.g., single fathers, noncustodial fathers, fathers with joint custody, primary parent fathers, fathers with a special needs child)” (Dienhart, 1998, p. 19). Many scholars today accept that fathers are in many cases “affectively and formatively salient” in the lives of their children (Lamb, 1997, p. 1). More specifically, it has

become increasingly recognised among researchers, theorists, and practitioners that fathers: (a) play complex, multidimensional roles as companions, protectors, care providers, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners; (b) that many patterns of paternal influence are indirect; and (c) that social constructions of fatherhood vary across historical epochs and sub-cultural contexts (Lamb, 1997; McBride, 1990).

In line with these general shifts away from viewing fathers according to a deficit paradigm or role inadequacy perspective towards recognition of the important roles played by many fathers, the aim of this chapter is to provide a review of pertinent literature (derived mostly from the American and/or European context) as it pertains to the broad range of issues that have been explored in relation to fatherhood, namely the cultural representations of and discourses about fatherhood, paternal identity and father involvement as well as the linkages between dimensions of the father-child relationship, and children's and fathers' well-being and development (Marsiglio et al., 2000). The focus on literature developed largely in the American and/or European context is due to the fact that literature on fathers in South Africa is generally sparse (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Morrell et al., 2003). However, it has been argued that the forms and patterns of fatherhood and father involvement in South Africa appear to be similar in their diversity of types to those identified in Western contexts (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Where possible, reference is made to literature on fathers in South Africa. In addition, this chapter will begin exploring the limited research that pertains specifically to the relationship between heterosexual fathers and gay sons. It is stated at the outset of this chapter that, in line with the proposed research in this thesis, reference to fathers throughout this chapter will pertain specifically to white, heterosexual men in two-parent dual-earner families.

Historical Discourses and Cultural Representations of Fatherhood

Although the historical understanding of fatherhood is rather limited, it has been observed by most scholars that men's roles in the family have undergone numerous changes throughout time (Dienhart, 1998; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Smit, 2008). In reviewing the literature it appears that while there is some variance amongst writers as to the precise nature and timing of these socio-cultural changes, there is at least some agreement around four phases or periods of documented changes in the West (Lamb, 2000). These phases or periods include the period extending from Puritan times through the Colonial period and into Republican times (e.g., father as moral guide),

the early nineteenth to mid-twentieth century (e.g., father as distant breadwinner), between the 1930s and 1940s (e.g. father as sex role model), and then again since the mid-1970s (e.g., father as nurturer and carer) (LaRossa, 1988; Lamb, 2000; Smit 2002). Although these documented changes are not considered to be universal, there is some evidence to suggest that these changes are mirrored in many other industrial and post-industrial societies, including South Africa (Smit, 2008).

During the lengthy period that extended from Puritan times through the Colonial period and into Republican times, it was widely expected that fathers assume the role of moral teacher and moral overseer within the family (Lamb, 1995b). As such, fathers were generally expected to raise their children with an appropriate sense of values, which they acquired themselves from religious scripts such as the Bible (Lamb, 1995b). In order to achieve this, fathers also had to assume responsibility for their children's education (Lamb, 1995b). By being literate, their children were equipped with the necessary tools to adopt and maintain a Christian way of living (Lamb, 1995b).

Subsequently, as a result of the industrial revolution during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which witnessed the introduction of a free market economy and concomitant individual wage labour, men in general became increasingly dependent on the open labour market (Knijn, 1995). This development contributed significantly to the widening gap between public and private lives at the time, whereby factory workers were forced to pursue demanding careers away from the home (Knijn, 1995). This trend was soon adopted by most men (Knijn, 1995). As a result of this shift, most men moved away from being an active and present dominant influence in the family towards being a physically absent and intermittent dominant influence (Balcom, 1998). Women, on the other hand, were expected to stay at home and assume the expressive role of home-maker, and provide the majority of childcare, while their husbands were away making a living (Booth & Amato, 1994). In general, children were regarded as women's work, while public life, for men, took precedence over the psychic economy of the family (Garbarino, 1992). As a result of these shifts, it is reported that more and more children were abandoned by their fathers towards the end of the nineteenth century (Knijn, 1995).

Parallel to these developments was the increasing re-appraisal of motherhood (Knijn, 1995). In the literature during this period, the importance of good motherhood was stressed, whereas the educational role of the father was hardly mentioned, indicating the decreasing influence of the father on the family in general and on the upbringing of children in particular (Knijn, 1995). Given the emphasis on motherhood, what remained for many fathers was simply to become the major provider, a position which still offered considerable status and financial compensation for their prolonged absence from the family, and the long working weeks spent within a hierarchical environment (Knijn, 1995). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the provider or breadwinner role was institutionalised and readily assumed by fathers; it was to become the most important aspect of their male gender identity (Knijn, 1995). According to certain scholars, not only were fathers expected to provide for their children, but also to bridge the gap between the home and larger society (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993), and perform the role of disciplinarian (Harris & Morgan, 1991). It has been noted that although the breadwinning role became a dominant aspect of fatherhood during this time, it did not mean that the father's responsibility for moral guardianship had disappeared, or that the provider role was insignificant before the industrialisation period (Lamb, 2000). It could be that the breadwinning role simply came to the fore at this point in history. However, in time the role of men as providers became increasingly challenged as a result of the advancement of women's rights (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993); the increasing participation of women in the paid labour force (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998; Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Knijn, 1995; Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Smit, 2002); the continuous rise of feminism, especially during the 1960s (Smit 2002; 2008); and increasing divorce rates (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). It is argued that these social and economic developments contributed largely to significant shifts in gender relations (Marsiglio et al., 2000), and therefore changes to the economy of families (e.g., men being no longer the sole breadwinner), and an increased emphasis on role sharing and egalitarianism (Booth & Amato, 1994) – all of which mounted an ever increasing challenge to the cultural saliency of the patriarchal model of the role of the husband and father (Smit 2008).

Possibly as a result of these continuing socio-cultural shifts, combined with the cumulative effects of the Great Depression and the Second World War, a new conceptualisation of fatherhood emerged during the 1930s and early 1940s (Lamb, 2000). In addition to being moral guides and breadwinners or providers, the role of fathers also now included that of sex role

model and model of achievement (Brayfield, 1995; Lamb, 1997; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). It would seem that this view was heavily influenced by psychoanalytic theory, which holds that fathers function primarily within the context of a motivational system in which boys seek to identify with their fathers (Lamb, 2000). It would also appear that the portrayal of fathers as sex role models emerged at a time when most fathers had become poor providers as a direct result of the Great Depression (Lamb, 1997). Nevertheless, most social scientists at the time assumed that a major purpose of fathers was to influence the gender role conceptions of their children, especially their sons (Brayfield, 1995), and to develop their sons into men (Lamb, 1995a). Parallel to these developments, heated public debates emerged over a range of issues pertaining to fatherhood, including “divorce and single parenthood, ‘deadbeat dads’ and ‘androgynous’ fathers, welfare reform, teenage pregnancy and non-marital childbearing, fathers’ rights and responsibilities, the definition of ‘family’, and fathers’ potentially unique contributions to child development” (Marsiglio et al., 2000, p. 1174). These debates served to raise public awareness of the growing numbers of fathers who were voluntarily, or involuntarily, disconnected from their children, and the meaning and relevance of fathers in their children’s lives (Marsiglio et al., 2000). Early studies on the phenomenon of father absence following the Second World War provided evidence of the detrimental effect father absence had on children (Cabrera et al., 2000; Lamb, 2000). These studies demonstrated that prolonged father absence had a negative effect on sons’ self-concepts, gender-role identity, peer-group relationships, scholastic performance, and the control of aggression (Lamb, 1997; Morrell, 2006). However, the effect of fatherlessness on girls appeared to be less enduring, dramatic, and consistent (Cabrera et al., 2000; Lamb, 1997).

Drawing on these prevailing assumptions and supporting evidence, family advocates called upon fathers to become more involved in family life (Marsiglio, 1991), arguing that the “increased participation of fathers would strengthen the family, alleviate much of the stress of employed mothers, decrease reliance on childcare of questionable quality, and renew children’s relationships with adult men as role models” (Glass, 1998, pp. 821-822). However, the feminist movement led many social scientists to question whether increased masculinity and aggressiveness among boys were in fact desirable (Lamb, 2000). The belief that fathers’ primary role was that of a sex role model was later refuted by findings suggesting that many boys without fathers appeared to develop quite normally in terms of their sex role development and level of achievement (Lamb, 1997). Decades later it was further realised that the characteristics of the

father as a parent, rather than the characteristics of the father as a man, seemed to play the most significant role in terms of their children's sex role development (Lamb, 1995b). A review conducted by Cabrera et al. (2000) identified five key ways in which paternal absence may actually affect children: (a) without a father there is no co-parent; (b) economic loss and disadvantage accompanying single motherhood could result in poorer educational and psychosocial performance; (c) social isolation, resulting from social disapproval of a single or divorced status, may lead to emotional distress and less adaptive functioning; (d) perceived or often actual abandonment may cause psychological distress; and (e) conflict between parents may have deleterious effects on children's socio-emotional well-being and behaviour.

As a result of these socio-economic developments, research findings, and evolving societal perceptions and expectations, it is generally believed that the role of fathers has once again been expanded upon (Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Smit, 2002). In the mid-1970s and 1980s writers and commentators started to emphasise the possibility and need for fathers to become more active and nurturing (Lamb, 2000), and encouraged a greater diversity of men across the globe to become more nurturant, expressive, and involved as parents (Smit, 2004). Since then, the meaning of father has come to mean more than just being a wage earner or provider, but also stay-at-home dad, caregiver of child, and sharer of childcare responsibilities (Coleman, Garfield, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2004). The phenomenon of involved fathering is not only limited to developments in the West, but can also be observed in many developing countries, including South Africa (Morrell et al., 2003; Smit, 2004). This is largely attributed to urbanisation, globalisation, and an increase in the number of dual-earner families (Smit, 2004). These shifts are evident in studies that indicate that the participation of fathers in domestic and childcare has risen, albeit to varying degrees, over the past few decades (Lamb, 1995b; 1997; Pleck, 1997; Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Smit, 2008), and that fathers increasingly report wanting to be more directly involved in the lives of their children (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993; van Dongen, 1995).

In a study conducted by Smit (2008) in South Africa, among English and Afrikaans-speaking fathers, it was determined that the so-called new fatherhood has become a reality in the lives of many of the participants. Slightly more than half of the participants believed that they demonstrated moderate to high levels of active father involvement. However, most participants

felt it was fair to expect a man to be actively involved in the lives of his children (Smit, 2008). It was also recognised that participants' level of actual involvement did not vary significantly in terms of their age, language (either English or Afrikaans), marital status, marital duration, educational level, age at the birth of their first child, number of children, gender of their children, or the age of the youngest child at home (Smit, 2008). However, perceptions of fairness seemed higher among participants who became fathers at an older age, held a postgraduate degree, are English-speaking, are involved in a professional career or managerial position, have a spouse with a postgraduate degree, have a spouse who holds a managerial position or professional career, and possess an egalitarian outlook on family life (Smit, 2008). And lastly, it was found that the more a man perceives it as fair to be actively involved, the more inclined he will be to demonstrate active, nurturant fathering himself, and vice versa (Smit, 2008).

Contemporary Discourses and Cultural Representations of Fatherhood

Conceptualisation of father, fathering, and fatherhood. Before discussing contemporary images of fatherhood, it may be useful to first explore how scholars understand the concepts of father, fathering, and fatherhood. In the Western world, it is generally recognised that a man becomes a father once he has impregnated a woman, and a child is born as a result (Morrell, 2006). However, modern technological advances such as in vitro fertilisation are challenging this traditional notion of what a father is (Morrell, 2006). In addition to these technological advances, the status of father does not always result from a biological process, as witnessed with social fathers (Morrell et al., 2003) in reconstituted families, including inter alia adoptions and step-family configurations (Morrell, 2006). It has therefore become necessary to distinguish between biological fathers, and the cultural construction of fatherhood, with the former expressing a genetic link between an adult male and a child, irrespective of the biological process, and the latter referring more to the social role of fathering, irrespective of a genetic link, and stresses the importance of social relationships and personal choice (Morrell, 2006). Such a distinction is useful in that it moves beyond a narrow focus on insemination as a defining feature of fatherhood towards a broader and more inclusive view of fathering as a socially constructed role, and therefore “a product of the meanings, beliefs, motivations, attitudes, and behaviours of all the stakeholders in the lives of children” (Doherty et al., 1998, p. 278). As such, most scholars today would agree that being a father has uniquely different meanings to different

individuals, and the ways in which men envision, enact, integrate, and differentiate their roles as fathers varies considerably (Palkovitz, 2002) across time and context (Morrell, 2006). The following points illustrate this general view further: (a) family historians have observed numerous shifts in the cultural representations of fathering across various periods in history (Lamb, 2000); (b) one does not necessarily need to be the biological father in order to accept the fatherhood role and act as a father towards one or more children (Morrell, 2006); (c) some men take on fatherhood as an unconditional aspect of their selfhood, whereas others appear unwilling to do so (Fox & Bruce, 2001); and (d) fathers play complex, multidimensional roles as companions, protectors, care providers, models, moral guides, teachers, breadwinners, although the relative importance of each role varies across cultural, ethnic, religious, and social class groupings (Lamb; 1997; 2000). With respect to fatherhood, there are no givens and everything is variable (Garbarino, 1992). Such variations in the relative salience of different aspects of fatherhood complicate attempts to conceptualise and assess paternal roles and influences (Lamb, 1997).

Contemporary images of fatherhood. Internationally, scholarship on fatherhood has developed significantly over the last few decades, resulting in an abundance of complex, interwoven, and multidimensional perspectives on the role of the father within the family (Morman & Floyd, 2006). As such, contemporary fatherhood has been conceptualised in different ways by different authors (Morrell et al., 2003), each foregrounding a particular aspect or feature of the new fatherhood (e.g., involved fathering, nurturant fathering, responsible fathering, generative fathering, or egalitarian fathering) (Palkovitz, 2002). Despite these developments, some scholars maintain that very “little is known about how males develop a perception of fatherhood, their status as fathers, and the roles associated with being a father” (Richter & Smith, 2006, p. 62). Similar observations have been made about fathers in South Africa (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). Furthermore, most scholars agree that “(n)o single definition of ‘successful fatherhood’ and no ideal ‘father’s role’ can claim universal acceptance or empirical support” (Cabrera et al., 2000, p. 133), given that fathers play many roles within the family, each of which is associated with a different set of ideas, competencies, and behavioural patterns (Cabrera et al., 2000), and the relative importance of these roles and functions vary across “familial, subcultural, cultural, and, of course historical contexts” (Lamb, 1995a, p. 154). As such, for Lamb (1995a, p. 154), a successful father is “one whose role performance matches

the demands and prescriptions of his sociocultural and familial context”. Without discounting this general view, some scholars do suggest that “for the sake of clarity, assessment, and coherence, continued convergence towards a general understanding of what it means to be a good father is beneficial for anyone interested in the scholarship of fatherhood” (Morman & Floyd, 2006, p. 117). These writers suggest that a good father should be loving, affectionate, involved, nurturing, and consistent in the raising of his children (Morman & Floyd, 2006). According to Lamb (2000) four central aspects or features of contemporary fatherhood can be noted, although their relative importance may vary from one cultural context to another. These features include: (a) economic provisioning; (b) psychosocial and emotional support to mothers; (c) provision of nurturance and care to young children; and (d) enforcement of moral and ethical guidance (Lamb, 2000). For Pruett (2000), effective fathering broadly includes the following everyday characteristics: (a) feeling and behaving responsibly towards one’s child; (b) being emotionally engaged; (c) being physically accessible; (d) providing material support to sustain the child’s needs; and (e) exerting decisions on child rearing. Practically, this means “helping with or paying the bills; participating in infant care by changing diapers, bathing, and feeding; disciplining, bandaging cuts, helping with homework, driving to and from after-school and weekend activities, making trips to the pediatrician; and knowing [a] child’s friends, passions, fears, and loves” (Pruett, 2000, p. 19). Also, Levine and Pitt (1995, cited in Doherty et al., 1998) suggest that responsible fathering includes the following: (a) delaying procreation until one is emotionally and financially prepared to support a child; (b) establishing paternity once a baby is born; (c) actively sharing the emotional and physical care of a child with the child’s mother; and (d) sharing in the financial support of a child with the child’s mother. In a further attempt to uncover the common themes that together form a generalised conception of what it means to be a good father, Morman and Floyd (2006) proposed a scholarly driven study on the nature of fatherhood. Through two inductive studies, these researchers assembled a list of referents that characterised their respondents’ conceptions of what it means to be a good father (Morman & Floyd, 2006). In the first study, comprising fathers only, participants mentioned the categories of love, availability, and role modelling most often (Morman & Floyd, 2006). These categories address the more relational and emotional components of the fathering role, which appear largely in line with shifts in the culture of fatherhood (Morman & Floyd, 2006). In the second study, consisting of both fathers and sons, the participants agreed on three of the top five characteristics

of good fathers, including love, availability, and role-modelling (Morman & Floyd, 2006). In comparing both studies, it is remarkable how both groups agreed on the top three characteristics of fathers (i.e., love, availability, and role-modelling), and how all three groups mentioned love most often (Morman & Floyd, 2006). These results provide a more refined and ecologically valid view of fathering, which could be useful for ongoing efforts to uncover the nature of fatherhood (Morman & Floyd, 2006).

Dissatisfaction with contemporary fathers. Despite the apparent shifts that have taken place around new fatherhood as a cultural image, many scholars have argued that the actual behaviour of men appears to have fallen short of the cultural ideal (Aldous et al., 1998; Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993; Lamb, 1995b; Walker & McGraw, 2000). According to these scholars, men's family involvement, both within and beyond the household, appears to have remained remarkably resistant to the wide range of demographic, social, and economic changes that have taken place (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001). Despite the significant increase in dual-earner families, men continue to assume the role of primary breadwinners in families, given continued disparities in income between men and women (Lamb, 1997). Similar observations have been made of men in South Africa (Morrell et al., 2003). A recent study by Aldous et al. (1998) indicated that fathers in two-parent families are generally less involved in the daily routine of family duties than mothers. In general, it was acknowledged that fathers were at work longer than mothers were (Aldous et al., 1998). Yet, even when both parents were employed in full-time paid work, mothers continued to be more involved in childcare at home (Aldous et al., 1998; Craig, 2006). As such, there appeared to be very little evidence of fathers being prepared to balance the load with their spouses. It was also acknowledged that the more hours fathers were at work, the less parenting they were likely to perform (Aldous et al., 1998). However, in certain cases, the more hours a mother was employed outside the home, the more physical care fathers appeared to provide (Aldous et al., 1998). However, on the whole, the work schedule of fathers seemed to take precedence over the mother's, thereby reflecting a differential gender power apparently existent in many families (Aldous et al., 1998).

In South Africa, it has been noted that although there has been some movement away from a male-dominant authority pattern, the husband is still primarily viewed as the head of the household, while his wife assumes the role of junior in the decision-making process (Viljoen &

Steyn, 1996, cited in Smit, 2002). Although men, in general, seem prepared to take on more childcare responsibilities, it has been shown that this usually involves the more pleasurable and non-committal aspects of childcare (e.g., playing, engaging in goal-directed actions and tasks, and going on outings), while the more routine day-to-day physical and interactive care of children is still largely left to women (Craig, 2006; Lamb, 1997; van Dongen, 1995). As such, women, to a large extent, continue to spend more time with, and provide more care to, their children than men do (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001; Lamb, 1995b; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). Although some fathers appear to be more involved, it has also been argued that many fathers appear less emotionally involved, more mechanical, and seem to enjoy it less than mothers do (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993).

Other writers draw upon the absent father phenomenon, which remains prevalent in many present-day families, across all socio-economic classes, to illustrate the continued lack of involvement among some fathers (Smit, 2008). In South Africa, between 1993 and 2002, it was established that a large and growing proportion of children did not have a father who is alive or living in the same household as them (Posel & Devey, 2006). Further, in 2002, it was revealed that children were more likely to be living apart from their biological father than they were to be living with him (Posel & Devey, 2006). Levels of paternal absence in South Africa appear to be particularly high in comparison with other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. On the basis of this finding, it is argued that many fathers in South Africa remain an untapped source of emotional and financial support for their children (Morrell et al., 2003). According to writers, father absence, or paternal deprivation, does not only entail the actual physical absence of the father, which may be due to death, incarceration, military service (Balcom, 1998), forced labour migration, pressure to work long hours, divorce or social dislocations, but also absence on a more psychological and emotional level (Morrell, 2006). This distinction is useful insofar as it illustrates the potential complexity of father absence; a father might be physically present, but emotionally absent or physically absent, but emotionally supportive (Morrell, 2006).

A host of reasons and explanations have been offered for the apparent disparity that persists in the allocation and performance of specific domestic and childcare-related tasks between fathers and mothers. One such explanation has been offered by LaRossa (1988), who made a distinction between the culture of fatherhood and the conduct of fatherhood. According to

LaRossa (1988, p. 451), the culture of fatherhood refers specifically to the “shared norms, values, and beliefs surrounding men’s parenting”, and the conduct of fatherhood refers to “what fathers do”, including a range of possible “paternal behaviours”. For LaRossa, an apparent disconnect exists between the culture and conduct of fatherhood in that the culture of fatherhood has changed more rapidly than the conduct of fatherhood (LaRossa, 1988). He attributes this asynchrony to the conduct of motherhood and its cross-fertilising effect on the culture of fatherhood, and not on the conduct of fatherhood (LaRossa, 1988). With more mothers participating in the paid labour force, it is assumed that these mothers are spending less time with their children (LaRossa, 1988). As a result, it is expected that fathers should be doing a whole lot more than ever before, spending more time with their children, and interacting with them in place of their mothers (LaRossa, 1988). However, this does not mean that the conduct of fatherhood does not also affect the culture of fatherhood (LaRossa, 1988). In fact, the conduct of fatherhood and the conduct of motherhood appear to be exerting contradictory influences on the culture of fatherhood (LaRossa, 1988). The consequences of the asynchrony between the modern culture of fatherhood and the less modern or traditional conduct of fatherhood, according to a study conducted by LaRossa (1988), includes the emergence of a technically present, but functionally absent father, an increase in marital conflict, and a greater number of fathers who feel ambivalent and guilty about their performance as fathers.

In direct response to the criticisms levied against fathers in general, and the level of their involvement, certain scholars have argued that observations of the apparent disparity between the level of involvement of mothers and fathers persist as a result of scholars comparing directly, and in absolute terms, what men and women do in the family, using an idealised model of motherhood as the benchmark for norms of fathering (Dienhart, 1998). Dienhart (1998) cautions writers against assuming that some type of universal motherhood experience exists, which is shared by all mothers. She therefore advises against using such a standard to evaluate all fathers, as this will limit our understanding of the diverse experiences of fatherhood (Dienhart, 1998). Certain scholars have argued that such a one-sided focus tends to reinforce the deficit paradigm or role inadequacy perspective of fatherhood (Dienhart, 1998), by depicting fathers as under-involved, unskilled, inadequate, incapable or selfish, (Allen & Hawkins, 1999); misinterpreting men’s motives, feelings, attitudes, and hopes about being fathers; discounting their contributions as being irrelevant or unimportant to traditional notions of childcare; and potentially de-

motivating many men by only focusing on the numerous obstacles encountered by men (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997, cited in Dienhart, 1998). Lamb (1997) believes that many fathers do in fact demonstrate responsibility and commitment, directly and indirectly, by providing important economic support to the family, by providing important emotional and concrete support to the mother, and by interacting directly with their children.

Similarly, it has been argued that by drawing on motherhood as the benchmark, the breadwinning or provider role, which is not traditionally associated with motherhood, is largely excluded as a valid form of parental involvement (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Pleck, 1997). According to Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001), it is generally expected that fathers should be providers; however, this provision is viewed as a baseline and contemporary discussions on father involvement generally connote something beyond such provision. Many fathers view their provision of economic support as a significant contribution to their child's well-being (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Pleck, 1997). For example, Snarey (1993) determined that when compared with childless men, fathers generally exhibited a greater attachment to the labour force and their career out of a sense of responsibility to provide for their children. Most scholars would agree that resource provision is, in fact, one of the essential functions of parents (Allen & Daly, 2007; Pleck, 1997). However, it is acknowledged that referring to a father as being highly involved simply because he is a good economic provider, but not really engaged, accessible, and responsible, would not be considered by most scholars to be an accurate reflection of paternal involvement (Pleck, 1997). The point here is that scholars should explore and acknowledge provision as a valid form of paternal involvement in contemporary fatherhood literature (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). Furthermore, when measuring fathers' involvement researchers should not simply focus on the performance of representative caring tasks, as determined by the maternal model, but also on how these tasks are contemplated, arranged, and organised (van Dongen, 1995). Lastly, certain scholars advocate using a perspective that values both fathering and mothering for their similar and unique contributions to family life (Allen & Hawkins, 1999).

In addition to these arguments, it has been further argued that a major shortcoming in research on the father role to date is that much of this research has relied on the wife or mother's report on her husband's attitudes towards domestic responsibilities, his spousal and paternal

conduct, and the quality of the father-child relationship (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Smit, 2002; Wical & Doherty, 2005). As such, the personal experiences of fathers have mostly been overlooked in international and local studies (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Smit, 2002). Studies that exclude men, and base their observations on the responses of women only, run the risk of underestimating father involvement and misjudging their level of paternal care (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1995). It is therefore important that researchers focus more on the husband or father's own perception and experience of his role as spouse and parent, rather than just documenting the views of his wife (Smit, 2002). For example, one study exploring fathers' experiences directly has recognised that, in the absence of appropriate father role models, the social construction of fatherhood identity is extremely difficult for many fathers (Daly, 1995). Without a reference point, many fathers feel unprepared for fatherhood and uncertain about what is required of them as fathers (Daly, 1995). However, many of these men were in a position to create new models for what it means to be a good father (Daly, 1995). In another study exploring the experiences of fathers directly, it was affirmed that most participants accepted the nurturer and carer discourses of new fatherhood, but realised soon after the birth of their child that their images of being there were unachievable (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Their images of being there were largely centred on an older child, and other male activities such as playing football or fishing (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). These men were expected to be involved with their child as a friend, playmate or guide (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). However, after the birth of their child, these fathers realised that their infant was in fact unresponsive, non-social, and more demanding than they had anticipated (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Many of the first-time fathers felt there were no guidelines for them to follow in terms of fathering a tiny infant (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Confusion resulted as they tried to understand a situation that they had not anticipated, and where they did not see a clear role for themselves (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Rather than adjust their images and behaviour to match the maturity of the infant, almost all the fathers delayed their goal of being there until the infant was older, more sociable, easily managed, and rewarding (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). As such, the emotional fulfilment that they sought from fatherhood came much later than anticipated (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Furthermore, several fathers reported having mixed feelings about breastfeeding, which serves as a powerful metaphor for the unique love only a mother could provide, and a reminder of the biological bond between mother and infant that excluded the father (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). Studies such as this one provide

meaningful insights into the unique experiences of fathers, which would otherwise be overlooked if focusing solely on the wife or mother's reports.

Certain scholars argue that fathering cannot be defined in isolation from mothering, mothers' expectations, and socio-cultural expectations about childrearing in society (Doherty et al., 1998). Fathering is, after all, a social construction (Doherty et al., 1998), whereby historical, cultural, and familial ideologies inform the roles fathers play (Lamb, 2010). However, as Pruett (2000) explicitly points out, fathers are not mothers; fathers do not mother, just the same as mothers do not father. This view raises an interesting question: If fathers are not meant to mother, then what should fathers be doing? (Pruett, 1995). Much disagreement, confusion, and even uncertainty exists in answering this question, as is apparent from the range of views expressed by different scholars (Morman & Floyd, 2006), and research reports indicating that most men struggle with a feeling of ambiguity (Saracho & Spodek, 2008) and inadequacy when becoming a parent (Pruett, 1995). "(R)ather than expecting men to be good 'mothers', the focus must fall on *fathers*, and their ability to be capable and loving care-givers in their own right" (Smit, 2004, p. 4). As such, it should be recognised that fathers play a number of significant roles, including that of companions, providers, protectors, carers, teachers, models, disciplinarians, and moral guides, all of which have relative importance across historical epochs, and sub-cultural groups (Lamb, 1997). Only when we understand these roles and their relative importance can we begin to evaluate any father's impact on his child's development (Lamb, 1997).

Other scholars have argued that most men, as fathers, continue to experience various structural, cultural, familial, and personal barriers, which prevent them from becoming more involved (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Smit, 2004). Some of the barriers suggested in the literature include the following: (a) early socialisation experiences render most men incompetent as fathers because of limited experiences with children, lack of knowledge on childcare, and a general lack of preparation for fatherhood (McBride, 1990; Saracho & Spodek, 2008); (b) most men have very little exposure to appropriate paternal role models while growing up (Daly, 1995; McBride, 1990); (c) limited institutional and social support is available to assist men embarking on fatherhood (McBride, 1990); (d) exposure to demanding jobs with longer work hours can interfere with opportunities for having contact with their children (van Dongen, 1995); (e) emotional interactions with spouses or partners can directly and indirectly affect interactions

with children (Aldous et al., 1998); and (f) high divorce rates, and the growing popularity of nonmarital childbearing, mean that more children are living apart from their fathers (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001). It is important that researchers understand the complex and cumulative effect of these barriers on father involvement (Freeman, Newland, & Coyl, 2008). In a study conducted by Freeman et al. (2008), it was acknowledged that as the number of barriers increased, the more likely fathers were to report decreased levels of socialisation, physical play, caring, and accessibility with their children.

In response to the father absence phenomenon reported to remain prevalent today, some researchers have started to caution against the oversimplification of father absence and its assumed negative impact on children, as these negative effects may in fact be due to a combination of other factors, rather than the absence per se (Smit, 2008). For example, father absence may be harmful, not necessarily because a sex role model is absent, but because many aspects of the father's role (e.g., economic, social, emotional) go unfulfilled, or are inappropriately filled by other members in the family, especially following death or divorce (Lamb, 1997). In a recent article on father absence, the writer argued that inexplicable or mysterious instances of father absence, as opposed to normative or honourable instances of father absence, may impair a son's ability to develop and sustain positive self-worth, and to form lasting relationships with adult romantic partners (Balcom, 1998). In this context, these abandoned sons were found to acquire a profound distrust of the continuity and stability of relationships (Balcom, 1998). Such a distinction is useful insofar as it illustrates the importance of the context of father absence in considering its potential effects on a son. This is supported by the argument that father absence or low paternal involvement may in some circumstances be more desirable and in the best interests of the child (Morrell, 2006). This becomes apparent when we consider that the South African socio-cultural context, as discussed in the preceding chapter, includes exceptionally high rates of unemployment (Cock, 2001), alcohol consumption (Conley et al., 2009), sexual and gender-based violence (Conley et al., 2009), child sexual abuse (Morrell & Richter, 2006), and the use of violence as a legitimate form of discipline (Dawes, 2004) or problem solving (Conley et al., 2009). Lastly, it has also been argued that to focus solely on father absence detracts from the positive contributions being made to children by involved social or substitute fathers (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). As such, the broader context

of an individual's family life must be taken into account before simply generalising the destructive impact of father absence to all children (Lamb, 1995b).

Amidst these ongoing arguments and counter arguments, many scholars turned their attention towards conceptualising and measuring father involvement in terms of quantity (i.e., the amount of involvement) and quality (i.e., the kind of involvement), in order to understand what fathers are doing and whether they are doing enough (Pleck, 1997).

Conceptualising Father Involvement

Since the early 1980s increased attention has been given to exploring the level, predictors, and consequences of father involvement (Bruce & Fox, 1999). Early studies on father involvement emerged against a backdrop of growing concern about whether children were receiving enough fathering and whether fathers were doing enough to ease the childrearing burden of employed mothers (Pleck, 1997). As such, these early studies tended to focus only on the amount and not the kind of fathering children received (Pleck, 1997). For example, these early studies focused on the absence or presence of fathers, their financial contributions, and the amount of time they spent with their children (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Many of these studies emerged alongside and as a result of the growing popularity of time use methodologies at the time (Lamb, 2000). It has also been observed that many of these studies involved small and often unrepresentative samples (Lamb, 1995a). Another problem was that the results of these studies varied considerably, largely as a result of researchers using different implicit definitions of paternal involvement, making it very difficult to compare results (Lamb, 2000). In an attempt to refine and expand upon these earlier conceptualisations of father involvement, Michael Lamb and his colleagues proposed a three-part model of paternal involvement (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985). This tripartite typology has played an influential role in guiding scholarship on fatherhood during the 1990s and beyond (LaRossa, 1988; Marsiglio, 1991; McBride, 1990; McBride et al., 2005; Parke, 2000; Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Smit, 2004; Volling & Belsky, 1991), largely because of a growing recognition of the multidimensional nature of fathering (Bruce & Fox, 1999). According to this model, active paternal involvement consists of three components, namely interaction or engagement, availability or accessibility, and responsibility (Lamb et al., 1985). Interaction or engagement refers to time spent in direct contact with a child, either through caring or shared activities (e.g., time spent feeding, helping with homework, or

playing a game together) (Lamb et al., 1985). Availability or accessibility refers to time spent in close proximity to a child, which may or may not involve direct interaction (e.g., time spent cooking while the child plays at the parents feet, or simply being in one room while the child plays in the next room) (Lamb et al., 1985). Responsibility refers to the extent to which a father is accountable for a child's well-being and care (e.g., time spent arranging for babysitters, making an appointment to see a paediatrician, and then making sure the child gets to see the paediatrician, or making sure that a child has clothes to wear) (Lamb et al., 1985).

In reviewing previous research on paternal involvement in two-parent families, where the mother is unemployed, Lamb (2000) affirmed that fathers spent approximately 20 to 25 % as much time as mothers in direct interaction or engagement with their children, and roughly a third as much time being accessible to their children (Lamb, 2000). Many of these studies also indicated that fathers assume virtually no responsibility for their children's care or rearing (Lamb, 2000). Further, when reviewing previous research on two-parent families, where the mother is employed, Lamb (2000) revealed that levels of paternal engagement (33 %) and accessibility (65 %) appeared proportionately higher than levels of maternal involvement (Lamb, 2000). Levels of responsibility appeared unchanged in these studies (Lamb, 2000). In conclusion, Lamb (2000) notes that although fathers appear to be doing more in proportion to employed mothers, they are in fact, in absolute terms, still lagging far behind the level of involvement of mothers (Lamb, 2000). The higher proportional increase may be linked more to the fact that mothers are doing less rather than fathers are doing more (Lamb, 2000). van Dongen (1995) has offered an explanation to account for the discrepancy that exists between proportional and absolute time spent with children: "(d)ue to work schedules most men spend far more time away from home than their wives. As a consequence their *absolute* share in routine caretaking tasks, such as feeding and nappy-changing, does not equal that of their wives. At the same time they all feel, and their wives seem to agree with this, that their *relative* share equals their wives' share. What's more, because their available time is limited they find it more important and in the children's best interest to spend time on affective aspects of childcare such as cuddling and romping, and educational activities such as playing games, reading (bedtime) stories and watching children's programmes on television" (p. 102).

In reviewing the content of these interactions, Lamb (2000) found that mothers' interactions with their children are dominated by caring, whereas fathers' interactions with their children are dominated by playing. But this is not to say that fathers play more than mothers do, or that fathers are incapable of childcare (Lamb, 2000). Contrary to common belief, parenting skills are acquired "on the job" by both mothers and fathers (Lamb, 2000). It is just that, mothers are on the job more often than fathers are, and therefore become more sensitive and attuned to the needs of their children (Lamb, 2000). By virtue of their lack of experience, and related lack in confidence, fathers continue to defer these responsibilities to mothers, who in turn accept these responsibilities, in part because of their designated role as care provider, but also because their male partners appear less competent in providing this care (Lamb, 2000). Over time, the differences between mothers and fathers are likely to become more entrenched (Lamb, 2000).

Although useful in guiding research on father involvement, it has been argued that the typology proposed by Lamb et al. (1985) fails to acknowledge other important dimensions of fatherhood (McBride et al., 2005). Furthermore, as long as level of involvement of fathers is measured according to the behaviour-oriented components, men will continue to lag behind the parental involvement of mothers (Smith, 2004). However, if we move beyond an overemphasis on the behaviour-orientated dimensions of paternal involvement, and include a cognitive and affective domain, we may begin to develop a more comprehensive picture of the extent to which fathers are involved in the lives of their children (Smith, 2004). Examples of the cognitive dimension include a father's assessment of the needs of his child or the allocation of time for the performance of childcare-related activities (Smith, 2004). Examples of the affective domain include the love of a father for his child, smiling, hugging or cuddling his child, or the feeling of distress when his child's health and well-being is threatened (Smith, 2004).

Another novel typological approach has been proposed in the work of Jain, Belsky, and Crnic (1996). In an attempt to move beyond an exclusive focus on fathering behaviour, Jain et al. (1996) identified four types of fathers in their study: caretakers, playmates-teachers, disciplinarians, and disengaged fathers (Jain et al., 1996). Men classified as caretakers typically engaged their sons mainly in routine and basic care activities, including dressing, feeding, and comforting (Jain et al., 1996). Men identified as playmates-teachers were primarily involved in playful interactions and engaged in instructional activities such as demonstrating things to their

sons (Jain et al., 1996). Disciplinary fathers were mostly engaged in disciplining, controlling, and socialising their sons (Jain et al., 1996). And lastly, disengaged fathers remained aloof and uninvolved in many activities with their sons (Jain et al., 1996).

With a better understanding of father involvement, and given variations in levels of their involvement, scholars have also increasingly explored the variables likely to play a role in the quality and extent of father involvement (Lamb et al., 1985).

The Antecedents of Father Involvement

Empirical research into the motivations behind or influences on father involvement remains quite limited (Lamb, 2000). Furthermore, the results of many of these studies appear to be largely inconsistent (Beitel & Parke, 1998). As such, relatively little is known about the precise factors that contribute to changes in father involvement in the child's life over time (Cabrera et al., 2000). In an attempt to address this gap, Lamb and his colleagues (Lamb et al., 1985) proposed that motivation, skills and self-confidence, social support and stress, and institutional practices be viewed as a hierarchy of factors influencing paternal behaviour. An underlying assumption of this four-factor model is that paternal involvement is multiply determined (Pleck, 1997). Therefore, each of the factors are considered to be additive (i.e., neither of the factors alone can adequately account for a father's degree of involvement), and interactive (e.g., for skills, self-confidence, and social supports to predict involvement, motivation needs to be present) (Pleck, 1997). Before discussing this model further, it may be of interest to mention briefly that a more recent conceptual model of influences (on responsible fathering) has been proposed by Doherty and his colleagues (Doherty et al., 1998). This model highlights: (a) individual factors pertaining to the father, mother, and child; (b) mother-father relationship factors; and (c) larger contextual factors (Doherty et al., 1998). In the centre of the model is the interacting unit of father, mother, and child – each formulating meanings and enacting behaviours that influence the others (Doherty et al., 1998). These interactions are embedded in a broader social context that affects them as individuals, and the quality of their relationships (Doherty et al., 1998). This model represents a promising variation in conceptualising the antecedents of responsible fathering, but has been criticised for excluding key features of fatherhood and motherhood (Walker & McGraw, 2000). This model does, however, provide a

consideration of child-related factors, which appears to be omitted from the model proposed by Lamb and his colleagues.

Motivation. Motivation is thought to be influenced by an individual's developmental history, personality characteristics, beliefs, and identity processes (Pleck, 1997). The aspect of developmental history that has received the most attention is the fathering men received from their own fathers (Pleck, 1997). According to the modelling hypothesis, men either emulate their own fathers' high or low level involvement (whether high or low) or compensate for their fathers' lack of involvement (Pleck, 1997). This hypothesis appears to be largely supported by numerous studies (Floyd & Morman, 2003; Pleck, 1997). However, a more recent study has questioned the modelling hypothesis because of its finding that highly involved fathers are more likely to cite peer parents, rather than their own fathers, as influential models (Masciadrelli, Pleck, & Stueve, 2006). In another, albeit earlier study, it was affirmed that fathers had great difficulty with identifying specific individuals as role models (Daly, 1995). Most of these participants did not model their fathering behaviour after a particular individual, but rather selected particular behaviours of their fathers, mothers, wives, and peers, to incorporate into their roles from a wide range of choices (Daly, 1995). Another aspect of developmental history pertains to early and proximal socialisation experiences (Pleck, 1997). Less is known about these aspects of development (Pleck, 1997). One study, however, has provided direct evidence that fulfilling experiences in caring earlier in life can contribute to paternal involvement later on (Gerson, 1993, cited in Pleck, 1997). In a review of more proximal socialisation experiences it was affirmed that reading books on childcare before and during pregnancy, attending the birth, daydreaming about being a parent, and taking leave immediately after the birth of a child can all influence paternal involvement and engagement (Pleck, 1997).

In terms of personality characteristics, several studies have revealed that involved fathers are more likely to be androgynous (Palkovitz, 1984). However, other studies have not identified this association (Levant, Slattery, & Loiselle, 1987). Positive paternal engagement has also been associated with self-esteem, empathy, and having an interpersonal orientation (Volling & Belsky, 1991). Again, however, other studies have revealed no association between relationships and empathy (Palkovitz, 1984).

Regarding beliefs, it has been recognised that men in egalitarian relationships tend to be more involved than men in more traditional relationships (Dienhart, 1998; Glass, 1998). More specifically, fathers with a more traditional orientation towards sex roles are more likely to be less involved in childrearing than fathers who are generally more liberal in this area (Kalmijn, 1999). One explanation is that men with less traditional orientations are less likely to feel that their masculinity is threatened by direct involvement with their children (Glass, 1998). In another study it was revealed that the beliefs held by men regarding men's ability to nurture resulted in them either becoming more involved or deferring caring responsibilities to their wives (Beitel & Parke, 1998). As such, many scholars conclude that fathers who have internalised parenting and gender role norms and expectations, that support paternal involvement and an equitable division of labour, are more likely to demonstrate active involvement (Brayfield, 1995; Marsiglio, 1991).

With reference to identity processes, I will reserve a discussion of identity theory and its relevance for paternal behaviour for the end of this sub-section, as this discussion involves an in-depth theoretical base, which requires further elaboration in order to meaningfully understand paternal behaviour.

Skills and self-confidence. In addition to motivation, skills and self-confidence are also necessary to ensure increased father involvement (Lamb, 1997). It is believed that father-child relationships develop as a result of ample interactions that enhance the sensitivity of fathers, which may be considered a skill, and their self-confidence (Lamb, 1997). Research also suggests that the self-perceived competence of fathers in interacting with children is associated with increased involvement (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). As such, the direction of influence may go both ways. In addition, research has shown that fathers with a higher education are more likely to be involved in childrearing (Kalmijn, 1999). More specifically, it has been determined that fathers with a higher education are more likely to read to their children, and assist them with reading and homework assignments (Marsiglio, 1991). There is also some research that indicates that fathers tend to spend more time with boys than with girls (Harris & Morgan, 1991; Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio, 1991), and as a result, they develop closer ties with their sons (Kalmijn, 1999). This may be because many fathers believe they are more adequately equipped with appropriate knowledge, and perhaps skills, to be more involved with their sons (Marsiglio, 1991).

Social support and stress. Regarding Lamb et al.'s (1985) third level of influence, which refers to social support and stress, it is believed that this cluster of influence consists of maternal employment characteristics, general maternal characteristics as well as the marital relationship itself (Pleck, 1997). Some research indicates that fathers tend to assume greater responsibility when their wives or partners are employed (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Lamb, 2000). For example, a recent study showed that mothers' work hours emerged as a key predictor of father involvement, and the full-time work status of mothers was associated with a more even distribution of childcare than when mothers worked part-time (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010). However, as Pleck (1997) points out, research indicating increased paternal involvement as a result of mothers' employment status may have more to do with a father's proportional share of total parental involvement than their absolute level of involvement, given inconsistent findings on whether the number of hours the wives worked predicts a higher level of absolute paternal involvement. Elsewhere, it has been determined that couples are more likely to demonstrate an egalitarian division of childrearing if the wife is employed after the birth of their first child (Kalmijn, 1999).

Regarding maternal characteristics more broadly, it has been affirmed that fathers with older wives tend to be more involved (Pleck, 1997). Furthermore, fathers tend to be more involved when mothers have attained a higher level of education, have positive relationships with their own fathers, and hold liberal attitudes towards gender roles (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Pleck, 1997; Kalmijn, 1999). In general, it would appear that the attitudes and beliefs of mothers, regarding their own caring roles and those of men, can exert a significant influence on the extent and quality of paternal involvement (Beitel & Parke, 1998). In fact, certain researchers go as far as to suggest that women's characteristics are more strongly correlated with paternal involvement than the characteristics associated with fathers (Palkovitz, 1984). However, such a strong association has not been identified in other studies (Kalmijn, 1999; Marsiglio, 1991). There is, however, a growing body of research that suggests that mothers exert a direct and indirect effect on fathering behaviour through maternal gatekeeping (De Luccie, 1995; McBride et al., 2005; Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010). Maternal gatekeeping can be defined as (a) a reluctance to relinquish family responsibility by setting rigid standards, (b) a desire to validate a maternal identity, and (c) differentiated conceptions of family roles (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). It is argued that a more collaborative family arrangement may lead some mothers to experience

feelings of guilt, regret, and ambivalence, especially if they have concerns over a husband's level of competence as a carer, if such a collaboration could result in an intrusion upon a domain in which they exercised considerable power, and if unwilling to allow a change in the standards set for housework and childcare (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). As a result, fathers' opportunities for learning and growing through the day-to-day care of family and the home can become limited (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). In this manner, maternal gatekeeping can be seen to mediate the relationship between father competence and level of involvement (Allen & Daly, 2007; Barclay & Lupton, 1999). De Luccie's (1995) study indicates strong support for the maternal gatekeeping hypothesis with the finding that mothers' attitudes towards fathers' involvement, and mothers' levels of satisfaction with fathers' involvement, serve as reliable direct and indirect predictors of the frequency of father involvement. Similarly, Fagan and Barnett (2003) identified a significant, negative association between maternal gatekeeping and paternal involvement. In addition, they also acknowledged an association between mothers' perceptions of paternal competence, gatekeeping behaviour, and father involvement with children. This suggests that mothers' decisions on how much time fathers get to spend with their children are based on their perceptions of the fathers' level of competence (Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Although these studies suggest that maternal gatekeeping may be an important source of men's underinvolvement in domestic labour and may inhibit mutually satisfactory arrangements for sharing family work, it is important to note that maternal gatekeeping is not the only or primary barrier to greater paternal involvement in two-parent families (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). This bears mentioning given the potential to use maternal gatekeeping as a form of blaming within a sociocultural context that privileges men and masculine power. As previously indicated, there are many correlates and antecedents of paternal involvement in housework and child care.

In a study exploring paternal identity (which will be discussed in more depth later on), maternal gatekeeping, and father involvement, McBride et al. (2005) determined that the relationship between fathers' perceived investments in their paternal roles and actual levels of paternal involvement are moderated by mothers' beliefs about the role of the father. Furthermore, this study also affirmed that mothers' beliefs about the paternal role appear to be better predictors of father involvement than fathers' own perceptions of the paternal role

(McBride et al., 2005). As such, this study lends support for the finding that mothers' beliefs play a gatekeeping role in influencing father involvement, particularly concerning the accessibility dimension of father involvement (McBride et al., 2005). Fathers' own perceptions of their investment in their paternal role are only related to the responsibility dimension of father involvement (McBride et al., 2005). McBride et al. (2005) suggest that it is possible that accessibility may be less salient to fathers' perceptions of their own parenting role than either interaction or responsibility (McBride et al., 2005). The father identity, along with societal expectations of the paternal role, may require increased father-child play, direct interaction, and a greater burden of responsibility, but not necessarily accessibility (McBride et al., 2005). As a result, mothers assume greater control in determining father involvement in terms of their accessibility (McBride et al., 2005). Similar results were revealed by Beitel and Parke (1998) in that maternal gatekeeping attitudes and beliefs do not affect all aspects of father involvement equally nor do men consider themselves as being competent or responsible on all levels of involvement. According to Beitel and Parke (1998), maternal attitudes concerning paternal competence may adopt a more central role in cases where there is direct involvement in caring, or whether the father has sole responsibility for the baby, and less so during play activities.

Considering marital dynamics, research suggests that emotional interactions with a spouse are likely to affect a partner's state of mind and their desire to remain involved in the family system, which in turn can influence interactions with children (Aldous et al., 1998). As such, it would seem that if fathers are unhappy in their marriages they are less likely to be involved in the lives of their children (Aldous et al., 1998). In contrast, a mother's positive relationship with both the father and his family is likely to increase father involvement (Allen & Daly, 2007). The same would hold for both divorced and non-resident fathers (Allen & Daly, 2007). Furthermore, research indicates that high marital quality supports high quality parenting, and is linked with greater similarity between mother-child and father-child relationships (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). Similarly, low marital quality has been conceded to undermine parenting (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). As such, when marriages deteriorate in quality, paternal interaction becomes more negative (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Booth & Amato, 1994). Interestingly, the direction of influence can work the other way around too. For example, it has been determined that increased father involvement can have positive consequences for a marriage (Allen & Daly, 2007; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Kalmijn, 1999). Elsewhere, it has been

demonstrated that the level of involvement of fathers is positively and consistently related to the activity levels of their wives or partners (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001; Marsiglio, 1991). Similarly, Aldous et al. (1998) also conceded that the more attention given to a child by one parent, the more attention he or she will be given by the other parent. On the contrary, when one parent is less involved in childcare, the other parent is not likely to make up the difference (Aldous et al., 1998). As such, fathers who do little with their children also have spouses who are less active (Aldous et al., 1998). This suggests that fathers may either be following the lead of their wives or partners with regards to engagement activities (Marsiglio, 1991), or that their wives or partners actively draw them into caring activities (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001). In general, these findings suggest that fathers influence and are influenced within their relationships (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). However, it has been determined that marital quality has a more negative impact on the father-child relationship than on the mother-child relationship (Belsky et al., 1991; Booth & Amato, 1994), especially in cases of high marital conflict or divorce (Amato & Booth, 1991).

Institutional practices. Moving on now to the fourth level of influence, (Lamb et al., 1985), which refers to institutional factors and practices, it is proposed that this category of influence contains father's employment characteristics, father's work-family conflicts, and the effects of workplace policies (Pleck, 1997). Most studies suggest that number of hours that the fathers work is not significantly related to their level of involvement (Pleck, 1997). However, research does show that many men, especially those in single-earner families, experience stress in combining work and family roles (Volling & Belsky, 1991). Work-family support, viewed as the degree to which the workplace and co-workers provide a supportive environment, has also been associated with increased father engagement (Volling & Belsky, 1991).

Not forgetting the child's influence. Another area of influence, not located within the four-factor model motivated by Lamb et al., but which deserves some mention for the purpose of completeness, involves characteristics pertaining to the child and dynamics located within the father-child relationship which can exert some influence over a father's level of involvement (Jain et al., 1996). As children grow and develop, displaying new sets of developmental gains and needs, so too are fathers developing and changing (Cabrera et al., 2000). For example, parents are required to provide higher levels of physical care when their children are infants and

greater levels of limit setting and conflict management when their children become a bit older (Doherty et al., 1998). In this manner, children play a significant direct and indirect role in shaping the family work of men (Gerstel & Gallagher, 2001). As such, researchers should “examine more closely how children’s behaviours, personalities, and perceived needs influence men’s identities and behaviours as fathers as well as how fathering affects men’s individual development” (Marsiglio et al., 2000, p. 1185). Based on the limited research available it would appear that fathers tend to spend more time with younger than with older children (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Lamb, 2000), are generally more invested in their own children than in the children of someone else (Kalmijn, 1999), and as already mentioned, tend to show a preference for boys over girls (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio, 1991). Some research reveals that when fathers spend more time with their children they are more likely to experience conflict with their children (Almeida, Wethington, & McDonald, 2001). This is especially the case when fathers are already in a bad mood (Almeida et al., 2001). Research also shows that fathers tend to be less affectionate and responsive to their children when they are judged to be temperamentally difficult (Volling & Belsky, 1991). However, this notion was not supported in a more recent study carried out by Meteyer and Perry-Jenkins (2010).

Recent considerations of the transitions within fatherhood. Partly linked to and moving beyond dynamics within the father-child relationship as a possible antecedent of father involvement, it may be meaningful at this point to touch on recent efforts to explore transitions within fathering more broadly as an alternative way of understanding variations in father involvement (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). According to these writers, “when fathers face challenging circumstances they alter their trajectory of involvement by making adjustments (transitions within fathering) to their patterns of cognitive and behavioural engagement with their families” (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009, p. 9). In their review of potential triggers for transitions within fatherhood, Palkovitz and Palm (2009) identified: (a) childhood development (e.g., children’s developmental capacities and needs change as they get older, thereby presenting a new set of tasks and challenges for parents); (b) family crisis (e.g., separation, divorce, identification of a child’s disability, accident, death of a spouse, change in work and income); (c) individual changes in father (e.g., pursuing further education, getting a new job or promotion, suffering from mental illness, being diagnosed with a serious medical condition, being dependent on

substances); (d) counter transitional changes (e.g., children leaving home, children getting married, a change in spouse's health or employment); and (e) historical shifts (e.g., war, natural disasters, economic recession). These triggers can cumulatively influence a father's level of commitment, fathering identity or fathering behaviour, and shape how he views himself as a father.

Identity theory as linked to fathers' level of motivation. I will now proceed with a more in-depth discussion on identity, which, as already mentioned, may be considered as a sub-factor of motivation within Lamb et al.'s four factor model. Paternal identity can be viewed as an integration of an individual's development history, personality characteristics, and beliefs related to fathering (Pleck, 1997). Identity theory is useful for understanding the processes by which men adopt a paternal identity and persist in that role (Fox & Bruce, 2001). In a review by Stryker and Burke (2000), identity theory has been meaningfully applied to religious individuals, individuals donating blood, first-time mothers, and students entering college or university. More recently, identity theory has been applied to fathers (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995; Marsiglio et al., 2000). Marsiglio et al. (2000) believe that identity theory is useful for understanding how men perceive and construct their identities as fathers in diverse situations.

Identity theory, as informed by the symbolic interactionist perspective, argues that identity may be viewed as parts of the self, composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they adopt and play in highly differentiated contemporary societies (Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, society may be regarded as a complex and differentiated system, comprising a vast network of durable patterned interactions and relationships, wherein sets of people are connected to one another, through continuous interactions (i.e., groups, organisations, communities, and institutions) (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Through these networks of patterned interactions and relationships, people share and learn about the range of normative social positions (or statuses) and roles (Stryker, 1980; Thoits, 1983). Status is defined in the literature as "an individual's place or position in a social structure, or network of social relationships" (e.g., husband, father, son, brother, employee) and role is defined as "a set of expected behaviour patterns, obligations, and privileges attached to a particular social status" (e.g., for a father this may include provider, nurturer, decision-maker, disciplinarian) (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995, p. 76). These social positions (or statuses) and

related roles are subsequently adopted over time, owing to social pressure and encouragement to commit to a particular identity and to ensure their continued participation in these networks (Burke & Reitzes, 1981).

Generally, positions serve as symbols for the different kinds of people one could potentially become in society (Stryker, 1980). Attaching a position label to a person leads to expected behaviours from that person as well as expected behaviours towards that person (Stryker, 1980). These behavioural expectations are designated as roles (Stryker, 1980). As such, positions provide people with important cues for the behaviour associated with each position, thereby enabling them to define and predict their and others behaviour, define different features within a particular interaction, anticipate the future course of the interaction, and consequently organise their own behaviour accordingly (Stryker, 1980). It is through these patterned interactions and relationships that the self emerges in relation to particular positions and continues to develop through the role-taking process (Stryker, 1980). Here, it is argued that social structure shapes the possibility for interactions, which in turn shapes people, which then determines their behaviour in a particular role (Stryker, 1980; 1987). Conversely, it is also argued that if a person is able to creatively alter the pattern of their interactions, those altered patterns should and could cumulatively affect the social structure itself (Stryker, 1980). These arguments therefore suggest that a dynamic and reciprocal relationship exists between social structures and self-processes (Burke & Reitzes, 1991).

Regarding self-processes more specifically, the self may be regarded as multi-faceted, composed of multiple interdependent and independent, mutually reinforcing and conflicting parts, as structured by different role relationships (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to identity theorists, these parts of the self are referred to as identities or role-identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Broadly, identities are considered to be self-meanings relative to various statuses held and roles performed, and are developed, maintained, and changed through experience, interaction, and negotiation with others (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995). It is argued that people have as many identities as there are distinct networks of relationships in which people can occupy positions and play roles (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In this way, according to the symbolic interactionist perspective, the self is seen as a reflection of society (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Callero (1985) argues that as a social object, identities must be shared, socially recognised, and defined by action. According to Burke and Reitzes (1981; 1991), identities generally possess four distinctive features: (a) identities are formed and maintained through social processes or relationships; (b) identities are self-meanings or cognitive schemas that are formed in particular situations or interactions; (c) identities are symbolic and reflexive in character; and (d) identities serve as a source of motivation for action, especially where action will lead to self-verification or confirmation. When a particular identity is activated, self-verification occurs and an individual then behaves so as to ensure congruence with the identity standard (i.e., the cognitive representation of a role containing the meanings and norms that people associate with a particular role) (Burke, 1991). In certain situations this may actually involve altering the current situation or seeking and creating new situations in which perceived self-relevant meanings match those in the identity standard (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Role choices are generally seen as a function of one's identities which are, according to Sheldon Stryker, organised according to a salience hierarchy (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Burke, 2000). A salience hierarchy suggests that one's identities are organised into a linear column, ordered according to the differentiated probability that certain identities come into play within or across situations (Stryker, 1987), with the most salient identity at the apex (Fox & Bruce, 2001). It is argued that "the higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the probability of behavioural choices in accord with the expectations attached to that identity" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). For example, for one individual the occupational identity may be the dominant aspect of the self, taking precedence over other identities and affecting general self-perceptions and actions, while for another individual the familial identity may be more important, and therefore associated concerns for family will come before those of work (Callero, 1985). As such, salience suggests how important one identity is over other identities in a particular context. The underlying assumption of a salience hierarchy is that the problem of juggling multiple identities is resolved by favouring certain identities over others (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). It is important to mention at this point that some other theorists do not share Stryker's conceptualisation of the organisation of the self (Fox & Bruce, 2001). McCall and Simmons (1978), for example, portrayed the self as a series of concentric rings in which the innermost ring denotes the most central identity in the person's self-structure. According to Marks and MacDermid (1996), the concept of role balance may be regarded as a

form of role- and self-organisation. Rather than emphasising one salient identity across all situations, the concept of role balance advises that persons move between various salient identities, engaging fully in one role or another, depending on the context (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). For Fox and Bruce (2001), the variety of alternative conceptualisations of the structure of the self is an indication of the continuous development of identity theory.

Returning now to Stryker's formulation of identity salience, the more salient the role-identity, the more meaning, purpose, and behavioural guidance an individual should derive from its enactment (Thoits, 1991). In addition, the more salient an identity, the more sensitive an individual will be to opportunities requiring behaviour that will confirm or validate that particular identity (Stryker, 1987). Further, the more salient an identity, the more likely an opportunity will be utilised to perform the behaviour associated with the role attached to that particular identity (Stryker, 1987). Such identity-relevant and identity-enhancing experiences are expected to lead to an increase in an individual's psychological well-being (Thoits, 1991). Alternatively, experiences that disrupt or threaten to disrupt an individual's most salient identities may lead to psychological distress (Thoits, 1991). It has also been suggested that just as statuses are structured according to a salience hierarchy, so too are the roles associated with a single status (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995). According to Thoits (1991), normative, economically rewarding and competently enacted roles are likely to be more salient than less normative, non-prestigious or incompetently enacted roles (Thoits, 1991). For example, just as some men may rank their status as father as being more salient than that of brother, they may also rank their role as provider as being more salient than that of nurturer (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995).

According to Callero (1985), identity salience has three important consequences for individuals: (a) self-definitions associated with salient role-identities help to determine one's overall evaluation of self or self-esteem; (b) salient role-identities shape how people come to define each other and affects with whom one will develop specific social relationships; and lastly, (c) role-identities imply action and it is through action that role-identities are realised and validated.

Finally, it is also argued that the salience of an identity reflects a person's subjective and behavioural commitment to the role relationships requiring that particular identity (Stryker,

1987; Stryker & Burke, 2000). In this conceptualisation, commitment is linked to role partners or a network of relationships, not to an identity per se (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1995). In this view, the concept of commitment refers to “the degree to which persons’ relationships to others in their networks depends on them possessing a particular identity and role” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). Stated differently, a person is committed (in terms of interactional or affective ties) to a particular “role to the extent that extensive [i.e., the number of people to whom one is tied through a particular identity] and intensive [i.e., the strength or depth of a tie to others] social relationships are built upon that role” (Stryker, 1987, p. 97). In contrast, other scholars propose that salience is determined by the amount of commitment an individual has to a particular identity (Thoits, 1983). In this conceptualisation, commitment is linked specifically to identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). According to Burke and Reitzes (1991, p. 244), commitment refers to “the sum of the forces that maintain congruity between one’s identity and the implications for one’s identity of the interactions and behaviours in the interactive setting”. However, Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1995, p. 64) advise that both types of commitment may be useful for exploring men’s commitment to (a) “establishing, maintaining, or changing his identity and role-related behaviours as father”, and (b) “actions taken to maintain a relationship with his child over time”. Although commitment has been conceptualised differently, the consequences of commitment remain the same: commitment is demonstrated by decisions to engage in specific behaviours associated with a particular identity (Fox & Bruce, 2001). The greater the commitment to an identity, and the greater the salience of the identity, the more effort a person would put into enacting the identity (Stryker, 1980). According to Burke and Reitzes (1991), gained rewards, avoided costs, and attachments to others also serve as the bases upon which commitment is built. Here, it is argued that persons who gain rewards or are tied to others by virtue of their identity are more likely to possess higher levels of commitment to that particular identity than persons who do not gain such rewards or have such ties to others (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). According to research conducted by Burke and Reitzes (1991), people do what they need to do in order to maintain their identities. Those with a higher commitment to their identities will work harder to maintain their identities (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). This suggests that individuals are active agents who essentially make their own decisions (Burke & Reitzes, 1991).

These conceptualisations of identity salience and commitment imply the following formula: commitment shapes identity salience, which in turn shapes role choice behaviour (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Burke, 2000). This formula is useful in explaining why one behavioural option may be selected over another in situations where both options are available to an individual (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). When given an opportunity to engage in certain behaviour, a choice must be made (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Here, choice is viewed as a function of the relative salience of one's identities and the relative salience of identities is seen as a function of commitment to the roles to which the identities are attached (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The activities that result from the choice then provide meanings, which correspond to, reinforce, and display the identity meanings of the individual (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Viewed as such, an identity is like a special compass that helps one steer a course of interaction in a sea of social meaning (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Further, within identity theory, conceptualisations of identity and identity salience seem to suggest stability in identities and their salience, across time and situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

In general it would seem that the propositions contained within identity theory are supported in the literature (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Stryker & Burke, 2000). There is a growing body of research that suggests that fathers behave in ways that reflect their role investments (e.g., Fox & Bruce, 2001; Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001), and that father involvement is a function of the salience with which fathers view their parenting roles (McBride et al., 2005). According to Fox and Bruce (2001, pp. 395-396), identity theory broadly suggests that "men's commitment to children through fathering is a function of the salience of the father role to a man's sense of self, the satisfaction that father role enactment provides and the perceived assessment of his performance in the father role by the father's significant others".

In a study conducted by Fox and Bruce (2001), it was determined that the evaluations and assessments men make of their father role affects their performance in that role. This appears to support an earlier unrelated study which found that the higher the value placed upon and the greater the level of comfort in the paternal role, the more likely fathers are to overcome the external constraints of work roles and demonstrate an increased level of involvement with their children (McBride, 1990).

In examining the relationship between men's commitment to their father role identity, the centrality of their role identity, and the overall performance of this role identity, Pasley et al. (2002) revealed that when fathers hold the father role identity as central to their sense of self and perceive their spouses to hold positive beliefs about them as fathers (viewed as affective commitment), they are more likely to be involved in child-related activities. Of significance here is that when fathers believe they are validated by their wives for the prominence they place on the paternal role identity, they are more likely to enact their role as father (Pasley et al., 2002). This finding appears to be consistent with literature that argues that a father's identity hierarchy (i.e., his relative commitment to various roles in his life) may be affected by the views, attitudes, personality, and behaviour of his partner or spouse (McBride et al., 2005). As such, maternal attitudes and beliefs are believed to have a significant influence on paternal involvement (Beitel & Parke, 1998). Similar results were presented in a study by Henley and Pasley (2005). In their study, the relationship between identity satisfaction and involvement was stronger when there were lower levels of indirect interparental conflict and cooperation and the relationship between identity investment and involvement was stronger when there were lower levels of inter-parental cooperation (Henley & Pasley, 2005). These findings suggest that fathers with cooperative interparental relationships remain highly involved with their children, irrespective of whether they viewed themselves as being satisfied or invested in the father identities (Henley & Pasley, 2005). In another study, it was affirmed that late fathers, as opposed to on-time or early fathers, were more likely to be involved in their children's lives and feel positive about this experience (Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato, & Palkovitz, 1993). For these researchers, one possible explanation for this finding is that by delaying fatherhood, men may be able to invest more readily in the father role, when it occurred, owing to reduced role demands encountered in other social spheres such as in their careers (Cooney et al., 1993).

In exploring four measures of parenting role identity, namely role satisfaction, perceived competence, investment, and role salience, Minton and Pasley (1996) found role competence, satisfaction, and investment to be significantly correlated with father involvement among non-divorced fathers, but only role competence and satisfaction to be significant for divorced fathers. Of particular interest in this study is that role salience was not significantly correlated with involvement for either group (Minton & Pasley, 1996). Overall, these authors found marital status to be the strongest predictor of involvement, further suggesting that paternal identity may

not be the most important source of paternal involvement (Minton & Pasley, 1996). However, Bruce and Fox (1999) have determined that paternal identity salience is associated with paternal involvement among resident and non-resident fathers.

It may also be useful at this point to briefly highlight the link between paternal identity and masculine identity. Although very little research is found on the intersection between masculinity and fatherhood (Nixon, Whyte, Buggy, & Greene, 2010), Morrell (2006) argues that the connection between fathers and masculinity seems patently obvious. Fathers are men and men have a gender identity we call masculinity; therefore, there must be some clear link (Morrell, 2006). In most cultures fatherhood is associated with manhood (Morrell, 2006). Both concepts also appear to be similar: (a) masculinity is socially constructed and fluid (Morrell, 2006); (b) masculinity is understood and enacted by men in different ways across time, place, and context (Segal, 1993) – as such many masculinities exist, each with a characteristic type and a set of features (Morrell, 1998); (c) masculinity is generally framed within a patriarchal, hetero-normative, and homo-negative context (Donaldson, 1993; Morrell, 2001); (d) traditional hegemonic masculinity is implicated in the domination over women, other subordinate men, and children; (e) traditional hegemonic masculinity is primarily associated with working hard (competitiveness), generating an income (achievement), and assuming a provider role (Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Catlett & McKenry, 2004; Epstein, 1998); (f) traditional hegemonic masculinity serves as a model to express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); and (g) masculinity is constantly being constructed, contested, accommodated, transgressed, resisted, and reconstructed (Vincent, 2006). Many of these features can also be observed in scholarly writings on fatherhood, as discussed throughout this chapter. According to Nixon et al. (2010, p. 35), the connection between masculinity and fatherhood “begs interesting and important questions concerning how fatherhood is linked to masculinity, how external expectations and societal discourses about masculinity and fatherhood influence fathering roles and procreative responsibility, and how experiences of fatherhood influence how men perceive themselves as men”. Others have questioned how fathering relates to hegemonic masculinity: Is active fathering a subordinated form or is it integrated into hegemonic forms of masculinity? (Brandth & Kvande, 1998).

The father role is not simply occupied by men – it is where men reflectively and reflexively act out their masculinity in different ways (Morrell, 2001; 2006). As such, there is a growing interest in understanding the (re)production of masculinity in the context of new or active fatherhood, which is viewed as a crucial element in the socio-cultural construction of, and psychological identification with, the male identity (Connell, 2000, cited in Finn & Henwood, 2009). As new or active fathers, it is generally believed that men are changing, by rejecting the traditional father as overly authoritarian, disinterested, absent, and emotionally distant (Finn & Henwood, 2009). In adopting a more egalitarian approach to parenting, the new father is generally presented in the media and literature as the caring, nurturing, emotionally involved co-parent who actively takes on domestic responsibilities and participates in family life (Lupton & Barclay, 1997, cited in Finn & Henwood, 2009). In line with this view, changes in contemporary fatherhood have the potential to challenge and unsettle hegemonic forms of masculinity (Donaldson, 1993), thereby integrating men more fully into their families rather than separating them from children, women, and other men (Morrell, 2006).

In contrast, some scholars believe that the ideals of involved fathering (i.e., being more nurturing and caring) continues to clash with hegemonic cultural ideals of traditional masculinity (i.e., what it really means to be a man) (Doucet, 2004), and is therefore at risk of being completely dismissed or overshadowed by competing dominant forms of masculinity (Morrell, 1998; Wall & Arnold, 2007). These concerns may be warranted, especially in the South African context, where the following observations have been made about the socio-cultural context in general (as discussed in the previous chapter): (a) traditionalism and conservatism appear to be predominant values; and (b) racism, sexism, homo-negativity, and xenophobic attitudes remain an ongoing critical issue (Daniel et al., 2006; Grossberg, 2002; Rule & Mncwango, 2006). In addition, various observations have been made specifically about South African men, in that (a) many men feel unsettled and unsure about their place in the new order (Morrell, 2001); (b) many men appear to be struggling with the very meaning of manhood (Haenfler, 2004); and (c) a range of brittle masculinities have emerged, which are especially defensive, and at times outright hostile and aggressive, in response to perceived, and actual threats to traditional masculine hierarchical power, or a share of the patriarchal dividend (Morrell, 2001). Many of these men are typically regarded as chauvinistic, misogynistic, and homo-negative, and are believed to be perpetuating and reproducing social relations that ensure their continued dominance in society

(Morrell, 2001; Segal, 1993). Furthermore, pre-existing hegemonic forms of white, traditional masculinity (including an emphasis on heterosexuality, anti-femininity, patriarchy, mastery, competition, hierarchy, individualism, sexual prowess, physical toughness, rationality, emotional distance, dominance, aggression, and risk-taking) are believed to continuously exert an influence, via media images and through various institutions (e.g., schools, sport, etc) (Morrell, 2001), on the ways in which many men perceive and subsequently accommodate, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their images of manhood (Vincent, 2006). Furthermore, in South Africa, these dominant forms of masculinity have been linked with a variety of social conditions, including high rates of sexual and gender-based violence and other violent crimes (Conley et al., 2009), the use of violence as an effect strategy for problem solving (Dawes, 2004), and militarised identities (Cock, 2001). Given observations that South Africa remains a deeply fragmented society (i.e., in terms of race, ethnicity, religion [Ramutsindela, 2002], education [Langa et al., 2006]), that South African identities are constructed in complex and varied ways according to individuals' cultural backgrounds, languages, religions, practices, and perceptions (Elion & Strieman, 2002), and that the divided and turbulent history of South Africa has produced a highly complex mix of gender regimes and identities (Morrell, 1998), it is possible to argue that the shifts in, and influences of, the culture of the new man and father have not had a universal or uniform effect on all men, nor across all images of masculinity. This may in part explain why, despite these socio-cultural shifts, many South African men do not seem to have taken up the challenge to become more active, involved, and nurturing, but rather remain disinterested in their children (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Many of these fathers are therefore seen to fail to attend the birth of their child, do not always acknowledge that their children are their own, and frequently fail to participate in their children's lives (Morrell & Richter, 2006).

Some scholars argue that most men struggle to make sense of the paradoxical relationship that exists between their ideals of involved fathering and their traditional masculine identities (Höfner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011). Many fathers manage this tension and internal inconsistency by pursuing both ideals simultaneously (Catlett & McKenry, 2004). Most fathers believe that being a committed parent is a central characteristic of being a real man (Höfner et al., 2011), and many of these fathers continue to construct their fathering role in relation to hegemonic masculinity (Brandth & Kvande, 1998). This can be demonstrated as a continuous need to affirm their masculinity (Kane, 2006 ; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver,

2008) by (a) assuming the primary role of breadwinner and provider of financial resources (Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Catlett & McKenry, 2004; Lamb, 1997); (b) assuming the position as head of the household and primary decision-maker (Catlett & McKenry, 2004; Viljoen & Steyn, 1996, cited in Smit, 2002); (c) being less involved in daily childcare activities, which are largely designated as feminine activities (Craig, 2006); (d) showing a preference for playing games and sport, and going on outings, which are largely considered as masculine activities; (e) assuming personal responsibility for crafting appropriately masculine sons (Kane, 2006); and (f) assuming the role of disciplinarian, from an emotional distance (Donaldson, 1993). More broadly, it has been argued that not only is breadwinning a demonstration of most men's masculinity, but it also serves as a unifying element in fathers' lives (Catlett & McKenry, 2004). Furthermore, within hegemonic masculinity, fathers generally do not have the capacity, the skill or the desire to become nurturant and caring parents (Donaldson, 1993). These explanations may explain in part the general disconnection that persists between the culture and conduct of fatherhood discussed earlier.

Further evidence of a need to affirm their masculinity can be seen in a study on Canadian stay-at-home fathers (Doucet, 2004), which revealed that all participants expressed feeling social pressure to be earning while performing their role of primary carer. Most of the fathers felt compelled to talk about paid work in relation to their caring role (Doucet, 2004). Most of the fathers maintained a connection with paid work, through working part-time, studying part-time for a new career or taking a short break from work to consider a new direction in their careers (Doucet, 2004). These fathers remained connected to paid work in order to maintain a link with masculine conceptions of identity (Doucet, 2004). Whatever the status of these fathers' relationship with paid work, most participants made a point to highlight that they had taken on self-provisioning work, including doing work on their homes (e.g., building and construction in and around their homes), and doing community work (e.g., organising or coaching recreational and competitive sports, building and construction in community projects, and assuming leadership positions on various councils in the community) (Doucet, 2004). These masculine-type hobbies and activities serve to distinguish them as men, as heterosexual, as masculine, and as fathers, not as mothers (Doucet, 2004). Interestingly, Doucet (2004) believes that these fathers appear to be carving out their own paternal and masculine identities within spaces traditionally considered maternal and feminine. In conclusion, Doucet (2004) believes that

rather than discussing whether these men are reproducing or challenging hegemonic masculinity or not, we should be considering the ways in which men as fathers may be constructing new kinds of masculinities which join together varied configurations of masculinities and femininities, as demonstrated by the men in this study.

In addition to conceptualising and measuring father involvement, and understanding the variables influencing father involvement, some scholars are interested in the ways in which father involvement affects children as well as fathers themselves.

The Influence of Father Involvement on Children and Fathers

Internationally, and in South Africa, scholars have increasingly recognised the importance of fathers (Morrell et al., 2003). As such, considerable attention has been given to the direct and indirect influences of fathers on child development and on the development of fathers themselves.

Paternal influences on child development. There appears to be two general perspectives in the literature, one suggesting that fathers contribute positively and negatively to children's well-being and development, and the other suggesting that fathers are merely peripheral figures in their children's lives (Amato, 1994). In reference to the latter perspective, there is a small body of research that suggests that although fathers' economic contributions are important, fathers generally contribute little else to their children's well-being and development (Amato, 1994; King, 1994). In contrast, however, there is a growing body of research that identifies the direct and indirect influences fathers have on their children (Lamb, 2010). In reviewing the voluminous literature on these influences, it is useful to distinguish between three areas of research which emerged alongside prevailing assumptions about the roles played by fathers (Lamb, 1997). These areas include (a) studies identifying correlations between paternal and filial characteristics; (b) studies of father absence and divorce; and (c) studies on increased paternal involvement (Lamb, 1997).

The vast majority of studies exploring correlations between paternal and filial characteristics were conducted between 1940 and 1970, when the father's role as a sex role model was considered to be important, especially in terms of sex role development in sons (Lamb, 1997; 2010). Researchers typically measured masculinity in both fathers and sons, and then

determined how strongly the two sets of scores were correlated (Lamb, 1997). In most cases no consistent correlation was found between the two constructs (Lamb, 1997). This puzzling finding raised the question that if fathers did not turn their boys into men, what role did fathers then play? (Lamb, 1997; 2010). In time researchers realised that sons would only want to resemble their masculine fathers if they liked and respected them, and if their relationship was considered to be warm and positive (Lamb, 1997; 2010; Rohner, 1998). Subsequent research also revealed that sons conformed to the sex role standards of their culture when their relationships with their fathers were seen as warm, regardless of their fathers' gender-role orientation (Lamb, 1997). A crucial mediating characteristic here seems to be the quality of the father-son relationship (Lamb, 1997; 2010). As such, most researchers today agree that the characteristics of the father as a parent (e.g., warm, loving, close) rather than the characteristics of the father as a male adult appear to be most significant as far as influences on children are concerned (Lamb, 1997; 2010).

Parallel to these studies, another body of literature on father absence emerged in the 1950s (Lamb, 1997; 2010). An underlying assumption of these studies was that by comparing children with fathers and children without fathers one could estimate the types of influence fathers had on children's development (Lamb, 1997). These studies demonstrated that prolonged father absence appeared to have a negative effect on sons' self-concepts, gender-role identity development, peer-group relationships, scholastic performance, and the control of aggression (Lamb, 1997; 2010; Morrell, 2006). However, the effect of fatherlessness on girls appeared to be less enduring, dramatic, and consistent (Cabrera et al., 2000; Lamb, 1997). Consequently, researchers started to wonder why father absence posed serious consequences for some boys, but not for others (Lamb, 1997). In the 1980s researchers started to explore the ways in which divorce and the transition to fatherlessness might affect children's development (Lamb, 1997; 2010). The results of these studies suggest that father absence may be harmful, not because of father absence per se, but because many aspects of the father's role (e.g., economic, social, emotional) go unfulfilled or are inappropriately filled by other members in the family (Lamb, 1997; 2010). In some cases, as already mentioned, father absence may in fact be more desirable and in the best interests of the child (Morrell, 2006). In sum, these findings underscore the importance of recognising fathers' multiple roles (e.g., as breadwinner, parent, and emotional partner) to better understand how they influence children's development (Lamb, 1997; 2010).

Since the 1980s, researchers have started to explore the direct and indirect effects of increased father involvement on children (Lamb, 1997; 2010). Direct effects refer specifically to father-child interactions, whereby fathers influence their children directly through their behaviour, and the attitudes and messages they convey (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 1997). For example, because fathers are generally less familiar with their children's language competencies they are more likely to speak in ways that challenge their children's linguistic and pragmatic abilities (Lamb, 2010). Amato and Rivera (1999) have demonstrated that positive paternal involvement is negatively related to the number of behaviour problems exhibited by their children. In addition, it has been recognised that father involvement and nurturance are positively associated with children's intellectual development, social competence, internal locus of control, the ability to empathise (Amato, 1994), nontraditional gender-role attitudes (Booth & Amato, 1994), and overall psychological adjustment (Rohner, 1998). Furthermore, regardless of the quality of the mother-child relationship, the closer children are to their fathers, the more likely they are to be happier, more satisfied, and less distressed (Amato, 1994). It has also been recognised that parents who demonstrate an authoritative parenting style facilitate children's academic success, lower levels of externalising problems (e.g., conduct problems, delinquency) or internalising problems (e.g., depression, self-esteem), and positive social behaviour (Marsiglio et al., 2000). According to research on generative fathering by Snarey (1993), it was determined that typical father-child interactions (e.g., playing games, going on outings, teaching athletic skills, verbal play etc.) make significant contributions to children's social-emotional development, intellectual-academic development, and physical-athletic development.

Indirect effects refer to the influence of fathers on children as a result of their relationship with significant others and social circumstances that influence children's development (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 1997). According to Lamb (2010), there is growing recognition among scholars that indirect patterns of influence are pervasive and possibly more important than direct influences. In line with the view that breadwinning remains a key feature of the paternal role for many fathers today, it is believed that economic support to the family constitutes an indirect but significant way in which fathers contribute to the rearing and emotional health of their children (Lamb, 2000; 2010; Marsiglio et al., 2000). In addition, it is also believed that fathers' emotional and instrumental support for the mother can benefit children indirectly (Lamb, 2000).

For example, when a mother feels supported she is likely to be more patient, flexible, emotionally responsive, and available to her children (Pruett, 2000).

In contrast, paternal involvement has been linked to a number of negative child outcomes. In a review of literature on the role of fathers in the development and maintenance of many types of psychopathology in children and adolescents, Phares (1997) determined that (a) strong genetic linkages have been identified with alcoholism, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, autism, and attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorder; (b) paternal behaviour has been related to a range of child outcomes, including children's aggression, adolescents' alcohol consumption, adolescents' negative personality traits, children's coercive or antisocial behaviour, and the development of depression among adult children; and (c) interparental conflict has been associated with child maladjustment in general. In explaining the last point, research indicates that when marital conflict is high, fathers become more emotionally and behaviourally detached from their children (Harris, Furstenburg, & Marmer, 1998). According to Palkovitz (2002, p. 5), "(f)athers who are abusive, substance dependent, or unpredictably vacillating between warmth and harshness, and those who are consistently detached or absent, create developmental deficits for their children to overcome".

When viewed together, these studies provide important insights into paternal influences: (a) parental qualities appear more important than gender-related characteristics in influencing children (e.g., parental warmth, nurturance, and closeness are associated with positive child outcomes irrespective of whether the parent is a mother or father); (b) paternal characteristics (e.g., masculinity, intellect, and even warmth) and amount of time spent with children appear to be less important than the quality of the relationship between fathers and their children (e.g., children with secure, supportive, reciprocal, and sensitive relationships with their parents are more likely to be well-adjusted than those whose relationships are less satisfying); (c) individual relationships appear to be less influential than the broader familial context (e.g., an absence in familial hostility contributes to child adjustment, whereas marital conflict contributes to child maladjustment); (d) fathers play multiple roles in their families and their success in each of these roles influences the ways in which they affect their children's development and adjustment (e.g., fathers have beneficial effects on their children when they have supportive and nurturant relationships with them, when they are supportive partners, when they are competent and feel

fulfilled as providers etc.) (Lamb, 1997); and (e) the nature of paternal influences may vary substantially depending on individual and cultural values (e.g., evolving gender-role standards), and the relative importance placed upon different paternal functions or roles across familial, sub-cultural, cultural, and historical contexts (e.g., provider versus carer) (Lamb, 1997).

In conclusion, these studies show that children generally benefit from a high level of father involvement, that some children may be disadvantaged when they do not live with their fathers, and that most fathers are psychologically salient in the lives of their children (Amato, 1994). In fact, Palkovitz (2002) goes as far as to say that good fathering is essentially good for everyone, including fathers themselves.

Influence of paternal involvement on fathers. According to Palkovitz (2002), men who become fathers mature differently than men who do not. For example, generative fathering has emerged as an idealised, generic developmental goal or outcome for male parenting in the early 1990s (Doherty et al., 1998). The generativity perspective of fatherhood, upon which the concept of generative fathering is based, conceptualises fathering as generative work and not as a social role embedded in a changing socio-historical context (Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998). This perspective emerged as a result of groundbreaking work by John Snarey (Smit, 2004), who in response to the deficit paradigm and role-inadequacy perspective of fatherhood, integrated his analysis of data collected across four decades of research on patterns of paternal conduct with Erik H. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Smit, 2004). Briefly, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development posits that human personality development takes place throughout an individual's life, specifically across eight stages of development (Erikson, 1963). Within each stage, individuals are confronted by specific crises (i.e., a turning point, situations where individuals must orientate themselves with regard to two opposing, yet complementary, developmental possibilities, referred to as a thesis and an antithesis), which need to be resolved through a process of synthesis, in order to attain a particular psychosocial gain or ego strength and advance to a higher level of development (Meyer, 1997). During middle adulthood (when most individuals become parents) individuals are confronted with the psychosocial task of dealing with the dichotomy of generativity versus stagnation and self-absorption (Meyer, 1997; Snarey, 1993). A successful resolution of this crisis will result in the development of the ego strength of care (Meyer, 1997). If not

successfully resolved, possibly due to unresolved crises during early childhood (e.g., a lack of trust in society and in the future of humanity), regression to an obsessive need for pseudo-intimacy takes place and a feeling of stagnation and obsessive self-concern are likely to develop as a result (Erikson, 1963).

The term generativity broadly encompasses the notion of taking care of and being attentive to the needs of the next generation (Smit, 2004). According to some theorists, “the generative work of fathers involves a sense of responsible caring, a desire to facilitate the needs of the next generation, and attention to fostering a fit between men’s activities and children’s needs” (Marsiglio et al., 2000, p.1177). It has been suggested that generative fathering can be described as ‘fathering that responds to the needs of children, instead of merely conforming to the social and cultural prescriptions with regard to a father’s role obligations’ (Smit, 2008, p. 6). Underlying these views, are the assumptions that most fathers have the desire to meet their children’s needs, the ability to meet those needs, and the ethical responsibility to do so (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997).

The complexity of generativity can best be illustrated by means of three categories as originally identified by Erikson: (a) biological generativity, which involves the need or desire to procreate (e.g., birth fathers); (b) parental generativity, which involves a need or desire to be actively involved in the rearing and caring for children (e.g., childrearing fathers); and (c) societal generativity, which involves making broader creative contributions towards next generations by acting responsibly and serving as a mentor to others (e.g., cultural fathers) (Smit 2008; Snarey, 1993). According to Snarey (1993, p. 24), the three types of generativity are “distinct and differentiated, and yet also interrelated and interdependent”, in the sense that “(b)iological generativity overlaps with and also prepares the way for parental generativity, just as parental generativity overlaps with and prepares the way for a more inclusive societal generativity”. Considering parental (or paternal and maternal) generativity more specifically, it has been observed that parental generativity begins with the arrival of a child, coinciding roughly with early adulthood, and continues throughout the rest of one’s life (Snarey, 1993). In addition to childrearing activities, paternal generativity involves the facilitation of a child’s successful resolution of developmental crises during childhood in order to accomplish ego strengths such as trust, autonomy, initiative, and identity (Smit 2008). In this way, life cycles can become

synchronised, in the sense that children provide opportunities for parents to satisfy their developmental need to be generative, while at the same time parents provide the necessary support for their child's ongoing psychosocial development (Snarey, 1993).

According to Smit (2008), the reason why generative fathering is so important for men is that it ensures the well-being of both father and child. Research on generative fathering has revealed that parental generativity makes a significant contribution to fathers' psychosocial development at midlife, as "suggested by the apparent contribution that their care for their children's social-emotional and intellectual-academic development make to their midlife ability to be happy in their marriages and to nurture other adults" (Snarey, 1993, pp. 118-119). Furthermore, childrearing was found to make a positive contribution to men's work success (Snarey, 1993). As such, according to Snarey (1993), generative fathers in early adulthood become good spouses, workers, and citizens during midlife.

According to a review by Smit (2004), characteristics found to promote generative fathering include: (a) the motivation to become an active nurturant father; (b) previous positive and negative socialisation experiences with one's own father; (c) opportunities encountered to develop competencies and self-confidence about becoming more involved in nurturing and caring activities; (d) pro-family workplace culture; and (e) the quality of the relationship between a man and his spouse or partner. In addition, Smit's (2004) review also uncovered characteristics believed to impede generative fathering, namely: (a) the cult of maternalism or the idealisation of mothers as indispensable, natural, and necessary nurturers and carers; (b) long working hours and demanding jobs or careers which serve to deplete physical and mental energies to the detriment of the family; and (c) fewer conversations seem to take place between men about their experiences as fathers, especially since being a father is often not considered a man's primary identity.

It is acknowledged that fathering seems to alter the course of adult male development, thereby providing support for the conclusions reached by Snarey (1993). Through assuming responsibility for fathering and ensuring continued involvement in childcare, Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk (2001) determined that fathers in their study saw fatherhood as the single greatest shaper of their life course and personalities (Palkovitz et al., 2001). While pervasive and profound, the modes of change for these fathers varied along divergent paths (Palkovitz et al.,

2001). For example, one path characterised father involvement as bringing a jolt to the life course (Palkovitz et al., 2001). A second path characterised father involvement as a gentler evoker of latent personality traits (Palkovitz et al., 2001). According to a study by Eggebeen and Knoester (2001), fatherhood impacts on men's well-being in that it strengthens their intergenerational family ties and lessens their likelihood of being unemployed. Pruett (2000) asserts that fatherhood leads to increased responsibility, compassion, openness, balance, decency, and calm. In contrast, it has also been revealed that some men report negative experiences involving fathering, including a "loss of freedom, problems of adjusting to being at home, lack of 'work status', general lack of support, the desire for greater community support, and the need for more flexibility in balancing work and family life" (Dienhart, 1998, p. 28). It has also been recognised that fathers experience a decrease in their social and leisure activities (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001). But on the whole, it would seem that father involvement has greater benefits than losses for many fathers.

(Heterosexual) Fathers and (Gay) Sons

Having explored the historical and contemporary discourses on fatherhood, current understandings of father involvement, its antecedents as well as the consequences of fathering for children and fathers, it may now be appropriate to focus on literature that pertains specifically to the relationship between fathers and sons. But before discussing available literature on heterosexual fathers and their gay sons, which is highly relevant in this thesis, I will first explore the literature on fathers and sons more generally.

Fathers and sons in general. Given that much of the literature discussed thus far pertains to fathers and their young children, which is a necessary foundation, and given that the focus of this thesis is geared more towards an older cohort, I will concentrate more specifically on fathers and their adolescent or adult sons.

Many scholars agree that "the relational dynamic experienced by men within the father-son dyad is a source of significant and long-lasting influence on a host of important psychosocial and developmental issues in the lives of men" (Morman & Floyd, 2002, p. 395). It is generally believed that father-child relationships are continuously transforming (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Changes during adolescence are generally built upon previous styles of interaction

between father and child (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Adolescence is believed to consist of rapid and sweeping changes, especially in terms of pubertal development, cognitive advances, increasing peer orientation, strivings for autonomy, and an emphasis on identity development (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Each of these changes can result in a change in the relationship between the adolescent and their father (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). In addition to understanding these developmental changes, it is important that researchers also understand the changes that occur in fathers (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Fathers of adolescents are typically middle-aged and potentially confronting a midlife crisis, which may affect their childrearing attitudes and behaviours (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Some fathers may become preoccupied with their own problems, and therefore withdraw time and energy from childcare (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Other fathers may question their previous level of involvement and seek increased contact and interaction with their children (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997).

Understanding developmental changes from both the perspective of a father and adolescent can provide unique insights into how these changes may interact with one another (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). For example, while many fathers during midlife seem to re-define their parenting role and attempt to become more involved, many adolescents are attempting to become more autonomous and establish their own sense of identity (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). This may result in conflict between fathers and their adolescent children (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Possibly as a result of this conflict, the father-adolescent relationship is typically described as distant and unemotional, with fathers assuming an instrumental role in the lives of their adolescent children (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Others have suggested that father-adolescent relationships are more problematic when fathers work very long hours and feel overloaded (Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001). In stark contrast to the father-adolescent relationship pattern is the finding that mother-adolescent relations seem to emphasise closeness, self-disclosure, and affection (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Harris et al. (1998) found that fathers might appear to be emotionally disengaged from their children as they make the transition from childhood into early adulthood, but many fathers do report having close affective bonds, and engage in joint activities and supportive interactions during mid-adolescence. This study also revealed that fathers appear to be more involved with their sons than with their daughters (Harris et al., 1998).

Considerable analytic work on father-son relationships has been carried out by Yablonsky (1990). Through his clinical work and research, he identified a range of father styles as well as the phases in a typical father-son relationship. Yablonsky (1990) identified four father styles, which he believes are either adopted alone or in some combination: (a) compassionate loving-doubling fathers; (b) peer-type fathers or buddies; (c) macho fathers; and (d) psychopathic fathers. A brief summary of these father styles and phases in a typical father-son relationship is provided below.

According to Yablonsky (1990), the first category of compassionate loving-doubling fathers describes fathers who are generally considered to be emotionally healthy men. They are capable of placing their sons' needs ahead of their own when necessary. They are compassionate and loving, and able to become one with their sons' emotions. On the negative side, they may become overly protective of their sons. The second category of peer-type fathers or buddies describes fathers who do not assume a proper status of father as they are considered boys or son-types no matter what their age. Emotionally, they are perpetual children, and do not serve as appropriate role models for their sons. They tend to love their sons like brothers and are likely to over-share in their problems. On the positive side, they are likely to make good friends and playmates. The third category of macho fathers describes fathers who possess an exaggerated idea of the meaning of masculinity. These fathers generally see their sons as a continuous extension of their own egos. They are not very compassionate, and tend to be more controlling and brutal. They generally do not allow their sons to become individuals in their own right. The last category of psychopathic fathers, is the opposite extreme to the first category of father style, and describes fathers who are without compassion and are morally flawed. They are insensitive to social demands, untrustworthy, impulsive, and improvident. They show poor judgement and shallow emotionality. They fail to demonstrate any real interest towards their sons' growth and development.

As a result of these father styles, Yablonsky (1990) asserts that sons will either become a father-type or a son-type personality. Sons of loving, caring fathers tend to want to emulate their fathers, and usually become positive father types themselves. However, sons with peer-buddy, macho-cruel or psychopathic fathers will remain perpetual sons because they do not identify with their fathers, and therefore do not want to become like their fathers. Many of these sons become

strong (really weak) macho fathers, keeping their own sons in servitude in order to bolster their own masculinity. Furthermore, Yablonsky (1990) believes that pathological father-son relationships lack the ability to communicate, confront, work through, and adjust to their conflicts.

In addition to the four father styles, Yablonsky (1990) identified three basic evolutionary and approximate phases in a typical father-son lifetime relationship: (a) phase I: ego-blending (birth to twelve years); (b) phase II: separation and individuation (thirteen to nineteen years); and (c) Phase III: man-to-man loving friendship (from twenty years onwards).

In phase one, according to Yablonsky (1990), many fathers are believed to have their closest emotional relationship with their sons. Many fathers are considered to be the object of identification throughout much of this period. By relating to their child's physical and emotional needs on a daily basis many of these fathers merge with their sons' egos and connect with them on a deep emotional level. During this critical stage of self-development, sons generally look to their father for approval and feedback on a daily basis. As such, these sons are seen to constantly examine their own behaviour from their fathers' point of view. It is during this phase that many fathers teach their sons through their actions the meaning of love, compassion, and warmth, which will enable them to relate to others in a more humanistic way later in life. Fathers who do not ego-blend tend to be self-centred, distant fathers.

Phase two is regarded by Yablonsky (1990) as a highly emotional time between father and son. During this phase sons begin to retreat from the ego-blending relationship between themselves and their fathers. Many sons seek the assurance that their fathers are still there for them, while they begin the process of separation and individuation. They begin to distance themselves from their fathers and relate more closely with their peers. While defining their ego boundaries, many sons become rebellious, opinionated, and stubborn. One of the son's greatest adversaries during this developmental phase is his father. A loving and compassionate father should recognise that his son is both a child and an incipient adult on an emotional, physical, and social level, and that he is largely vacillating between these two states. As such, he will permit his son to try out a variety of emotions, ideas, and behaviours without being hurt by his father, who absorbs some but not all of his son's so-called punches. A psychopathic macho father will retaliate impulsively and with severe consequences. An immature, macho or emotionally weak

father may react as a peer, and outsider, often in defence of their own weak egos. A father who does not understand his son's ego needs during this phase could bring about a rupture in their relationship that could be detrimental to both father and son, but especially to the son. The disciplinary process generally becomes a core feature of the father-son interaction during this phase. A father's method of discipline can be either destructive or positive. Destructive punishment involves personal attack – no lesson is learnt and both father and son feel they have been wronged by the other. Macho fathers are likely to resort to corporal punishment while disciplining their sons. Psychopathic or ego-centric fathers are likely to punish indiscriminately and during emotional outbursts. Overly indulgent fathers are likely to be non-punitive, choosing rather to smother their sons. As such, extreme punishment and extreme permissiveness are generally considered to be ineffectual responses by fathers in helping their sons to develop a superego.

Another core feature of the father-son relationship during this period is the change in physical power. Although the chronological difference between father and son remains constant throughout their lives, the precise physiological differences between them can vary greatly from one period to the next (e.g., the physiological difference between a father and his six year old son is far greater than the difference between a father and his sixteen year old son). In essence, the contrast between a father and his adolescent son includes that one person is losing their full physical power while the other is gaining theirs. The physical conflict and play between father and son can be loving and playful, but at times also serious. In positive father-son relationships both father and son are able to acknowledge this normal shift in power, and not make a big issue of it. In contrast, this normal shift in power can produce conflict and negative competition between sons and macho fathers. In addition to normal physical conflicts, fathers and sons are likely to battle over generational value differences. Given that society is constantly evolving it is increasingly difficult for most fathers to transmit precise rules of life to their sons since cultural norms change so rapidly. Research has demonstrated that a sharp value difference between fathers and sons can be seen in issues relating to sexuality and intimate relationships. Furthermore, sons tend to be more optimistic and idealistic than their fathers. Such differences in values can produce a great deal of conflict between fathers and negatively affect a father's ability to counsel his son appropriately. In essence, Yablonsky (1990) recommends that fathers

should basically back off, but still be on call during this period as this will not only benefit fathers (e.g., less stress), but also their sons (e.g., space to individuate).

Yablonsky (1990) considers phase three to be a highly desirable result of the proper handling of the early years. Uncontaminated by bad feelings and conflicts, the son and father will ideally emerge as separate entities, yet equals, and be able to love and respect each other as men. They will have mutual problem-solving experiences and thoroughly enjoy a meaningful and productive friendship with one another. Such a rewarding relationship is not always achieved by fathers and sons. Some father-son relationships remain stuck in an earlier unresolved phase in the development of their relationship. As such, some father-son relationships may be irreparably damaged. For example, because some fathers are insecure and unable to let their sons become men, their sons may remain subservient to them and become locked into a dependent-son type role. Alternatively, if some fathers are highly competitive and view their sons as adversaries, the father-son relationship may take on a competitive tone. In conclusion, Yablonsky (1990) notes that a father's awareness of normal father-son developmental conflicts and the expectations of his changing role across time can be of great value towards the goal of effective fathering and in developing healthy and loving father-son relationships. Furthermore, Yablonsky (1990) acknowledges that a son is not totally influenced by his father; there are peers, a mother, siblings, and a range of other influences that can also affect a son's development (Yablonsky, 1990).

Over and above qualitative formulations of father-son relationships, there is a body of research that demonstrates the significance of father-son relationships in predicting sons' attachment security (Belsky, 1996); their relational success and communication with partners or spouses (Beatty & Dobos, 1993); their relationships with their own sons (Floyd & Morman, 2000); their academic performance, (Jones, 2004), achievement (Snarey, 1993), and educational attainment (Harris et al., 1998); their parenting style (Simons, Beaman, Conger, & Chao, 1992); their potential for delinquent behaviour (Harris et al., 1998) and adult development, and psychosocial adjustment (Snarey, 1993). Addressing more specifically the body of research exploring father-son affection communication, a study has revealed that the amount of affection fathers received from their own fathers was associated with how close, involved, and satisfying their relationships were (Floyd & Morman, 2000). Furthermore, the amount of affection fathers gave to their sons was associated with the closeness, involvement, and satisfaction of these

relationships (Floyd & Morman, 2000). Lastly, men with highly affectionate fathers communicated more affection to their sons than did men with highly unaffectionate fathers (Floyd & Morman, 2000). In a follow-up study by these researchers it was determined that father-son relationships appear closer, more satisfying, and include more verbal, nonverbal, and supportive affection than the relationships fathers had with their own fathers (Morman & Floyd, 2002). These results seem to reflect recent changes in the culture of fatherhood (Morman & Floyd, 2002).

However, in another follow-up study, these researchers found that fathers communicated more affection to their sons than their sons communicated with them (Floyd & Morman, 2003). As an explanation for this finding, these researchers proposed that fathers have more to gain by expressing affection to their sons than their sons have to gain by expressing affection to them (Floyd & Morman, 2003). In another related study, it was affirmed that gay and bisexual men received less verbal, nonverbal, and supportive affection from their fathers than did heterosexual men (Floyd, Sargent, & Di Corcia, 2004). The researchers in this study attributed this difference to the possibility that parents invest more resources in children who are more likely to reproduce (Floyd et al. 2004). Furthermore, this study showed that fathers communicate affection to their sons more through the use of supportive activities (e.g., doing favours for them), than through the use of direct verbal statements or nonverbal affectionate gestures (Floyd et al., 2004).

In a study researching parent-son communication, it was noted that sons receive little information from either parent about sexuality, and that the little information they receive do in this regard comes primarily from mothers (Lehr, Demi, Dilorio, & Facteau, 2005). These researchers conclude that the role of fathers and their contribution to their sons' development of sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours warrants further research (Lehr et al., 2005).

Afrikaans fathers and sons. As previously mentioned, the reliance on literature developed largely in the West is due to the fact that literature on fathers in South Africa is generally sparse (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Morrell et al., 2003). Literature on Afrikaans fathers and sons are no exception. It may be recalled from chapter two, that the Afrikaans culture has been described in terms of (a) hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, as a manifestation of Afrikaner Christian nationalist ideology, and buttressed mainly by the Dutch Reformed Church, which placed considerable emphasis on morality, ascetism, industriousness, and hetronormativity; (b)

Puritanism; (c) Calvinism; (d) patriarchal authority; (e) authoritarianism and militarism; (f) traditionalism and conservatism; (g) and since the loss of political power, feelings of marginalisation and alienation, along with the need to establish a new, depoliticised and culturally-based identity (du Pisani, 2001; Sonnekus, 2013; van Zyl, 2008; Vestergaard, 2001). It is reasonable to assume that these aspects may shape or inform aspects of the relational dynamic between Afrikaans fathers and their sons.

Some insights about the Afrikaner father-son relationship can be gleaned from the portrayal of Afrikaans fathers in contemporary novels. As Visagie (2001) notes, “a study of contemporary Afrikaans literature leads to the conclusion that the father in Afrikaner culture is still the local, familial embodiment of political authority, despite changes brought on by globalisation” (p. 154-155). For example, J.M. Coetzee’s “Boyhood” (1997) presents the image of a self-interested and misogynistic father, who appears concerned with making his son a man. Furthermore, Coetzee (1997) describes a father that is essentially emotionally unavailable, as demonstrated in the following quote:

“He [the narrator] he never worked out the position of his father in the household. In fact, it was not obvious to him by what right his father is there at all. In a normal household, he is prepared to accept, the father stands at the head: the house belongs to him, the wife and children live under his sway. But in their case...it is the mother and children who make up the core, while the husband is no more than an appendage, a contributor to the economy as a paying lodger might be.” (p. 12).

Another example can be seen in M. Behr’s “The Smell of Apples” (1995), previously published as “Die reuk van appels” in 1993. Set in the 1970s, the central character, Marnus Erasmus (aged 11), is seen to receive a rigorous education from his father, Johan Erasmus, a general in the South African Defense Force – he is systematically introduced to racist myths that were used to legitimise the apartheid government, and he is thoroughly initiated into the conventions of Afrikaner masculinity. Depicted as a prominent figure within the military, the General is seen to possess legitimate power, which translates into the home, where he governs the same way as he does in the army – with rigid, uncompromising, and irrefutable authority (Reck, 2010). The Smell of Apples also reinforces the image of a father as being the one with ultimate authority and responsibility over his family, and a blatant embodiment of every aspect

of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity associated with apartheid (Reck, 2010). Furthermore, the General is portrayed as the ideal Afrikaner male (e.g., strong, unflinching, unwavering, determined, single-minded, and authoritative) and serves as an ideal role model for his young son (Reck, 2010). However, Marnus' acceptance of his father's patriarchy as natural is challenged when he witnesses his father raping his friend, Frikkie. In this instance, the veil of secrecy over domestic violence, which since the 1970s had been exposed in the media, is also lifted for Marnus, as revealed in the following quote:

"He pulls Frikkie's legs apart and it looks as if he's rubbing something into Frikkie's bum. Then he goes onto his knees between Frikkie's legs and I can see his mister. It's too dark to see everything, but it seems like he pushes his mister into Frikkie's bum, and then he lies down on top of him. He starts moving around. It's just like the Coloured with the girl in the dunes. He uses his one hand to hold himself up on the bed. With the other he keeps the pillow down over Frikkie's head" (p. 177)

Contemporary novels aside, some insights can be obtained from one study that could be found that focused on aspects of the Afrikaner father-son relationship. According to a recent study by Grobler (2010), wherein she explored the perceptions of Afrikaans fathers and adolescent sons on identity formation within their relationship, as well as the role that God plays, she found that the father-son relationship plays an important role in identity formation in both the father and the son. Furthermore, Grobler (2010) also found that faith in God is seen as an inseparable part of the fathers' male identity, and that the practice thereof supports their male identity. In addition, the practicing of Christian values and norms appear to be closely connected to the responsibility that the fathers experienced regarding their roles as heads of families and as fathers to their sons. However, although the adolescent sons grew up with specific faith-based values and norms as portrayed by their fathers, they did not necessarily value them in the same way their fathers did. Unfortunately Grobler (2010) does not provide an adequate reason for the perceived difference between fathers and sons, beyond stating that the fathers appeared resistant about transferring their beliefs to their sons, and that the adolescent boys indicated no need to one day transfer learned behaviour from their fathers to their sons.

Heterosexual fathers and their gay sons. Although the finding that most fathers are perceived by their gay sons to be less supportive than mothers is well documented (Isay, 1996;

Savin-Williams, 1998), much of what is known is derived largely from the reports of gay sons (e.g., Matthews, 2002). As such, very little is known about the full range of personal experiences of parents, especially fathers, of gay sons (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998), and the role they play in the coming out process (Savin-Williams, 1989a), and beyond, especially during the extensive period before and possibly after disclosure (Valentine et al., 2003). Very little is known about the typical father who struggles alone without the support or assistance of others (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998). Furthermore, very little is known about the determining factors that distinguish families who react positively from those who do not (D'Augelli, 2005). Similarly, according to my knowledge, no study currently exists in South Africa that attempts to draw the disparate findings and theories in the literature (cited in this chapter and the previous chapter) together and explore them in relation to the personal experiences of heterosexual fathers of gay sons. Given the growing view that paternal influence uniquely and independently explains child and adult outcomes (Rohner, 1998), and that families can potentially play a significant role in their gay son's identity formation and psychological adjustment, it is imperative that researchers begin to ask fathers directly about their life as a parent of a gay child, in order to elicit potentially vital personal information (i.e. experiences and associated meanings) that their children are not likely to discern (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998).

In an attempt to address these gaps, Gottlieb (2000) conducted a qualitative study on a group of twelve fathers, (between the ages of fifty and eighty-five) from in and around the United States (including one participant from Puerto Rico), and documented their varied reactions in coming to terms with their sons' sexual orientation. A brief summary of Gottlieb's (2000) findings is provided below.

All of the participants in Gottlieb's (2000) study were regarded as professionals, although six of the participants were already retired. Eight of the fathers were married, three were divorced and unmarried, and one was widowed. Eleven of the participants were heterosexual and one was gay. Gottlieb (2000) revealed that the majority of participants acknowledged that their sons were gay. Three distinct patterns of acceptance emerged amongst these fathers, namely resigned acceptance (i.e., feeling there is nothing they can change about their situation), narcissistic acceptance (i.e., seeing their son as an extension of themselves), and unconditional acceptance (i.e., believing their son is great the way he is). The majority of fathers were classified according

to the resigned pattern of acceptance, while the gay father was the only father identified according to the narcissistic pattern of acceptance. Only one father was identified as merely acknowledging his son's same-sex sexual orientation, and reported not knowing any gay people or parents of gay people struggling with this.

Many of the fathers in Gottlieb's (2000) study had encountered and overcome (but remained preoccupied with) various personal obstacles over the course of their lives. In addition to these broader struggles, these fathers highlighted their personal struggles over how to parent and often not feeling good enough as a father, their difficulty in connecting with a son who appeared to be different early on, and their struggle to accept his same-sex sexual orientation. As a result of a combination of these forces, many fathers felt distanced from their sons. However, Gottlieb (2000) observed that despite fathers' preoccupation with their own individual struggles, their experiences of struggles seemed to have fostered identification with their sons in their own struggles. In recognising that their sons' gayness potentially places them in an extremely vulnerable position in society, most of these fathers experienced a powerful need to protect them, in ways that they did not feel particularly protected themselves. Furthermore, in discovering that their sons are gay, most of the fathers became aware of the fact that as parents of a gay child they shared their sons' stigma and that they too were embarking on a parallel process of coming out. Through this process of uncovering who their son actually is, opportunities are created for fathers to identify the parts of the son that are like or unlike those parts of themselves.

According to Gottlieb (2000), idealisation also brought about fathers' identification with their sons. Fathers were seen to idealise their sons along various lines, including intelligence, creative and artistic talents, physical appearance, and specialness. Building on the notion that sons are narcissistic extensions of the father, Gottlieb (2000) reasoned that by idealising their sons, these fathers were able to idealise themselves once these idealisations had been internalised, thereby restoring and strengthening their narcissistic needs. Through idealisation, their sons' gayness became of lesser importance and was neutralised in the process. The fathers were then able to see their reflection in their sons' eyes once more. Through this process the relationship between father and son was further strengthened. Gottlieb (2000) sums up this entire process as follows: idealisation and internalisation further identification; identification furthers attachment; attachment furthers adaptation.

This study offers an important starting point for understanding the experiences and meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons. Given that most of the participants included in this study were highly motivated to be involved (i.e., wanting to make a contribution to the gay movement, it could be argued that this study does not provide a true reflection of the broader spectrum of positive and negative experiences of fathers having previously struggled with, continuing to struggle with, or simply not willing or interested in dealing with, their sons' same-sex sexual orientation, particularly in a South African context. Furthermore, this study does not explore in any depth (a) the biographical histories of the fathers; (b) the construction of their identities as men and as fathers; (c) the fathers' relationship with the mother of their child and her direct or indirect influence on the father-son relationship; (d) the nature and quality of the father-son relationship before, during, and after the coming out process; (e) the quality of the fathers' relationships with their heterosexual children as compared to their relationships with their gay sons; (f) the interaction between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities within the father-son dyad; (g) the shifts that may have occurred throughout the father-son relationship and the range of variables that might account for these shifts; and (h) the possible obstacles that impede a closer and more supportive relationship with their sons. These important considerations are to a large extent explored in this thesis.

Summary of Chapter 3

The aim of this chapter was to provide a review of pertinent literature on fathers, fathering and fatherhood. Scholars generally agree that social constructions of fatherhood vary across historical epochs and sub-cultural contexts, that fathers play complex, multidimensional roles, as companions, protectors, economic providers, care providers, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners, and that many fathers are affectively and formatively salient in the lives of their children. While some scholars conceptualise contemporary fatherhood as including the notion of involved fathering, other scholars remain sceptical whether contemporary fathers have actually embraced the cultural ideals of the new style of fatherhood. Against these ongoing tensions, some writers have attempted to refine and expand upon earlier conceptualisations of father involvement by including components such as interaction, availability, and responsibility. In addition, some scholars have begun to explore the various antecedents influencing paternal behaviour. Furthermore, some researchers have explored the direct and indirect influences of

fathering on child development and the development of fathers themselves. In looking at fathers and sons, generally, it appears that the relational dynamic experienced by men within the father-son dyad is a source of significant and long-lasting influence on a variety of psychosocial and developmental issues in the lives of men. Focusing more specifically on Afrikaans fathers and sons, it is likely that features within the broader Afrikaans culture may shape or inform aspects of this relational dynamic. This is evident in popularised images of fathers as being self-interested, authoritative, misogynistic, emotionally distant, and a blatant embodiment of every aspect of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity associated with Apartheid. Focussing further on heterosexual fathers and gay sons, with the exception of one study conducted in New York in 2000, very little is known about the nature of the father-son relationship before, during, and after the son's coming out, especially within the South African context. Furthermore, very little is known about the typical father who struggles on his own without the support and assistance of others, and very little is understood about the determining factors that distinguish families who react positively from those who do not. With these apparent gaps in mind, the aim of this thesis is to explore first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons.

In the following chapter, I provide a description of the research design, from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective, as it emerged in the course of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research design for this thesis from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective. I start by identifying the purpose of the research. From there I provide a broad overview of the qualitative research paradigm. Subsequently, I identify and discuss the interpretivist approach located within the qualitative research paradigm. Once the theoretical context has been furnished, I go on to discuss the specific research design adopted, and the methodological choices I made, in relation to the purpose of the research. My rationale for providing an in-depth discussion in this chapter is twofold: first, to demonstrate explicitly my own process of making sense of the research design as it emerged, and second, to demonstrate the methodological coherence of the research design.

Purpose of the Research

As previously mentioned, according to my knowledge, very little research can be found on heterosexual fathers' personal accounts of their relationships with their gay sons. This research project aims to fill that apparent gap by exploring first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons. The research design discussed in this chapter will enable me to explore the context and deeper content and meaning of the lived experiences, thoughts, and feelings of heterosexual fathers of gay sons.

The Qualitative Research Paradigm

Theoretical paradigms or philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding the overall perspective from which a particular study is designed and carried out (Krauss, 2005). The qualitative research paradigm, also referred to broadly as the naturalist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Krauss, 2005), is derived from various phenomenological, hermeneutic, pragmatic, critical, and postmodernist traditions (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1996).

The qualitative paradigm assumes that, at least in the social world, there are multiple constructed realities that are interrelated, intangible, and determined within a particular context (ontological assumption) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Haase & Myers, 1988; Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Here, it is assumed that no single, unitary, independent reality exists apart from the perceptions (Krauss, 2005), or mental constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), that reside entirely in the minds of people (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Since each of us experiences from our own point of view, it is believed that each of us experiences a different reality (Krauss, 2005), which may not be more or less true in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and sophisticated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This does not mean that tangible phenomena do not exist (e.g., events, persons, and objects), but rather that “the meanings and wholeness derived from or ascribed to these tangible phenomena in order to make sense of them, organise them or reorganise a belief system, however, are constructed realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 84). To understand these multiple constructed realities, it is contended that one must study them holistically, because to separate them into parts may result in altering these realities radically (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Furthermore, it is assumed that a researcher and the object of inquiry are interactively linked, to such an extent that both the researcher and the object of inquiry influence one another, especially when the object of inquiry is another human being (epistemological assumption) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As the researcher and the object of inquiry are regarded as inseparable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), it is not possible for researchers to remain objective and value-free (Nolan & Behi, 1995a). In addition, it is also maintained that an inquiry is value-bound because it is always influenced by the inquirer’s values, the paradigm selected, the choice of substantive theory and methods utilised to guide the collection and analysis of data, and the values inherent in any context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, qualitative researchers have come to embrace their involvement and role within the research process (Winter, 2000), and essentially viewing themselves as primary instruments of observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). As human instruments of observation, it is avered that researchers are well suited to process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously with its acquisition, to hone in on relevant facts and ideas by virtue of their sensitivity, responsiveness, and adaptability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), and to draw upon their tacit knowledge (i.e., what is intuitively felt or apprehended), as well as their propositional knowledge (i.e., which is expressible in language form), to more fully appreciate the nuances of multiple constructed realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although admittedly imperfect, this is not possible when utilising conventional paper-and-pencil and brass data gathering instruments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, qualitative researchers should

still ensure special safeguards to minimise certain types of reactivity or interaction effects believed to stem from either or both the researcher and the respondent (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Given the above mentioned propositions, it would be considered inappropriate for researchers to manipulate and control people and events as this will essentially alter their behaviour (methodological assumption) (Nolan & Behi, 1995a). As such, qualitative researchers share a commitment to naturalism and believe that the best way to explore, examine, describe, and understand any phenomenon is to view it in its natural real-world context or setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Krauss, 2005; Nolan & Behi, 1995a; Orb et al., 2001; Patton, 2002). As such, qualitative researchers aim to develop an idiographic body of knowledge, comprising possible working hypotheses that may be transferable to other similar contexts or situations (Guba, 1981; Sandelowski, 1997). Their aim is not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings, but rather to contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding people's lived experiences (Elliott et al., 1994). These propositions provide the broad methodological approach within the qualitative paradigm (Nolan & Behi, 1995a). Given the variable and personal nature of individuals' constructions of realities, it is further believed that these constructions or meanings can only be accessed through the direct interaction between researcher and respondents (Durrheim, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), utilising appropriate qualitative data collection methods that facilitate the study of phenomena in depth and detail (Patton, 2002), such as interviews, observations, and written or audiovisual material (Orb et al., 2001; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Given the assumption of multiple constructed realities, it is not possible to conceive these realities upfront, and devise an appropriate research design ahead of time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the qualitative research design is typically considered to be emergent (i.e., open, fluid, and unfolding), depending largely on the progression of the study (Sandelowski & Barosso, 2003; Walsham, 1995), and what the qualitative researcher does throughout the research process (Patton, 2002; Sandelowski & Barosso, 2003).

Given these assumptions, this thesis is appropriately located within the broader qualitative research paradigm. Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to note that although most qualitative researchers share a central aim, which is to "understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations" (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 216) and to "interpret the meaning of [these] situations or events from the perspective of the

people involved, and as understood by them” (Spratt, Walker, & Robinson, 2004, p. 10), it should be recognised that “(q)ualitative researchers have vastly different disciplinary, philosophical, theoretical, social, political, and ethical commitments, and they often have very different views of how to execute ostensibly the same kind of qualitative research” (see Table 4.1) (Sandelowski & Barosso, 2003, p. 432). For example, neopositivists, constructivists, feminists, Marxists, anthropologists, and postmodernists make use of diverse approaches in their research, including grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, qualitative discourse analysis, narrative inquiry, symbolic interactionism, and social action research (Alvermann & Mallozzi, 2010; Elliott et al., 1999; Sandelowski & Barosso, 2003; St. Pierre & Roulston, 2006). It is therefore important to note that qualitative inquiry is composed of multiple and overlapping communities of practice (Preissle, 2006), with a wide variety of representational styles for disseminating qualitative research (Sandelowski & Barosso, 2003). What follows is a discussion of one particular approach, within the qualitative paradigm, that is considered appropriate for studying heterosexual fathers of gay sons, namely the interpretive approach.

Table 4.1: Variety of theoretical traditions in qualitative inquiry

Perspective	Central questions
1. Ethnography	What is the culture of this group of people?
2. Autoethnography	How does my own experience of this culture connect with and offer insights about this culture, situation, event and way of life?
3. Reality testing: positivist and realist approaches	What is really going on in the real world? What can we establish with some degree of certainty? What are plausible explanations for verifiable patterns? What is the truth insofar as we can get at it? How can we study a phenomenon so that our findings correspond, as much as possible, to the real world?
4. Constructionism/constructivism	How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, truths, explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and for those with whom they interact?
5. Phenomenology	What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of

	people?
6. Heuristic inquiry	What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?
7. Ethnomethodology	How do people make sense of their everyday activities so as to behave in socially acceptable ways?
8. Symbolic interactionism	What common set of symbols and understandings has emerged to give meaning to people's interactions?
9. Semiotics	How do signs (words, symbols) carry and convey meaning in particular contexts?
10. Hermeneutics	What are the conditions under which a human act takes place or a product was produced that makes it possible to interpret its meanings?
11. Narratology/ narrative analysis	What does this narrative or story reveal about the person and world from which it came? How can this narrative be interpreted to understand and illuminate the life and culture that created it?
12. Ecological psychology	How do individuals attempt to accomplish their goals through specific behaviours in specific environments?
13. Systems theory	How and why does this system as a whole function as it does?
14. Chaos theory: nonlinear dynamics	What is the underlying order, if any, of disorderly phenomenon?
15. Grounded theory	What theory emerges from systematic comparative analysis and is grounded in fieldwork so as to explain what has been and is observed?
16. Orientational: feminist inquiry, critical theory, queer theory etc.	How is X perspective manifest in this phenomenon?

Note. Adopted from Patton (2002, pp. 132-133).

The interpretive approach. Before discussing the interpretive approach, it is useful to first provide a clarification. Interpretive research (also referred to as interpretivism) and qualitative

research are sometimes utilised interchangeably (Angen, 2000; Williams, 2000). While many scholars see no clear distinction between these two terms, others argue that the word interpretive should not be viewed simply as a synonym for qualitative (Klein & Myers, 1999; Williams, 2000). For some of these scholars, although qualitative research involves all approaches in the human sciences that do not take a hypothetico-deductive approach to investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995, cited in Williams, 2000), not all of these approaches may be regarded as interpretive (Klein & Myers, 1999). Similarly, Alvermann and Mallozzi (2010) argue that the interpretive approach is located within a broader paradigm that is focused on “*understanding* (e.g., naturalistic, constructivist, phenomenological, ethnographic, symbolic interactionist methods) in contrast to *predicting* (e.g., positivist and postpositivist), *emancipating* (e.g., critical, neomarxist, feminist/gendered studies, critical race theory, critical ethnography), or *deconstructing* (e.g., poststructural, postcolonial, postcritical, discourse analysis, post-humanist)” (p. 2). In addition, other scholars have contended that an approach may be regarded as interpretive if it assumes that our knowledge is gained only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Klein & Myers, 1999), and employs strategies to interpret the meanings and actions of human actors, according to their own subjective frame of reference, within their natural setting (Williams, 2000). According to Sandberg (2005), the interpretive approach has many roots and should not be regarded as a single unified approach. Noting these complexities, and that neither qualitative research nor interpretivism are precise or agreed terms (Williams, 2000), I will attempt a more detailed discussion of the interpretive approach, as a particular qualitative approach, while simultaneously making reference to its appropriateness for this thesis.

As a starting point, the interpretive approach assumes broadly that “the human world is never a world of itself; it is always an experienced world, that is, a world that is always related to a conscious subject” (Martin, 2005, p. 43). Reality is therefore assumed to be a social construction, and thus a perceived reality (Giorgi, 1994), that is continuously negotiated between people (Sandberg, 2005; Walsham, 1995; 2006). Through lived experiences (Sandberg, 2005), it is assumed that people, also referred to as human actors (Walsham, 2006), continuously interpret and give meaning to their environment and themselves (Hammersley, 2007). These interpretations and meanings are shaped by the particular contexts in which they live (Hammerlsey, 2007). In turn, these interpretations and meanings generate the actions and

institutions in which they participate (Hammersley, 2007). As a result of this process, many different forms of and variations in social organisation, ways of life, beliefs about, and attitudes towards the world can be observed within and across societies (Hammersley, 2007).

Located within these broader assumptions, the following basic assumptions may be observed: (a) beliefs and practices are constitutive of each other; (b) people interpret and give meaning to any given situation in different ways; (c) people then act on these beliefs and meanings in various ways; (d) beliefs and meanings are influenced and constrained, but not defined by the social context; (e) beliefs and meanings generally make sense in the context of actions and practices to which they refer; (f) actions and practices make sense only by examining the meanings and beliefs embodied in them (g) beliefs and meanings are inherently holistic, and therefore make sense by locating them in a wider web of beliefs that give them their character; (h) beliefs and meanings form webs that are also constitutive of actions and practices; (i) actions and practices are also interpreted as part of this wider web of beliefs and meanings and not merely correlated with an isolated attitude; and (j) actions and practices are radically contingent and essentially without a fixed essence or given path of development (Bevir & Rhodes, 2000; 2006).

Related to these assumptions about beliefs and meanings, and associated actions and practices are notions of autonomy, agency, and intentionality. Many proponents of the interpretive approach argue against the notion of autonomy, stating that all people initially adopt or inherit beliefs against a background of prior theories and associated practices, which are made available to them through discourse or tradition (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). These traditions are believed to be contingent, constantly evolving, and generally located within a historical context (Bevir & Rhodes, 2000). A rejection of autonomy, however, does not necessarily include a rejection of agency (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). While all people are generally embedded in a background of discourse or tradition, they may still be viewed as intentional agents, who possess an innate capacity to act and reason in novel ways, for reasons of their own, with the potential to transform the social background (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). However, while it is argued that people have the innate capacity to adapt, develop, and reject these prevailing discourses and traditions depending on their reasons and beliefs, it is also recognised that this capacity is never truly autonomous, but rather situated, in that it always occurs in a social context that

continuously influences it (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). Furthermore, not all people will necessarily succeed in the actions they attempt or have a tremendous impact on the historical direction of tradition and discourse as this is also very much dependent on the actions of others around them (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006).

Given these basic assumptions, most notably the assumptions that actions impart meaning and meanings embody actions (Charmaz, 2004), it is contended that any satisfactory explanation of actions or practices must refer to the beliefs and meanings that animate them (Bevir & Rhodes, 2000; 2006). As such, most interpretivist researchers argue that we cannot begin to understand why people do what they do without developing a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Sandberg, 2005), that is, how they intra- and inter-subjectively interpret and make sense of their world (Hammersley, 2007). The notion of understanding an individual's lived experience can be traced back to the phenomenological concepts of *verstehen* (i.e., understanding) and *lebenswelt* (i.e., life-world) (Sandberg, 2005). The idea of life-world (or *lebenswelt*) expresses that person and world are inextricably linked through a person's lived experience of the world (Sandberg, 2005). Related to the idea of life-world is the notion of understanding (or *verstehen*), which specifies that humans possess an innate capacity or natural inclination to make sense of their world (Krauss, 2005; Patton, 2002). Drawing on these phenomenological concepts, it is further argued that in order to achieve deeper understanding of phenomena, it is necessary that researchers access and interpret the subjective meanings of people's lived experiences that may give rise to their behaviour and actions (Rowlands, 2005; Sandberg, 2005). According to Patton (2002, p. 52), the "verstehen tradition stresses understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behaviour, the context of social interaction, an empathic understanding based on personal experience, and the connections between mental states and behaviour". The term *meanings* refers to cognitive categories that constitute a person's view of reality (Krauss, 2005) and may include expressions of reason, intention, beliefs, the unconscious or a system of signs (Bevir & Rhodes, 2000). These meanings may also be referred to as culture, norms, understandings, social reality, typifications, ideology, worldview, perspectives, stereotypes or definitions of a situation (Lofland & Lofland, 1996).

Noting these basic assumptions, it is perhaps useful to explicitly situate the interpretive approach within the broader qualitative paradigm. The interpretive approach is compatible with

the overarching qualitative research paradigm in that it assumes “that people’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology)” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123). The interpretive approach does not prescribe a particular methodological toolkit for producing data, but rather prescribes a particular way of treating data (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). However, consistent with broader ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions contained within the qualitative paradigm, it is generally accepted that interpretivists adopt qualitative research methods that are flexible, context sensitive, concerned with understanding complex issues (such as in-depth or unstructured interviewing) (Carcary, 2009), and will enable them to unveil the nature, essences, characteristics, and meanings of people’s lived experiences, as fully and completely as possible, as understood by them within the particularities of their historical, social, and cultural contexts (Haverkamp, 2005; Leininger, 1992).

These basic assumptions appear consistent with the aim of this thesis, which is to explore first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers’ relationships with their gay sons. Drawing upon interpretivist assumptions, it is assumed that heterosexual fathers actively interpret and give meaning to their environment and themselves. As such, it is assumed that each father potentially experiences and constructs a different view of reality. Although these subjective experiences, or mental constructions, reside wholly within the individual, they are nonetheless considered to be real, and therefore meaningful and important. These interpretations and meanings are shaped by each father’s particular historical, social, and cultural context, which in turn shapes the actions and institutions in which they participate. By adopting an interpretive approach, with an explorative descriptive focus, I would interact directly with each father in order to explore the context, and deeper content and meaning of their particular thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In doing so, I would uncover rich experiential data that would make sense of emotions, experiences, and social situations, as they occur in the everyday realities of each participant (Patton, 2002; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). By utilising an interpretive approach, I would be able to capture a warmer, richer, and more nuanced elaboration of human experience (Carcary, 2009; Haslam & McGarty, 2003). While the interpretive

approach is not the only qualitative approach to specifically focus on meanings, it is distinctive because of the extent to which it privileges meanings as ways to understand behaviour and actions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). The interpretive approach is also ideal for generating thick descriptions of, and rich insights about, unknown or vaguely known phenomena (Leininger, 1992), which are deemed relevant and could make a meaningful and significant contribution to the development of knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, cited in Matthews, 2002).

Research Design

A research design generally serves as a plan that guides how the research will be executed in order to answer the research question (Durrheim, 1999). In general, qualitative researchers propose research designs that are typically more open, fluid, and changeable (Durrheim, 1999), and which emerge as the fieldwork unfolds (Patton, 2002). The research design adopted in this thesis will be discussed in terms of (a) the role of the researcher; (b) the research site; (c) fieldwork; (d) the participants; (e) data collection methods; (f) ethical considerations; (g) data analysis; and (h) criteria of goodness.

Role of the researcher. Consistent with the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher is designated as the instrument of observation (Durrheim, 1999). The researcher-as-instrument is largely based on the broader belief that reality as we know it is construed intra-subjectively and inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings garnered from our social world (Angen, 2000). It is also associated with the view that in order to access and fully understand the meaning of phenomena in context (Charmaz, 2004; Starks & Trinidad, 2007), one must become immersed in it (Krauss, 2005) and interact directly with each participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the choice of a human as an instrument of observation is qualified by the following characteristics: (a) responsiveness: the human-as-instrument can sense and respond to all personal and environmental cues in any given situation; (b) adaptability: the multipurpose human can collect information about multiple factors, at multiple levels, simultaneously; (c) holistic emphasis: the human instrument is capable of grasping the world of any phenomenon, its surrounding context as well as the nuances of multiple constructed realities; (d) knowledge base expansion: the human instrument is competent to function simultaneously in the domains of propositional (i.e., which is expressible in language form) and tacit knowledge (i.e., what is

intuitively felt or apprehended); (e) processual immediacy: the human instrument is able to process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously with its acquisition, to hone in on relevant facts and ideas, and to test hypotheses in the situation in which they were created; (f) opportunities for clarification and summarisation: the human instrument is capable of summarising data on the spot and feeding this back to respondents for clarification, correction, and amplification; and (g) opportunities to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses: the human instrument is able to explore atypical and idiosyncratic responses not only to test their validity, but to achieve a higher level of understanding than might otherwise be possible.

Noting these formidable advantages, it is, however, acknowledged that the human as instrument is undoubtedly imperfect (Patton, 2002), which raises potential issues of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, because humans possess the ability to learn and profit from experience, it is contended that individuals can be expected to function adequately as human instruments and approach a level of trustworthiness similar to that of conventional standardised tests (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is perhaps useful to indicate at this point that I have personally profited from some professional training, up to Masters' level, and have gained considerable research experience within the context in which I currently work.

Another related criticism levied against the human-as-instrument is the subjective, and therefore potentially flawed nature of his or her data collection and analysis capabilities (Easton, McComish, & Greenberg, 2000; Patton, 2002). However, it has been argued that the ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice and any researcher that claims the mantle of objectivity risks exposing himself or herself as embarrassingly naïve (Patton, 2002). Given the ontological assumption that reality is essentially a perceived reality (Giorgi, 1994) that is continuously shared and negotiated between people (Sandberg, 2005; Walsham, 2006), it is contended that these shared meanings should be viewed as a form of inter-subjectivity rather than objectivity (Walsham, 2006). Furthermore, given the associated assumption that qualitative research is a joint product between participants, the researcher, and their relationship (Finlay, 2002), it is argued that, in order to access and explore the context, and deeper content and meaning of people's particular thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds, a researcher cannot maintain the position of a detached, value-free, independent observer (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Nolan & Behi, 1995a), but should rather embrace

their direct involvement and influential role within the entire research process (Winter, 2000), including the collection, selection, and interpretation of data (Finlay, 2002). To do otherwise would be considered epistemologically inconsistent (Hoskins, 2001).

Rather than eliminate subjectivity, it is recommended that researchers attempt to bracket pre-existing theories and values so as to understand and represent participants' experiences and actions more accurately (Elliott et al., 1999). Through the use of reflexivity, the issue of subjectivity can be transformed from being a problem to an opportunity, thereby ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of the research process (Finlay, 2002; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Reflexivity can be understood in a multitude of ways, and applied at different levels, depending on the research tradition or approach adopted (Finlay, 2002). In simple terms, reflexivity can be defined as "thoughtful, conscious self awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p. 532). According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p 275), a "reflexive research process means a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, participants, and the research context". More specifically, Finlay (2002, p. 532) proposes that a "(r)eflexive analysis in research encompasses a continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself". In line with these views, a reflexive researcher is one who is continuously aware of all potential influences and is able to step back and take a critical look at these influences in the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). At a minimum level, reflexivity means "acknowledging the existence of researcher bias, and explicitly locating the researcher within the research process" (Finlay, 2002, p. 536). At a more active level, reflexivity involves "a more wholesale embracing of subjectivity, for example, by exploiting [a] researcher's/co-researcher's reflective insights, and by engaging in explicit, self-aware meta-analysis throughout the research process" (Finlay, 2002, p. 536). By adopting a reflexive process, one's implicit assumptions and biases are made overt to oneself and others (Morrow, 2005), the co-constructed nature of meaning is demonstrated (Koch & Harrington, 1998), and the research process itself is laid open for public scrutiny (Finlay, 2002).

Finlay (2002) recommends that the process of reflection and reflexive analysis begins the moment a research project is conceived, by examining existing literature, the lived world itself, and the researcher's motivations, assumptions, and interests in the research topic, which may

influence the direction of the research process. This process of reflection and reflexive analysis then continues throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the research process (Finlay, 2002). However, she cautions that while reflexive analysis is important, a balance is necessary so as not to become too preoccupied by one's own emotions and experiences, and that one's emotions and experiences do not become unduly privileged, thereby blocking out the participant's voice (Finlay, 2002). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that any reflexive analysis can only ever be regarded as "a partial, tentative, provisional account" (Finlay, 2002, pp. 542-543).

What follows are some reflections that I think are relevant in order to understand and locate my involvement in this thesis. Although inextricably linked, I have drawn an arbitrary distinction between personal, professional, and process-related reflections in order to present these reflections in a more manageable manner.

Personal reflections. I am a resourced, educated, English-speaking, gay, white South African male in my early thirties. Born in the late 1970s, my formative years coincided with the tail-end of the apartheid era in South Africa, which saw widespread civil and political unrest that essentially resulted in successive State of Emergency declarations in the latter half of the 1980s. Largely oblivious to these socio-political developments at the time, I can recall a childhood that was predominantly happy, secure, and stable. I was born to an Afrikaans-speaking mother, who willingly assumed the role of matriarch in the family, and an English-speaking father. They were somewhat traditional and conservative, in a sense, but not overtly religious. I was the youngest in the family, with two older brothers and three older sisters, most of whom were establishing families of their own when I was still young. During the holidays, and over the Christmas season, the entire family would descend upon our house, filling it almost to the brim. Although generally chaotic, and at times unpredictable, I have very fond memories of the times we all spent together. I also recall that we moved quite often when I was still young, largely due to my father receiving a job transfer or pursuing a new job opportunity. Nevertheless, I performed well academically at school, although making and keeping friends after each successive move proved to be increasingly difficult. I took part in school athletics and swimming. However, on the whole, I was not sporty or very interested in sports. I was happy to spend my time reading, drawing, or playing games.

Of my two parents, I would say I was considerably closer to my mother. Although a working mom, she was actively involved in my upbringing: making meals, buying clothes, attending teacher-parent conferences, taking me to the doctor, helping with home-work, and so forth. Although very warm and nurturing, my mother was equally strict, domineering, and generally a no-nonsense type of person. She never hesitated to speak her mind or to put anyone in their place. My father, on the other hand, appeared mostly on the periphery, seemingly disinterested and uninvolved, until called upon to provide further discipline or assistance where necessary. Although ostensibly distant and reserved, he remained ever present and vigilant. Although never far away, I do not think I ever really knew him or understood his outlook, motivations, expectations, intentions, reactions, and general temperament. In essence, I never really knew how he felt about me, as his son. Our interactions generally consisted of either prolonged silences (where I was not permitted to interrupt what he was busy with at the time), or intense clashes (where I was usually being scolded or punished for doing something wrong). During some of these clashes I do recall experiencing firsthand his capacity to be especially mean and hurtful (e.g., berating me in front of others or ridiculing me if I did something wrong). These earlier negative interactions are, however, interspersed with a handful of positive, yet awkward, experiences such as the time he attended my appointment as a school prefect or spoke at my 21st birthday celebration or attended my graduation ceremony. To conclude that he was simply an uncaring monster would be grossly misleading. Negative experiences aside, he was a good provider for and protector of the family. I never felt materially deprived or unsafe at home. I guess the best way to summarise our relationship would be to say that it was in many ways complicated.

After a brief fight against cancer, my mother passed away unexpectedly shortly after my fifteenth birthday. My internal world was literally shattered as a result. Not only had I lost someone significant in my life, but I was also suddenly confronted by the reality of being alone with my father, and having to depend on him solely. We were all going through a process of mourning and I think he tried his best, with what he knew and that for which he had the capacity. The experience (or should I say fear) of being alone with him and having to rely on him solely was further compounded a year later when he took the decision to relocate to the coast. While my older sister remained behind with her boyfriend, I had to go with my father. I remember becoming very angry at him for making a decision that would potentially disrupt our family

further. I did not understand his reasoning or motives whatsoever at the time. Nonetheless, I had no choice in the matter. After relocating to the coast I tried to adapt to the unfamiliar surroundings. My father worked long hours and I took refuge in either focusing on my school work, spending time with family living at the coast or spending weekends away visiting with my best friend, who had also moved to the coast. From there, I guess our relationship became increasingly distant, like two ships passing in the night. Essentially, he had his life and I had mine. And there was very little in between.

My last year in High School was particularly rough. My father revealed that he was planning to marry a woman he had met the previous year. I responded in shock as I hardly knew (let alone trusted) this woman, and in my mind it seemed too soon after the passing of my mother. Once again I did not understand the reasons or motivations behind his actions. In an attempt to establish a secure position within our family she became very involved in our lives, but I just experienced her as interfering, domineering, insensitive, and at times, hostile. She was a source of a great deal of tension between me and my father (and between my father and other family members), which continued for a number of years. However, in time I started to recognise the role she played in meeting his need for companionship.

In my final year of High School I also accidentally discovered that I had been adopted, that my biological mother was my oldest sister, and that my adoptive parents were in fact my grandparents. When I discovered this longstanding family secret I felt alienated, betrayed and angry. Once again I questioned his motives and intentions for withholding the truth from me. I also wondered whether the distance in our relationship was in some way attributed to the fact that I was not his biological son. My father and I briefly spoke about my adoption shortly after I found out about it, but it was awkward and emotionally intense for both of us. The reality of my adoption surfaced again at awkward, unpredictable moments, but neither of us intentionally raised the subject again thereafter.

As time went on, he mellowed substantially and I became a man in my own right. Upon reflection, although I have made some peace with the past, I think that these and other experiences have cumulatively shaped the distanced relationship we have today: we do not argue anymore, in fact, we do not speak very much, and when we speak we are quite polite and generally say very little. I acknowledge that I may be as much to blame as he is for the current

state of our father-son relationship. Looking back I think my expectations of him, especially after my mother passed away, may have exceeded that which he was able to provide for me emotionally. Unable to meet these unrealistic expectations, it is possible that he then felt like a failure. Unable to transform him into the idealised paternal figure or object I wanted (and needed) him to be in order to have my emotional needs met, I too felt like a failure. With both of us defeated and disappointed, I think we both gave up trying, and have learnt to accept our relationship as it is.

Another aspect to highlight here, amongst these experiences, and in reference to my relationship with my father, is my sexual orientation. I was vaguely aware at an early age that there was something different about me. I did not understand it and I did not have the label for it initially. I could not really identify with the way the other boys were behaving or the activities they were typically involved in, but I was nonetheless very curious about them. This initial curiosity evolved later on, as I reached puberty, into private thoughts and feelings about some of these boys. I developed feelings of shame as I believed that these thoughts and feelings were perverse, and wrong, and therefore a sin. In time, however, I came to understand the notion of being gay and I started the process of accepting that I am a gay male. Afraid of being rejected, ridiculed, punished, or physically assaulted, especially by my father, older brothers, and male peers, I chose to keep this part of myself hidden. It was only after I turned 21 that I made the decision to finally tell my father that I was gay. I can recall how terribly nervous and uncertain I was the day that I went to his house to tell him: my dad busy working on something in the back yard. My heart was racing, and all I managed to blurt out was: “I have something I need to tell you...I don’t like girls”. Once I blurted this out I panicked because I could not take it back. My father did not stop what he was doing and simply responded, “Well, as long as you are happy”. I must admit that I was quite surprised at how unaffected he seemed by what I had just told him. In fact, I did not know what to make of his response: Did it mean that he accepted me or did it mean that he did not really care? I never asked. I think I chose to believe that he accepted me as I am. We never spoke about it again.

As a final point, while working on the revisions of this thesis I learned that I will soon become a father myself. I have wanted children of my own for a long time. In the days and months since hearing the news I have experienced a multitude of thoughts and intense emotions:

initial disbelief, followed by episodes of extreme joy, excitement, bewilderment, anxiety, self-doubt, uncertainty, and hope. I can recall the moment where the thought of becoming a father became a reality for me; seeing the scan of the developing foetus for the first time, seeing it move and hearing its heartbeat. I will never forget that moment. In my process of preparing for fatherhood, I reflected on my relationship with my father, and felt determined that I would not repeat his mistakes. I also reflected on the fact that I am already a god-father to five children, whom I love and care for deeply, and how this had prepared me for the role of father. But I soon realised that nothing will really prepare me for the role I am about to play. I then also reflected on the ways in which the notion of becoming a father could influence my final engagement with the content of this thesis. Although not a father yet, I feel more compassion towards the fathers as they navigate their way through unfamiliar terrain.

Professional reflections. Against the backdrop of these and other personal reflections, while I was in high school, I realised that I wanted to become a psychologist. I think the idea of becoming a psychologist developed from a natural curiosity about the mind and the ways in which people function in their lives, as well as a desire to help others. Following high school, I completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of South Africa in 1999. Thereafter, I completed a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree at the same University in 2001. In order to be accepted into a Psychology Masters programme I needed to gain some work experience. As such, I started volunteering at the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre. I was later offered the position of Personal Counselling and Support Groups Project Coordinator. Although brief, my time at the Centre laid the foundation for developing an understanding of the experiences of gay and lesbian people. I left the Centre in 2005 as I was accepted to do my Masters in Social Science Degree (in Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I subsequently completed my internship at the Student Counselling Centre of the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine. I remained at the Centre the following year on a contract basis. During my time there I worked on a few sexual minority cases, and provided some technical assistance to a support group for gay and lesbian students.

In 2007, I accepted a post at OUT Well-being, a non-profit organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people based in Tshwane, Gauteng. Initially as a Sexual Health Manager, and later as a Health and Well-being Manager, I was tasked with the

responsibility to devise, develop, implement, monitor, evaluate, and report on a range of health and well-being services and programmes. Since starting at OUT, my knowledge and understanding of the unique experiences and needs of LGBT people has deepened considerably. It is through this work that I acquired a sense of the far-reaching, detrimental effects of homo-negativity, hetero-normativity, heterosexism, and internalised homo-negativity on the lives of so many LGBT people (i.e., isolation, depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, sexual risk-taking etc.). On the other hand, I also acquired a sense of the strength, tenacity, and resilience demonstrated by many clients. It is important to note here that, in the course of my professional development as a counselling psychologist, I adopted a psychodynamic orientation, drawing upon an LGBT affirmative approach in the therapeutic work that I do. In addition, I do not regard myself as an outright activist, although a part of my work may include some form of advocacy.

It is through my psychotherapeutic work with gay-identified clients (and to some degree my social and informal interactions with other gay men) that it became increasingly clear that many gay men reported experiencing unsatisfactory relationships, primarily with their fathers. Further, these reports appeared to be in direct contrast with their relatively closer, more satisfying relationships with their mothers. For these gay men, the only difference in their experiences with their fathers appeared to be the level of dissatisfaction, ranging from maintaining superficial or ceremonial contact to having little or no contact at all. It also became strikingly evident among these gay men how absent and uninvolved their fathers seemed in providing them with much needed informational, emotional, and social support and guidance, as they developed, adjusted to life outside the closet, and managed direct and indirect forms of discrimination and victimisation on a daily basis. Based on these observations (and to ensure that I was not merely looking for evidence to substantiate my own personal experiences), I reviewed some literature and found further evidence referring to the said poorer relationship between some fathers and their gay sons. To test my observations further, by casting the net wider beyond those gay men I had professionally and socially interacted with, I ran a poll on OUT Well-being's website in 2010, and ascertained that 57.2 % (n=185) of the gay men who participated indicated that their relationship with their fathers was largely unsatisfactory. Their responses ranged from "we get along at times" (23.2 %), to "we hardly get along" (16.2 %), and "we have no contact" (17.8 %). While I do not think that these experiences are universal among all gay men, I do, however, think

that they are evident among a large portion of gay men, and therefore warrant further investigation.

It is from these professional (and personal) realisations that I subsequently developed the topic of this thesis, with the aim of uncovering and understanding the experiences and meanings that shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons, so as to possibly help fathers who are struggling with their sons' sexual orientation, and to potentially bridge the emotional divide that plagues so many of their relationships with their sons.

Process-related reflections. In addition to noting some of my personal and professional experiences above, I also kept a self-reflective journal, wherein I recorded my own experiences, reactions, and any assumptions or biases that emerged throughout the research process (Morrow, 2005). This included field notes and reflexive notes that I made before and after each interview (Finlay, 2002), during my immersion in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999), during the analytic process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and during the process of writing and revising this thesis. While developing the research topic and outline in my research proposal, I became acutely aware of my anxiety about taking on such an enormous project on my own, which would require a great deal of commitment, and whereof the final outcome was relatively uncertain. I reminded myself repeatedly of the importance of conducting this research, and the potential it offered for helping others. I also started to reflect on my relationship with my father, and while this experience is meaningful and important, I was careful not to allow this experience to overshadow the experiences of others or dictate what literature I exposed myself to. As such, I assumed a neutral position, and remained open to multiple positions, views and arguments, as reflected in the literature review. My neutrality/openness was guided by the view that “(g)aining multiple views of the phenomenon strengthens the power of our claims to understand it” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 983).

Prior to the first few interviews, I can recall feeling particularly anxious about making contact with the fathers, and subsequently conducting the interviews with them. In some cases, I postponed the initial call for a day or two. I reflected on this initial apprehension or hesitation, and came to realise that, in part, I may have been projecting the uncertainty I experienced with my own father onto these fathers. I further realised that this sense of uncertainty was being compounded by the sensitive nature of the topic to be discussed. With regards to this latter

point, I discovered that I was not alone. According to Cowles (1988), some authors express similar feelings, and while initial feelings of anxiety are not necessarily unique to researchers exploring sensitive topics, this anxiety may be heightened by the anticipation of interacting with potentially vulnerable participants involved in sensitive situations. But once the interviewing commenced, I started to relax and focused my attention rather on understanding the lived experiences of these fathers. My confidence grew with each interview I conducted. Each of the fathers kept their appointments with me, and did not seem to mind when the duration of our interview extended beyond the negotiated time. I developed the sense that most of the fathers appreciated being afforded an opportunity to share their experiences in a confidential and neutral space. I felt immensely privileged being given access to a part of their private worlds.

Following each interview, I continued to make process notes, documenting any ideas, observations, or questions that came to mind. These notes were used to adapt the interview guide, remain immersed in the data, and at a later stage, to deductively inform the data analysis process. For example, my reflection after the first interviews led me to question whether it was adequate to explore participants' feelings towards their sons in broad terms or whether it would be more useful to probe participants' feelings towards their sons particularly when engaged in same-sex practices (e.g., being in a same-sex relationship). In this way my process notes informed the revision of my interview guide. In terms of remaining immersed in the data, I referred to the process notes while reading and re-reading the transcripts to ensure that I remained close to the data. And then, when it came to the data analysis, I referred to the process notes to inform the manner in which I ordered and linked some of the organising and basic themes.

I also documented my thoughts and feelings throughout the actual process of writing and revising this thesis. While writing the literature review and research design chapters I experienced considerable difficulty trying to address the varied expectations of potential audiences, including the panel of examiners. Drawing upon the notion that reality is a social construction, I reasoned that each reader would approach this thesis from a particular theoretical perspective and a particular set of expectations. With this consideration in mind, I made the decision to explicitly guide readers through each chapter and render visible my thorough engagement with the literature, and my understanding of the research design, as it emerged.

Furthermore, I believed that through the guidance of my promoter, and input obtained from an independent qualitative researcher who served as a critical reader on the findings chapter, that I would ensure that my interpretation of the fathers' accounts remained plausible, complete, and trustworthy.

I then received feedback from the examiners. Although mostly valuable, I did struggle to make sense of some of the feedback, which in some ways varied considerably between the examiners. As anticipated, each of the examiners approached the thesis from a particular theoretical perspective and a particular set of expectations. For me, the challenge would be to address and integrate each of the examiner's feedback as far as possible. This is not out of the ordinary given the view that qualitative research is essentially a joint product between human actors (i.e. researcher, participants, promoter, critical reader, peers, colleagues, examiners etcetera).

After consulting with my promoter, I contracted the services of a research consultant to assist me with a fresh analysis of the transcripts. In consideration of the examiners' feedback, I realised that I had gotten stuck in my way of thinking about the themes. I therefore felt the need to consult with an independent research expert to assist me to start thinking about the themes in a different way. I had an initial briefing session with the research consultant where we discussed the research topic, research design, and the transcripts. We also discussed issues of confidentiality, and agreed on a way forward. Once the research consultant had compiled a coding report, we met again to discuss the report and reach consensus regarding the identification and organisation of themes. From our discussion of the themes, I was able to recognise the themes I had previously identified, which had largely been reorganised. Admittedly, I felt relieved that I wasn't as far off track as I previously thought. With increased confidence, I set about completely re-working the thematic analysis, addressing the remainder of the examiner's required changes, and revised the results and conclusion chapters based on the re-analysis.

The research site. Devers and Frankel (2000), describe research sites as social and physical settings where "subjects" or "cases" are located. At the start of this study, when I was still in the process of reviewing the literature, I made some initial contact with potential participants I thought may be interested in participating in this study. These participants were identified

through a support group for gay youth being run at the organisation I worked for. However, when it came to the point that I was ready to start collecting data, most of these initial contacts withdrew their interest in participating, citing reasons such as “being too busy”, or “no longer feeling comfortable to continue”. As a result I had to come up with the following ways to find the participants: (a) I e-mailed an advertisement (see Appendix 1) to all my personal and professional contacts; (b) I enlisted the help of friends and colleagues to distribute flyers through their networks; (c) I enlisted the help of colleagues to distribute flyers at the said organisation, and during outreach activities (e.g., Joburg Pride); (d) I posted an electronic advertisement on two of the organisation’s websites, as well as the organisation’s Facebook profile; (e) I posted an advertisement on another website targeting gay men; (f) I e-mailed an advertisement through the organisation’s electronic database; (g) I sent a short message service (sms) notice through the organisation’s telephonic database; and (h) I provided information in online chat rooms for gay men. Each of these strategies produced very few returns over an 18 month period. Two participants contacted me because their sons had seen an advertisement online. Another participant contacted me because of information he had received from a colleague of mine. I made contact with two participants, utilising the leads provided to me by another two colleagues. One participant was contacted through a mutual acquaintance.

Fieldwork. Upon identifying a potential participant I made telephonic contact with each of them. During the call I introduced myself, and explained the purpose of my call, which was to share information pertaining to the planned research, and to identify and recruit voluntary participants for my study. In cases where the potential participants made contact with me first, I proceeded to tell them about the study. I provided a brief overview of my research topic, described the aims of the study and my method for collecting the data, and what I was planning to do with the data after the interview. I explained the interview process, how long it would take, and that the interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis later on. I then described the voluntary nature of their potential involvement and explained related ethical considerations (e.g., that their participation was confidential, but that this confidentiality was subject to certain limitations). We then discussed the inclusion criteria for participating in the study and whether the participant was interested in participating. When participants expressed their interest in participating in the study, we then scheduled the interview on a date and time, and at a location that was convenient for the participant. Prior to each scheduled interview I read

the interview guide, checked that my audio-recorder was working, and ensured that I had all the necessary stationery. In terms of the location of the interviews, two of the interviews took place at my office. Of these interviews, the one took place during work hours, while the other took place on a Saturday morning. Two of the interviews took place at the participants' homes, both of which were in the afternoon. And then, two interviews took place at the participants' offices. Again, the one interview took place during work hours, while the other interview took place on a Saturday morning. At the start of each meeting we introduced ourselves and engaged in some small talk (e.g., finding the location for the interview or offering some kind of refreshment). Once settled, I began each interview formally by thanking the participant for their willingness to participate in the interview. I once again explained the interview process and the nature of their participation. We then reviewed the consent form, and each participant was requested to sign the form before commencing with the interview. I then invited the participants to ask questions. With no questions to ask, I then checked whether they were ready to begin. Once they indicated that they were ready I switched audio-recorder on and commenced with the interview. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred during each interview. Once the interview was over I switched the audio-recorder off. I then explained that I would send them a copy of the transcription, which would give them another opportunity to add or change any of the information they shared. While collecting my papers and stationery, and packing my audio-recorder, we engaged in small talk again (e.g., the weather forecast or looking forward to the weekend). I then thanked each participant for their time and we parted ways. Following the interview I made field notes, documenting my ideas or observations about the content revealed in each interview. I then listened to the audio-recording and documented any further ideas or observations in my field notes. Once each audio-recording had been transcribed, I sent the transcription via e-mail to each participant. In the e-mail I requested that they review the transcript and to note any information that they would like to add or change. In one instance I asked a participant to clarify what he had said during the interview as the audio-recording was briefly inaudible. On the whole, no major changes were made to the transcripts and the participants approved my use of the transcripts for analysis.

The participants. Utilising opportunity sampling, I selected participants who were: (a) male, (b) heterosexual, (c) white, (d) between the ages of 35 and 60 years, (e) residing in the Tshwane metropolitan area, (f) English or Afrikaans-speaking, (g) identified as the biological

father of a self-identified gay son, and (h) sharing a residence with the mother and gay son, or at least the gay son, while the son was growing up.

My decision to focus solely on white fathers is based on the degree of accessibility associated with the work I do. My decision was also informed by the view that research on men in South Africa tends to focus on certain groups of men, including risky, problematic or disadvantaged, predominantly black men, while white economically-advantaged men appear to constitute an invisible norm (Morison, 2011). As such, the experiences and perceptions of the minority white middle class remains largely uninterrogated (Morison, 2011). The focus on white middle class fathers in this thesis serves to address this gap. My choice of geographical area is based on time, financial and practical considerations.

While there are no hard and fast rules for sample size in a qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), I initially planned to include at least 20 male participants. However, I was aware that the final number of selected participants would largely depend on at least three factors: (a) the saturation principle, also referred to as sampling to redundancy, which states that one could stop recruiting new participants at the point where nothing new can be learnt (Durrheim, 1999; Kelly, 1999); (b) the number of participants available and willing to participate; and (c) the availability of time and resources to recruit these participants.

I knew at the outset that it would be difficult to recruit heterosexual fathers for this study, but I soon realised just how challenging this would be once I started the study. Similar difficulties have been noted by other researchers such as Butera (2006), who conducted a study on male friendships. Butera (2006) acknowledged that despite devoting considerable time and energy to entice men to participate in her study, men in general appeared disinterested. She provided possible reasons for men appearing to be uncooperative: (a) most men tend to work long hours and have little flexibility to schedule extra activities; (b) most men are used to being sheltered, by wives and children, from uninvited challenges to their time given the privileged status they hold in society; (c) when men participate voluntarily, many do so when there are direct payoffs and when such activities serve as examples of “doing” masculinity; (d) most men experience masculine pressure to avoid becoming involved in what may be considered emotional labour and tend to experience a strong need for privacy and compartmentalisation, thereby keeping certain aspects of the self locked away from public scrutiny; (e) most men are comfortable discussing

their experiences and opinions publically when they are seen to be doing something well and succeeding, but are less likely to participate when they are seen to be doing something badly or failing; and (f) many men are not likely to participate when they distrust or are fearful of the researcher's agenda or intentions to potentially undermine them as men specifically or more generally. In addition, cohort studies in developing countries have generally found that higher socioeconomic class individuals are harder to enrol and maintain in studies as they are more likely to perceive fewer benefits and more disadvantages to participating in research (Harpham, Huttly, Wilson, & de Wet, 2003). These findings may also explain why so few participants volunteered for the study.

The sample therefore consists of six Afrikaans-speaking white males between the ages of 53 and 61 years (median: 55.5 years). All of the participants reside in Pretoria or Johannesburg in Gauteng, South Africa. The majority of the participants (n=4) hold an undergraduate degree from a university. Three of the participants were employed full-time, two were employed part-time, and one was already retired. All of the participants were married, with two participants indicating that they were in their second marriages. The majority of the participants (n=5) were from dual-earner households. Two of the participants earned between R10 000.00 and R15 000.00 per month, while the other four participants earned above R25 000.00 per month. Five of the participants indicated that they were Christian, while one participant reported being spiritual. The mean number of offspring among these participants is 2.5. Only two participants indicated that their gay son was the first born, whereas the majority of the participants (n=4) indicated that their gay son was the second eldest. The median age of the gay son of these participants is 27 years. The median age when participants first suspected that their sons were gay was around 17 years. Similarly, the median age when participants learnt that their sons were gay was also around 17 years. Half the participants learnt of their sons' sexual orientation directly from their son, whereas two participants were told by their wives, and one discovered it by accident. In most cases (n=3) the gay son lives on his own, while two still stayed with their parents, and one stayed with his partner. The frequency of contact between participants and their gay sons varied between having daily contact (n=2), being in contact every second day (n=2), and being in contact at least once a week (n=2). A summary of the sample's characteristics appears in Appendix 2.

Data collection method. Qualitative interviewing and participant observation are the methods of data collection generally favoured by interpretivist researchers (Durrheim, 1999). According to Durrheim (1999, p. 47), “(t)hese methods permit rich and detailed observations of a few cases, and allow the researcher to build up an understanding of phenomena through observing particular instances of the phenomena as they emerge in specific contexts”. However, there are phenomena that are not amenable to participant observation, and where asking people directly about these phenomena appear to be the only viable means of finding out about these phenomena (Bryman, 2001; Patton, 2002). Such phenomena include feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Patton, 2002), and the reconstruction of past experiences (Bryman, 2001). Qualitative interviewing is typically viewed as a means of providing direct, albeit partial, access to the inner constructed world or life-world of respondents (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Kvale, 1983). According to this view, qualitative interviewing is based on “the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). According to Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane, and McPherson (2010), qualitative interviews can (a) provide direct contact with participants, meaning that their responses can be probed for additional details; (b) elicit accounts of the past, present, and future, together with reports of what these meant for the interviewee; (c) be easily adapted to the particular focus or purpose of a study; and (d) provide detailed, rich, and contextual descriptions that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. In addition, qualitative interviews can ensure access to a wider variety of people and situations (Bryman, 2011) and can yield meaningful data (i.e., uninterpreted descriptions) in large quantities in a relatively short period (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Given these considerations, qualitative interviewing is regarded as the most appropriate method of data collection for this thesis.

However, it is important to recognise that qualitative interviewing is much more difficult, challenging, complex, and layered, than many initially realise, and the quality of the information obtained is largely dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 2002). Easton et al. (2000) identified a number of pitfalls they believed could severely affect the interview process and its outcome. Some of these pitfalls include equipment failure (i.e., where an audio-recorder stops functioning), and environmental hazards (i.e., background noise and interruptions; Easton et al., 2000). To avoid these common pitfalls, Easton et al. (2000) recommended that interviewers plan well in advance by checking their recording equipment, ensuring that they have spare batteries

with them, ensuring that interviews are conducted in a quiet space away from the main flow of activity, and negotiating the duration of the interview beforehand so as to finish the interview without any interruptions. According to a study conducted by Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003), the following challenges were also observed among their interviewers: (a) challenges associated with dealing with sensitive issues; (b) unexpected participant behaviours and the consequences of this on the interview process; (c) the effect of researchers' own actions, reactions, and subjectivities on the interview process; and (d) challenges associated with meaning in terms of word phrasing, and negotiating questions and answers.

These challenges become especially relevant given the view that a research interview is a co-constructed conversation (Sandelowski, 2002) that, from the point of initial contact, "becomes a socially constructed matrix of shifting, multiple identities" (Hertz, 1995, p. 432). The context, the immediate situation as well as the researcher's training and theoretical proclivities, all influence what he asks and hears, and how he will make sense of this (Charmaz, 2004). In turn, how an interviewer looks, acts, and sounds will affect how participants receive them (Charmaz, 2004). Similarly, the questions asked and the manner in which they are framed will affect what participants choose to reveal about themselves (Charmaz, 2004). Furthermore, the combination of memory, learned conventions, conscious and unconscious motivations, and narrative models adopted for telling one's story will also influence what is shared with the interviewer (Sandelowski, 2002). And lastly, it is also recognised that people often use interviews strategically to present, account for, and even justify themselves and their actions (Sandelowski, 2002). Although such researcher or participant interaction effects cannot be eliminated (not that interpretivists would want to eliminate this effect given the co-constructed nature of meaning [Morrow, 2005]), it is recommended that researchers continuously reflect on the dynamics of interaction between researcher and participant (Kvale, 1983), their position and role within the interview process, and how these aspects influence their understanding of the interview results (Hertz, 1995). Furthermore, it is important that researchers recognise the status they confer on interview data, in terms of how this data is viewed (i.e., its authenticity), and subsequently how it is treated (Sandelowski, 2002). Two strategies recommended for developing self-awareness throughout the research process are to keep a self-reflective journal to record the researcher's experiences, reactions, and any assumptions or biases that may emerge (Morrow, 2005), and to keep field notes before and after each interview (Finlay, 2002). As already indicated, I have

adopted both these strategies for this thesis. More broadly, it is encouraged that researchers prepare adequately for each interview (Dilley, 2000), remain flexible (Cowles, 1988), and develop sufficient interviewing skills beforehand, including the ability to build rapport, maintain empathic neutrality, maintain control, and remain attentive and responsive towards participants (Patton, 2002). It is recognised here that my training as a psychologist and my experience in doing some research have enabled me to effectively use my interviewing skills to gain the trust of participants in order to facilitate disclosure (Haverkamp, 2005).

Noting these strengths, challenges, and complexities as a backdrop, I adopted an individual in-depth interview strategy as a means of gathering data, utilising a semi-structured interview schedule for guidance (Breakwell, 1998). I chose to develop and use a semi-structured interview schedule as I already had a clear focus and an idea of the questions and topics that I wanted to cover (Bryman, 2001). The advantage of utilising an interview schedule as a guide is that one can remain flexible about the questions asked, the order in which they are asked, and the specific wording that may be utilised (Bryman, 2001). For example, in some cases I felt it unnecessary to pose certain questions as these had already been answered in previous responses and in other cases I posed new and different questions as follow up questions to some of the responses. My emphasis, while utilising the interview schedule, remained on how participants frame and understand relevant issues and experiences.

I developed the semi-structured interview schedule from topic areas and questions I identified while conducting the literature review for this thesis. For example, after reading literature on coming out that demonstrated that parents reactions are rarely neutral and remain highly personal, varied, and unpredictable (Connolly, 2005; du Plessis, 1999), I noted specific questions around the coming out experience, and the fathers immediate and longer term reactions and adjustment processes. The general aim of the interview schedule was to elicit personal information about previous and current relationships, and associated experiences and meanings. As such, the interview schedule comprised open-ended questions that focused on participants' background, experiences, meanings, behaviours, opinions, values, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). Once constructed, I piloted the 90-minute interview schedule (Breakwell, 1998) in the first two interviews to ensure that the range of questions included in the schedule is appropriate and manageable, and would elicit rich and meaningful data about fathers. Following

these pilot interviews, I made some minor changes to the interview schedule, by grouping certain questions together, and then utilised the revised version in the remainder of the interviews (see Appendix 3).

I also developed a brief questionnaire probing demographic characteristics in order to further contextualise the data obtained in the interviews (see Appendix 4). The questionnaire was administered directly after the interview. All interviews were audio-recorded with the written permission of the informants. The audio-recordings were transcribed and stored in a secure location, along with the completed questionnaires. All personal identifying information was removed from the data. The transcripts were prepared for later coding and analysis. Before proceeding with a discussion of the analysis procedures utilised, it is perhaps useful to provide a few specific comments on transcription.

It is recognised here that a transcription is not a verbatim record of an interview, but rather a written representation of an audio-recorded interactive event that has been assembled by a researcher, and therefore mediated by the researcher's interpretive stance (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). As such, it is recognised that considerable variation of practice exists in transcription (Roulston et al., 2003). Further, it is recognised that much of the emotional context of the interview as well as any nonverbal communication during the interview does not translate well into a written record (Poland, 1995). As such, the full flavour of the interview as a lived experience is unlikely to be represented in the transcript (Poland, 1995). In addition, it is also recognised that as an interpretive activity, the transcript is also open to multiple alternative readings as well as re-interpretation upon every fresh reading (Poland, 1995). Given these observations, it is important that researchers be mindful of the limitations of transcripts in portraying the full flavour of the interview as well as the contested meanings and divergent interpretations that can be made. However, with regards to nonverbal communication, and the emotional context, it is recommended that researchers minimise this limitation by keeping field notes that provide a fuller description of the emotional context as recollected after each interview (Poland, 1995). As already demonstrated this strategy has been adopted in this thesis.

In addition, there are several types of errors that can occur during the transcription process, including inaccurate punctuation, and missing, mistyped, misunderstood, and misinterpreted words (Easton et al., 2000; MacLean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004). Most of these errors can be

overcome by (a) having the researcher be the interviewer and transcriber; (b) re-reading the transcripts, while listening to the audio recording, and (c) having the participant read through the transcript (Easton et al., 2000). The suggestion that the researcher be both the interviewer and the transcriber was adopted with the first three interviews. Thereafter, it became unfeasible to continue with this process, so I employed the services of a professional transcriber. A confidentiality contract was signed with the professional transcriber in order to maintain participants' confidentiality. To verify the accuracy of these transcriptions, I re-checked each transcript against the original audio recording (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In all cases, I also sent the transcripts to the participants as a final verification of accuracy (Poland, 1995).

Ethical considerations. In essence, ethics pertains to “doing good” and “avoiding harm” (Orb et al., 2001, p. 93) and is therefore an essential part of conducting rigorous research (Davies & Dodd, 2002). As such, researchers have the ethical obligation to anticipate the potential outcomes of a qualitative interview, and to weigh up both benefits and potential harm (Orb et al., 2001). In this thesis it is argued that the relatively minor potential harm or embarrassment that the participants might have faced during the interview is outweighed by the potential benefits of this research for others (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). Nonetheless, any potential harm could be prevented or reduced by applying appropriate ethical principles (Orb et al., 2001). The research undertaken in this thesis was guided by three ethical principles, namely autonomy, nonmaleficence, and beneficence (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). In accordance with these guiding principles, I ensured that: (a) the general nature, aims, and potential benefit of the research were made explicit to each participant before the research commenced; (b) each participant was made aware of my level of competency and professional training as the researcher as well as information pertaining to my promoter or supervisor; (c) each participant was accorded the right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any consequence to them whatsoever; (d) each participant was assured of their right to confidentiality in terms of assuring their anonymity in any future publication of research results, but informed of limitations placed on confidentiality where the researcher is mandated to report cases of potential harm to self and others; (e) each participant voluntarily provided their informed consent before the research commenced; (f) as a registered counselling psychologist, I remained vigilant for any signs of discomfort or distress accompanying highly emotional experiences, and when I recognised these signs I would have responded appropriately where necessary; (g) each

participant was invited to raise any concerns or questions they had concerning the research; (h) each participant was offered an opportunity to request feedback regarding the research results; and (i) participants needing support during or following the interview were referred for counselling (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999; Haverkamp, 2005). Most of these points were addressed in the consent form (see Appendix 4). Furthermore, the interviews were conducted at locations and times, and on dates that were considered convenient for participants, so as to minimise and avoid undue intrusion in their lives. I also consulted with my promoter during each stage of the research process.

While interviews are usually equated with confidentiality, informed consent, and privacy, as demonstrated above, they are also sometimes associated with the recurrence of opening old wounds, and the sharing of secrets (Orb et al., 2001). This is especially the case when dealing with sensitive topics such as deteriorating personal relationships and intensely emotional life experiences (Cowles, 1988). Interviews are therefore in many ways regarded as some form of intervention (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), “(a) good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experiences, not only for the interviewer but also to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn’t know – or at least were not fully aware of – before the interview” (p. 405). As such, one can never know beforehand what may emerge during the encounter (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998), and what impact the interview is likely to have (Patton, 2002). However, the purpose of an interview is to elicit personal information, not to change people (Patton, 2002). Similarly, the role of a researcher is that of a researcher and not a therapist (Patton, 2002).

Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that I am first and foremost a counselling psychologist. It is recognised in the literature that one of the most challenging requirements for the psychologist researcher is to maintain one’s role as a researcher during interviews (Haverkamp, 2005). This challenge is based on three factors: (a) participants are likely to hold certain expectations about my profession, knowledge, skills, and intention as a psychologist; (b) my training as a psychologist provided me with skills and experience that render me highly effective in eliciting a level of disclosure that may exceed a participant’s expectations; and (c) qualitative interviews are typically characterised by high levels of rapport, intimate disclosure, and potentially strong

emotions (Haverkamp, 2005). As a psychologist, it was important that I remained attentive to issues of power, influence, coercion, and manipulation (Haverkamp, 2005). Furthermore, it is important that I remained attentive to not crossing any boundaries, and that I minimised any urge or request to respond to the informant in a therapeutic manner, as this was not what participants consented to (Haverkamp, 2005). Nonetheless, it is, however, recognised that there may have been instances where participants were clearly in distress, and where I may have been required to briefly step outside my researcher role in order to prevent harm. Fortunately, such a need never arose. But, if such a need did arise, I would have negotiated this shift in roles with the participant and temporarily or permanently abandoned the research relationship (Haverkamp, 2005). The monitoring and clarifying of expectations throughout the interview was helpful in that it minimised the potential for misunderstanding and feelings of betrayal (Haverkamp, 2005).

Data analysis. Broadly, qualitative data analysis transforms data into findings (Patton, 2002). More specifically, data analysis refers to the extraction of meaning from a data set (i.e., interview transcripts and fields notes), and focuses on “rebuilding and presenting the processed data set in a thematic or conceptually relevant whole” (Knafl & Webster, 1988, p. 196). The process of transformation involves “identifying, coding, categorising, classifying, and labelling the primary patterns in the data”, and depends largely on the analytic intellect, creativity, and style of the analyst (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Data analysis usually commences with the recording and tracking of insights that occur while collecting data (Patton, 2002) and continues in the progression from description to interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is contended that the overlapping nature of data collection and data analysis can improve both the quality of the data collected and the quality of the analysis (Patton, 2002). As previously mentioned, I kept field notes as part of my fieldwork for this thesis. A useful distinction is drawn between inductive and deductive analysis in the literature. Inductive analysis involves a process of discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data by interacting with the data and allowing these findings to emerge (Patton, 2002). In contrast, deductive analysis involves the analysis of data according to an existing framework (Patton, 2002). Qualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages (i.e., when figuring out the possible categories, patterns, and themes) and deductive in the final stages (i.e., when testing and confirming the authenticity and appropriateness of categories, patterns, and themes; Patton, 2002). The qualitative analysis undertaken in this study can also be seen to be a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. On the whole, analysis is

usually deemed sufficient when critical categories are defined, relationships between them are established, and they are integrated into an elegant, credible interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The challenge of data analysis is to simplify and make sense of the undigested complexity of reality represented by raw field notes and interview transcripts (Patton, 2002). This is especially challenging given that no absolute rules exist for this transformation (Patton, 2002). As each qualitative inquiry is unique, it is argued that the analytical approach adopted will also be unique (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the final destination will be unique for each enquirer, “known only when – and if – arrived at” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). In the absence of absolute rules, qualitative data analysis is often viewed as being ad hoc, intuitive, unsystematic, and therefore without much rigour (de Wet & Erasmus, 2005). However, it has been observed that a range of guidelines, procedural suggestions, and examples on how to analyse qualitative data can be found in literature (Patton, 2002). Some of these suggested guidelines and procedures are arguably systematic, procedural, and rigorous (de Wet & Erasmus, 2005), and can therefore yield meaningful and useful research results (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Here, systematic data analysis refers to “the conscious use of procedures to organise a mass of data methodologically so that all the parts fit into a broader, structured whole” (de Wet & Erasmus, 2005, p. 28). For the purpose of this thesis, the analytic procedures developed by Attride-Stirling (2001) were employed for thematic analysis of the interview transcripts (including my field notes; i.e., thematic network analysis).

Thematic analysis refers broadly to a flexible method in qualitative analysis that minimally organises and describes, in rich detail, the themes or patterns identified within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this context, a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). A thematic analysis may provide a rich thematic description of the entire data set or a more detailed nuanced account of one particular theme or group of themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, a thematic analysis may identify semantic themes (i.e., the explicit or surface meanings of the data) or latent themes (i.e., underlying ideas, assumptions, meanings, and conceptualisations believed to shape

or inform the semantic content of the data; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In general, there are no hard-and-fast rules here and different combinations are possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), thematic analysis can be usefully aided by and presented as thematic networks, which refers to web-like illustrations that summarise the main themes constituting a piece of text. Whereas thematic analysis uncovers salient themes and patterns in a text at different levels, thematic networks facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes (Attride-Sterling, 2001). As such, thematic networks serve as an organising principle and an illustrative tool in the interpretation of text (Attride-Stirling, 2006). According to Attride-Stirling (2001), thematic networks systematise the extraction of basic themes, organising themes, and global themes. These themes are subsequently represented as web-like maps that depict salient themes at each of the three levels, and illustrate the potential relationships between them (Attride-Stirling, 2001). What follows is a brief summary of the concepts and recommended procedures for conducting thematic network analysis, as presented in the work of Attride-Stirling (2001).

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), a basic theme refers to the most basic, simplest or lowest-order theme that, on its own, says very little about the text or group of texts as a whole. To make sense of a basic theme, it is necessary to go beyond its immediate meaning and view it in the context of other basic themes. Together, these basic themes represent an organising theme. The latter refers to a middle-order theme that organises the basic themes into clusters of similar issues. These clusters in turn summarise the principal assumptions of a group of basic themes, and provide a more abstract and more revealing account of what is going on in the texts. Furthermore, these clusters enhance the meaning and significance of a broader theme that is seen to unite several of these organising themes. A global theme is a broader, super-ordinate theme that groups sets of organising themes that together present an argument, a position or an assertion about a given issue or reality. A global theme is a macro theme that summarises and makes sense of clusters of lower-order themes abstracted from and supported by textual data. As such, a global theme is both a summary of the main themes as well as a revealing interpretation of texts within the context of a particular analysis.

A thematic network is developed by starting with the basic themes and working inwards towards a global theme. Once a collection of basic themes have been identified, they are

classified according to the underlying story being told and then clustered into organising themes. These organising themes are subsequently re-interpreted based on their basic themes and collated in order to illustrate a super-ordinate theme that becomes the global theme. The resulting thematic networks are then presented graphically as web-like nets in order to emphasise the fluidity and interconnectivity of themes.

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), the analytic process can be divided into three broad stages, namely (a) the reduction or breakdown of the text; (b) the exploration of the text; and (c) the integration of the exploration. The analytic process is further sub-divided into six steps, namely (a) coding the material; (b) identifying themes; (c) constructing thematic networks; (d) describing and exploring thematic networks; (e) summarising thematic networks; and (f) interpreting patterns. Different tasks are specified according to each step. See Table 4.2 for a summary of the stages, steps, and tasks proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001). It is noted at this point that the data analysis was initially conducted with input from a critical reader, and then repeated several months later with the assistance of a research consultant following feedback given by the examiners. What follows is a general discussion of the data analysis process proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001) that was adhered to on both occasions.

Table 4.2: The stages and steps of thematic network analysis

Stages	Steps	Tasks
Analysis stage A: Reduction or breakdown of text	Step 1: Code material	(a) Devise a coding frame
		(b) Dissect text into text segments utilising the coding frame
	Step 2: Identify themes	(a) Abstract themes from coded text segments
		(b) Refine themes
	Step 3: Construct thematic networks	(a) Arrange themes
		(b) Select basic themes
		(c) Rearrange into organising themes
		(d) Deduce global themes

		(e) Illustrate as thematic network(s)
		(f) Verify and refine the network(s)
Analysis stage B: Exploration of text	Step 4: Describe and explore thematic networks	(a) Describe the network (b) Explore the network
	Step 5: Summarise thematic networks	
Analysis stage C: Integration of exploration	Step 6: Interpret patterns	

Note. Adapted from Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 391).

The analytic process proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001) assumes that the previous research stages of design, field work or data collection, and transcription have already been completed. To this list of completed activities, I included another task in preparation for and leading into the first step in the thematic network analysis process. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a crucial preparatory task in analysis is to immerse myself fully in the data (i.e., interview transcripts and field notes). Immersion involves the repeated reading of textual data in an active manner (i.e., making field and reflexive notes, drawing diagrams, and brainstorming) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Through repeated active reading, and engaging with the content of each transcript I became familiar with the depth and breadth of the content contained in my data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process I made notes and recorded ideas for coding in the margins of the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once fully immersed, I was ready to proceed to the first step.

The first step, as specified by Attride-Stirling (2001), comprised the coding of the material. To accomplish this, I first needed to develop a coding framework. The coding frame was developed on the basis of theoretical issues guiding the research questions and salient issues that emerged from the text itself. The codes included in the coding frame were based on the following criteria: (a) they had explicit boundaries (i.e., definitions); (b) they were not interchangeable or redundant; (c) they were limited in scope; and (d) they focused explicitly on the object of analysis. Once developed, the codes were applied to the textual data to dissect it

into text segments (i.e., meaningful and manageable chunks of text such as passages, quotations, and single words).

Once the codes had been applied to the textual data, I was ready to proceed to step two. According to Attride-Stirling (2001), step two focused on the identification of themes. To accomplish this step I first needed to abstract the themes from the coded segments. To achieve this, I went through the text segments in each code (or group of related codes) and extracted the most salient, common or significant themes from each of the coded segments. By abstracting the themes from the coded segments I was able to reframe my reading of the text and identify underlying patterns and structures. From there, I went through the selected themes and refined them further into specific, discrete, non-repetitive themes, and broad themes that encapsulated a set of ideas across numerous text segments. This activity reduced the data further into a more manageable set of significant themes that succinctly summarised the text.

Once the themes had been identified, I was ready to begin constructing the networks (step three). Guided by Attride-Stirling (2001), I commenced this step by arranging themes according to similar, coherent groupings based on content or theoretical grounds. These groupings were designated as basic themes, which formed the basis for my thematic networks. I subsequently rearranged these basic themes into clusters that centred on larger, shared issues. Once clustered into organising themes, I identified and named the issues underlying them. From there, I summarised the main claim, proposition, argument, assertion or assumption that the organising themes addressed. This then constituted the global theme of my thematic networks (i.e., the core, principal metaphor that encapsulated the main point of the text). Once the basic themes, organising themes, and global themes had been prepared, I illustrated them in a web-like representation. Thereafter, I checked and verified that these themes reflected the data and that the data supported these themes.

Once the thematic networks had been constructed, I commenced the process of describing and exploring these networks in relation to the text (step four). As such, I returned to the original text and analysed it further utilising the thematic networks. This enabled me to achieve a deeper analysis of the text, and anchor my interpretation to the summary provided by the network. Once the network had been described and explored fully, I presented a summary of the main themes and patterns characterising it (step five). The objective here was to summarise the principal

themes that emerged in the description of the network and to explicate the patterns that emerged during the exploration. Finally, I interpreted the patterns in the text (step six). This involved collating the deductions in the summaries of all the networks, and these deductions as well as relevant theory in order to explore the significant themes, concepts, patterns, and structures that emerged from the text. According to Attride-Stirling (2001), the aim of this final step is to address the original research questions and the theoretical interests underpinning them, with arguments grounded on the patterns that emerged in the exploration of the texts.

Criteria of goodness: The quality and rigour of the research design. Although some scholars continue to replicate the use of quantitative criteria as credible benchmarks for establishing rigour in their qualitative work (Morse, 1997; Nolan & Behi, 1995b; Sparkes, 2001; Stenbacka, 2001), others have gone on to develop, refine, and use a parallel set of criteria deemed more appropriate for evaluating qualitative research (Angen, 2000; Leininger, 1992; Seale, 1999). Probably the best known are those developed by Lincoln and Guba (Creswell & Miller, 2000; de Wet & Erasmus, 2005; Elliott et al., 1999; Emden & Sandelowski, 1998; Koro-Ljungberg, 2008; Morrow, 2005; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Nolan & Behi, 1995b; Seale, 1999; Sparkes, 2001).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) drew on the concept of trustworthiness, and specified four criteria, namely (a) credibility; (b) transferability; (c) dependability; and (d) confirmability (see Table 4.3) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness can be seen to refer to a study that is “meaningful, trackable, verifiable, and grounded in real-life situations from which they were derived” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 250). Credibility is concerned with the extent to which findings and conclusions reached by researchers are an adequate and faithful account of others’ constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nolan & Behi, 1995b). Transferability refers to the degree to which the results can be applied to other contexts, depending on the degree of similarity between the sending and receiving contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nolan & Behi, 1995b). Dependability is concerned with whether or not the data are dependable and stable in light of factors such as an emerging design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nolan & Behi, 1995b). Lastly, confirmability refers to the extent to which conclusions are real and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nolan & Behi, 1995b). In line with these criteria, Lincoln and Guba (1985)

recommend various techniques or procedures that may be utilised to increase, but not assure, the trustworthiness of qualitative studies (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.3: Summary of criteria for establishing trustworthiness

Credibility	Truth value of findings
Transferability	Applicability of findings
Dependability	Consistency of findings
Confirmability	Neutrality of findings

Note. Adopted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 289-331).

Table 4.4: Summary of techniques for establishing trustworthiness

Criterion area	Technique
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities in the field that increase the probability of high credibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prolonged engagement; ○ Persistent observation; and ○ Triangulation. • Peer debriefing • Negative case analysis • Referential adequacy • Member checks
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependability audit, including audit trail
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmability audit, including audit trail
All of the above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reflexive journal

Note. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 328).

Given constraints in time and available resources, I selected the following procedures to increase the trustworthiness of this thesis: (a) conducting peer debriefing; (b) conducting member checking; (c) providing thick descriptions; (d) maintaining an audit trail; and (e) maintaining a reflexive journal.

In terms of peer debriefing, I had regular contact sessions with my promoter and three of my colleagues to discuss the progress of my research. I also had some contact with another PhD

student in the Department of Psychology, as well as a qualitative researcher who assumed the role as critical reader on the “findings and discussion” chapter, and a research consultant who provided assistance with the data analysis. Although these contact sessions were not formally structured, they were nonetheless useful in terms of exposing and probing my biases or assumptions, exploring the different meanings that were uncovered, and clarifying my inferences and interpretations in an open and transparent manner. These discussions were recorded in my field notes. In terms of member checking, I sent the transcripts back to respondents to check their accuracy and clarify any outstanding issues. In terms of providing thick descriptions, considerable effort was made to provide detailed, in-depth information on the setting, the context, the participants, and the themes uncovered. These thick descriptions provided the foundation for my interpretations. In terms of the audit trail, I maintained extensive records throughout the research process, including the research proposal, original and revised interview schedule, original and revised demographic questionnaire, audio-recordings, transcripts, field notes, process notes, reflexive notes, data reduction and analysis notes as well as notes on the interpretive process. And then, in terms of maintaining a reflexive journal, as previously discussed, I recorded my process of self-reflection and self-scrutiny throughout the research process in order to ensure honesty and transparency.

I do, however, recognise the limitations of some of these techniques. For example, it has been argued that an audit trail does very little to guide the research process or ensure an excellent outcome, but merely serves to document the research process and the development of a completed analysis (Morse et al., 2002). In terms of member checking, it is argued that members may forget what they have said, regret what they have said, feel compelled to agree with researchers or possess a need to present themselves in different ways at different times (Sandelowski, 2002).

In an attempt to further bolster the trustworthiness of this thesis, I was further guided by suggestions offered by Morse et al. (2002), which are to ensure (a) investigator responsiveness (i.e., the researcher’s creativity, sensitivity, flexibility, and skill); (b) methodological coherence (i.e., congruence between the research question and the components of the method); (c) sampling sufficiency (i.e., appropriate and adequate sampling to saturation); and (d) collecting and analysing data concurrently (i.e., an iterative interaction between data and analysis). Further, I

was guided by Patton (2002) who proposed that good qualitative research differentiates between thick descriptions and interpretation, with the researcher owning his or her particular interpretation. All in all, I was guided by the overall suggestion that a good qualitative inquiry is one that is “contextualised, rich, dense, theoretical, and fascinating” (Morse, 2006, p. 417).

Summary

The aim of this chapter was to describe the research design for this thesis, as it emerged during the study. The purpose of the research is to explore first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers’ relationships with their gay sons. Utilising an interpretivist approach, located in the qualitative research paradigm, it is assumed that people’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology). By adopting an interpretive approach, with an explorative, descriptive focus, I was able to interact directly with each father in order to explore the context, and deeper content and meaning of their particular thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds. Consistent with the interpretive approach and broader qualitative paradigm, the notion of subjectivity and the role of the researcher as an instrument of observation, was acknowledged and even embraced as an integral part of the research process. However, to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the research process I reflected upon and documented my own personal, professional, and research-related (process) experiences. Utilising opportunity sampling, I selected six Afrikaans-speaking, white fathers, between the ages of 53 and 61 years, from a middle to upper-middle income bracket, and residing in Gauteng, South Africa. I utilised an individual in-depth interview strategy as a means of gathering data and a semi-structured interview schedule for guidance. I also developed a brief questionnaire probing demographic characteristics to further contextualise the data obtained in the interviews. The questionnaire was administered directly after the interview. Important ethical considerations were adhered to at all times during the data collection process. All interviews were audio-recorded with the written permission of the informants. The audio-recordings were transcribed and prepared for later coding and analysis. Thematic network analysis was employed to analyse the data.

In the following chapter I present the findings and a discussion of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis is to uncover and explore first-hand accounts of experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons, by utilising an interpretivist approach located within the qualitative research paradigm. As discussed in the previous chapter, by drawing upon interpretivist assumptions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2000; 2006), it is assumed that each of the fathers interviewed actively interprets and gives meaning to their environment and themselves in different ways. Furthermore, it is assumed that these interpretations and meanings are shaped by each of their historical, social and cultural contexts, which in turn shapes their actions and the institutions they participate in.

In this chapter, the fathers are introduced by providing a brief summary of each fathers' context. I have included the summary of the fathers in this chapter merely as a point of reference when reading through particular quotes extracted from their interviews. Following the brief summary, the experiences and meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons are "represented in ways that economically and faithfully capture(s) the common and idiosyncratic themes in the interview data" (Sandelowski, 1998, p. 377), by the quoted words of the fathers to illustrate these themes. Before doing so, three points bear mentioning.

First, it is acknowledged that reference throughout this chapter, and the following chapter, is made to "fathers" instead of "participants". The decision to refer to the participants as fathers is deliberate and informed by my view that the participants occupy certain positions in society by virtue of the roles they adopt as fathers. By representing them as fathers, I thereby acknowledge the full range of their experiences and associated meanings.

Second, it should be noted that the interviews were conducted between March and December 2011. As such, the participants are presented as they were at the time of the interviews.

Third, the themes identified and discussed in this chapter are largely intertwined, and can therefore be arranged and interpreted in a number of different ways, depending on the interpretive lens being applied by the researcher. I have attempted to arrange and interpret these

themes in a coherent and plausible manner, based on a contingent line of interpretation that is informed by a theoretical perspective, previous research, prior interpretations offered by other scholars, and my existing knowledge, experience, creativity, judgement, intuition, and ability to highlight pertinent issues.

The Fathers

Six fathers were interviewed over a nine month period in 2011. The interviews were conducted at their private residences (2), places of work (2) or at my office (2). Pseudonyms are utilised to refer to each of the participants and members of their families in order to protect their real identities. The six fathers include (see Appendix 6 for a summary of each participant's profile):

Kobus. Kobus is a 53 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He is currently employed full-time in the Information Technology field. He regards himself as being spiritual and a student of life. Two sons were born during his first marriage. They divorced after a few years of marriage, when his sons were approximately 5-and-a-half and 1-and-a-half years old. Following the divorce, Kobus gained custody of both his sons. He is now remarried and has another son with his second wife. His gay son is the oldest (24 years old) of the three children and currently lives with his same-sex partner.

Gideon. Gideon is a 61 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He is a Christian missionary and has devoted his life to spreading the word of God to those who do not know Him yet. He has two children, a son and a daughter, with his wife. His gay son (36 years old) is the eldest child and currently lives on his own in a distant town.

Johan. Johan is a 55 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He is employed full-time in the field of architecture. He is also currently pursuing a degree in law. He identifies himself as a Christian. He enjoys pursuing his own interests and hobbies and getting away on fishing and hunting trips. He has three children, two daughters and a son, with his wife. His gay son (29 years old) is the middle child and currently lives on his own in the same town.

Nico. Nico is a 56 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He is currently practising as an attorney. He self-identifies as a Christian. He has three children, two sons and a daughter, with

his wife. His gay son (25 years old) is the middle child and currently lives on his own in the same town.

Pieter. Pieter is a 54 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He is employed full-time as a journalist. He views himself as a Christian. He has two sons with his first wife. They divorced while the boys were still young. Following the divorce, the boys remained with their mother for most of their childhood, while visiting their father over weekends and holidays. Later on, both sons elected to stay with their father. Pieter is now remarried. His gay son is the second born (19 years old) and currently lives at home with his father and step-mother.

Thinus. Thinus is a 61 year old Afrikaans-speaking white male. He has retired from his occupation in the banking industry. He identifies himself as a Christian. He has two children, a daughter and a son, with his wife. His gay son is the second born (29 years old) and currently lives at home with his parents.

Themes

Overview of the main themes. As mentioned previously in Chapter 4, thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was utilised to identify, code, categorise, classify and label primary patterns as they emerged from the interview data (to view the transcripts in their entirety refer to the compact disc included in Appendix 8). Through thematic network analysis, eight organising (main) themes were identified around the global (central) theme “experiences and meanings that shape heterosexual fathers’ relationships with their gay sons”: (a) subliminal awareness prior to coming out; (b) epistemic rupture of internal systems of ideas/beliefs; (c) personal paradigmatic shifts; (d) acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process; (e) ambiguous loss; (f) persistent history of thought; (g) wrestling with the reason why; and (h) coming out as a dual experience (see Figure 5.1 for a graphical representation of these themes). Each organising theme is presented in turn, starting with a brief description of the organising theme. From there, an overview of the basic themes contained within the organising theme is provided. This is followed by a more detailed presentation of each basic theme. The structure and style for presenting each basic theme, unless stated otherwise, is thus: (a) provide a brief description of key concepts or themes as they emerged from the findings, (b) provide evidence through the use of verbatim quotes; and (c) provide an

interpretation of the meaning derived from the quotes driven by a holistic orientation, with reference to theory and/or prior research.

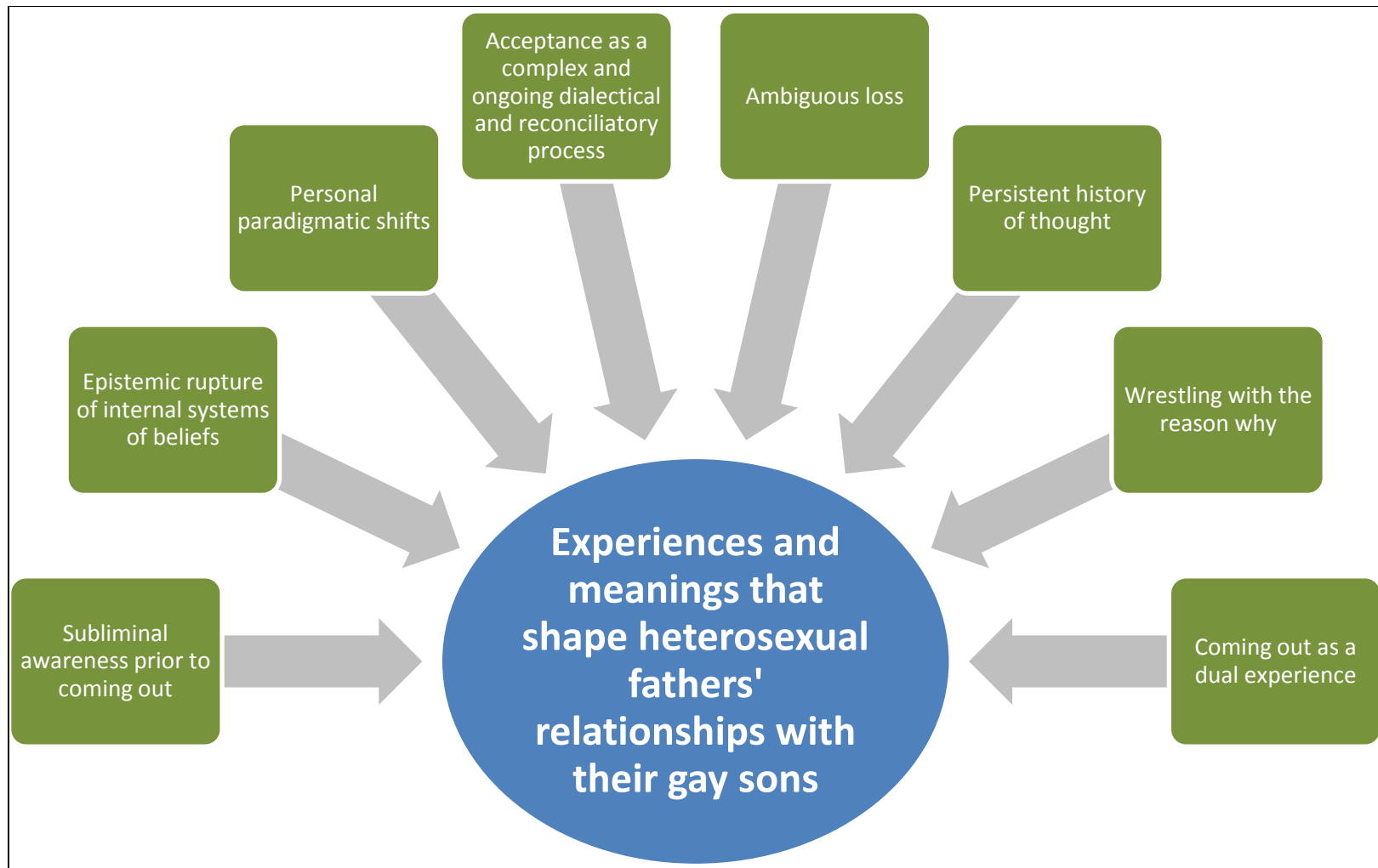


Figure 5.1: Organising themes linked to the global theme “experiences and meanings that shape heterosexual fathers’ relationships with their gay sons”

Subliminal awareness prior to coming out. The organising theme “subliminal awareness prior to coming out” refers to the fathers’ early awareness that their son might be gay, before the actual moment of coming out. This subliminal awareness is revealed through their retrospective accounts of certain early signs or “telling” incidents that signalled that their son might be gay. As such, the organising theme “subliminal awareness prior to coming out” consists of the following basic theme: “early signs and ‘telling’ incidents (see figure 5.2 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes). The basic theme “early signs and ‘telling’ incidents” is discussed below.



Figure 5.2: Basic theme linked to the organising theme “subliminal awareness prior to coming out”

Early signs and “telling” incidents. The fathers recalled a number of early signs and “telling” incidents that suggested the possibility that their son might be gay. These early signs and “telling” incidents are demonstrated in the quotes below:

“I was still married to my ex-wife, she found some of her stockings, and stuff, under his bed... At the time I thought, you know, it might be a sign, but I also thought let’s not make an issue of it.” (Kobus)

"I suspected earlier on...when he was about 17...but obviously suspecting and knowing are two different things...and when I suspected it I thought well maybe it is not so...but I thought one or two things that he did...I thought well maybe he could be gay, you know." (Johan)

"He was a different kettle of fish altogether. Then in high school, there were these bullies, these macho men...rugby players... and they bullied him terribly...it was then that I realised he was different." (Thinus)

"And, um, a lot of girls went to him just to be with him. He did bring girlfriends home, from time to time, but he was never really that physical with them...no hugging, and hand holding...the normal stuff." (Kobus)

"Well, we went fishing and he brought a friend along. And the way they reacted to one another...I thought this could be. But, it was very subtle." (Johan)

"...he had a friend visiting all the time...and eventually we put one and one together and we realised he was gay." (Thinus)

"...he wasn't interested in sport...He wouldn't compete with the other boys...his only friends were really girls..." (Pieter)

"...he tried to have a girlfriend but you could see it wasn't working out." (Johan)

As is evident from the quotes above, the fathers recalled various material, characterological, and behavioural signs and "telling" incidents (e.g., engaging in subtle gender non-conforming behaviour, not being visibly attracted to the opposite sex, or displaying unusually close bonds with the same sex) that served as potential indications that their son might be gay. The subliminal awareness demonstrated by the fathers is in line with previous research that indicates that many parents (including fathers) suspect that their sons are gay long before discovery and disclosure (Aveline, 2006; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gottlieb, 2000; Miller, 2005). According to Gottlieb (2000), the finding that fathers demonstrate an early awareness that their son might be gay dispels the myth that mothers intuitively know whereas fathers don't.

For the fathers, these early signs and "telling" incidents suggested the possibility of being gay as they potentially signified a degree of difference, and represented a shift away from gender-

typical norms and roles or heteronormative prescriptions (Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001). There is consensus in the literature that childhood gender non-conformity or atypical behaviour is associated with the later emergence of an adult gay identity (Lippa, 2008).

Further, these early signs and “telling” incidents appear to have facilitated a process of psychological preparation for the moment when their son eventually came out of the proverbial closet and confirmed the fathers’ earlier suspicions. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

“But I was fine with it and I even expected it for years...my wife and I even spoke about the possibility.” (Pieter)

“I think I already made my mind up upfront and that is why it was more of a surprise than a shock.” (Kobus)

The potential psychological preparation that comes with an early awareness allows some parents time to work through their feelings prior to the moment of actual confirmation (Miller, 2005). However, some parents still report that the disclosure was stressful or shocking (Aveline, 2006). It is possible that the suspicions of many parents remained at a subliminal level for a very long time (Aveline, 2006). This is evident from the following excerpt taken from the quote presented above:

“...obviously suspecting and knowing are two different things.” (Johan)

It appears then that subliminal awareness may have led to limited psychological preparation for some fathers.

Epistemic rupture of internal systems of beliefs. The organising theme “epistemic rupture of internal system of beliefs” refers to the disruption of and/or challenge to the fathers’ taken for granted ways of knowing and/or being, especially in terms of their fathering role, masculinity, and religious ideology, and represents a time of questioning and seeking guidance. The organising theme “epistemic rupture of internal systems of beliefs” consists of the following basic themes: “initial surprise/shock/anger”, “sense of fatherhood and masculinity challenged”, “religious beliefs challenged”, and “questioning/seeking” (see figure 5.3 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes). These basic themes are discussed below.

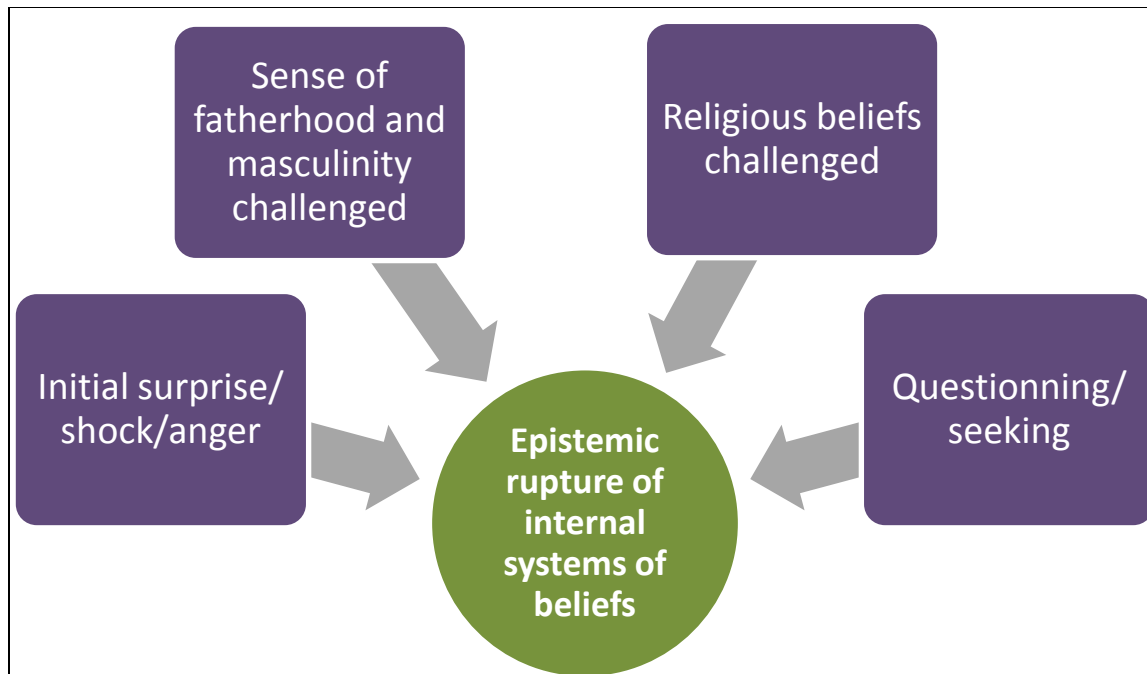


Figure 5.3: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “epistemic rupture of internal systems of beliefs”

Initial surprise/shock/anger. The fathers recalled their initial reactions when their son’s sexual orientation was confirmed as being gay, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

“It was actually a hell of a surprise to us when he came out of the closet.” (Kobus)

“I never expected that he would be gay... It was kind of a shock for me.” (Gideon)

“...when we found out it was a shock.” (Thinus)

“...that dream is just scattered.” (Thinus)

“I was shocked when I found out... and then angry...to a certain extent I was angry with myself, angry with my wife, and angry with him...” (Nico)

These quotes demonstrate that the fathers’ reactions varied from surprise, to shock, and anger. This finding lends support to the view that the reactions of parents are rarely neutral and remain highly personal, varied and unpredictable (Connolly, 2005; du Plessis, 1999).

Furthermore, these findings appear similar to the findings obtained in Gottlieb’s (2000) study, in that the fathers also reported a sudden and unexpected shock. While parents’ first reactions are

generally shaped by what they know or do not know at the time of disclosure, and their individual strategies for handling stressful situations, many parents appear to react negatively (Ben-Ari, 1995; Matthews, 2002; Muller, 1987; Phillips, 2007; Protoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). Furthermore, as already noted, despite reports of an early suspicion among parents, this awareness may have remained at a subliminal level for a very long time, hence the observation that most parents still experience the disclosure as stressful or shocking (Aveline, 2006).

Building on the notion that sons are the narcissistic extensions of the father (Gottlieb, 2000), fathers' initial reactions may also be influenced by an underlying concern about the impact the revelation will have on their own images (du Plessis, 1999). This viewpoint is illustrated in the following basic theme.

Sense of fatherhood and masculinity challenged. It appears that a sense of fatherhood, including their masculinity, may be challenged upon hearing that a son is gay, as manifested by a sense of failure in terms of the fathering role and the modeling of their masculine identity, as revealed in the quotes below:

"...what did I do wrong?" (Nico)

"...wasn't I the reason for him becoming gay?" (Nico)

"But then I accepted responsibility because he is a boy and I should have done more boy things with him." (Nico)

"And, I thought something went wrong there and I immediately blamed them for the fact that their son is gay. Only to later find out that I am in the same situation." (Nico)

These quotes suggest that this father questioned whether he was to blame for his son's same-sex sexuality, possibly as a result of his perceived failure to model heterosexual masculine norms as a father and produce an idealised image of heterosexual masculinity in his gay son. This is consistent with the finding that many parents of gay children feel as though they have failed as parents (du Plessis, 1999; Gottlieb, 2000; Phillips, 2007).

It may be recalled from chapter three that fathers are men, and men have a gender identity we call masculinity (Morrell, 2006). In addition, it is argued that the father role is not simply

occupied by men – it is where men reflectively and reflexively act out their masculinity in different ways (Morrell, 2001; 2006). Furthermore, it is believed that men are constantly under considerable social and psychological pressure to establish, affirm and defend their traditional heterosexual masculine identity (Cullen et al., 2002; Epstein, 1998; Herek, 1996). And, while there is consensus in the literature that fathers envision, enact, integrate, and differentiate their roles as fathers in various ways (Palkovitz, 2002), many fathers continue to emphasise role-modelling as a significant component of their fathering role (Morman & Floyd, 2006). Therefore a perceived failure in their ability to role-model suggests a potential failure in their fathering role, and thereby a possible failure in their heterosexual masculinity as well.

Religious beliefs challenged. In addition to a sense of fatherhood being challenged, it appears that religious beliefs may also be challenged upon confirming that a son is gay, as illustrated in the quote below:

“According to me it was a sin and according to me they would go to hell...I then realised this is something different... since then my attitude changed...” (Gideon)

It is evident from this quote that this father initially viewed same-sex sexuality as being incompatible with the Christian faith. This finding is in line with research that identifies conservative religious ideology as a variable that is consistently linked to anti-gay attitudes (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Johnson et al., 1997). However, from this quote it appears that the knowledge of having a gay son may have disrupted the conservative religious belief that same-sex sexuality is a sin, and that it will inevitably lead to damnation. Rather than continue to view same-sex sexuality as a sin, this father reframed it as something different, and therefore more tolerable. Cognitive dissonance theory may provide some insight into this apparent shift in religious beliefs. According to cognitive dissonance theory, as first formulated by Festinger in 1957, cognitive dissonance is induced when a person detects the presence of two contradictory or inconsistent beliefs or when a belief is deemed incongruent with an action performed freely (O’Leary, 2012). The resulting negative affect is believed to compel an individual to alter or reject one of the beliefs and/or behaviours so as to reduce the inconsistency (O’Leary, 2012). For this father, it is possible that cognitive dissonance may have resulted from having a conservative religious ideology on the one hand, while being confronted with a gay son on the other hand. The resulting cognitive dissonance is likely to have produced a great deal of tension

or discomfort, which may have compelled him to alter his religious beliefs regarding same-sex sexuality in a way that would enable him to accommodate his son's same-sex sexuality, while simultaneously retain most of his core religious beliefs. As previously noted by Goldfried and Goldfried (2001), through the reduction of cognitive dissonance an opportunity exists for greater acceptance and a reduction in stigmatisation.

Questioning/seeking. Some fathers embarked on a search for answers upon hearing the news that their son is gay, as illustrated in the quotes below:

When I found out I went to that lonely place...and for three days I prayed and searched the Bible..." (Gideon)

"Then I started doing research, and in the way that I was brought up it is a religious thing, and you know in the Bible it says it is a sin, and I read many articles, you know, and then I decided to discuss it with him. I said to him it can't be, what did I do wrong? He said maybe I didn't do anything wrong." (Nico)

"We prayed about it many times. And like I said the father-son relationship is not as I thought it would be. But ja, you make peace with it eventually and you accept it as much as you can." (Thinus)

From these quotes, it is evident that the fathers needed to make sense of the fact that their son is gay. The fathers employed different strategies to uncover the answers they require, such as praying, reading the bible, reading literature, and even seeking answers directly from the source of the disruption (i.e. their gay son). This finding is consistent with prior research (Phillips, 2007). Once again, cognitive dissonance theory may help to explain the fathers' need to find answers. It is possible that their son's same-sex sexuality represented something different, and potentially incompatible with their beliefs. This discrepancy is likely to have resulted in some negative affect, which in turn, may have compelled them to engage in cognitive work (i.e. seek out answers that would aid them in their process of making sense of their son's same-sex sexuality) so as to reduce the cognitive discrepancy or dissonance and associated negative affect.

Personal paradigmatic shifts. The organising theme "personal paradigmatic shifts" refers to the fathers' contemplation and reconstruction of beliefs relating to self and others, fatherhood, human and personal sexuality, especially sexual orientations, as well as societal and religious or

spiritual beliefs. The organising theme “personal paradigmatic shifts” includes the following basic themes: “a shift in beliefs over time”, “a shift in beliefs expressed as religious epiphany”, and “a shift in beliefs expressed as a casting off of societal norms and moral strictures” (see figure 5.4 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes). These basic themes are discussed below.

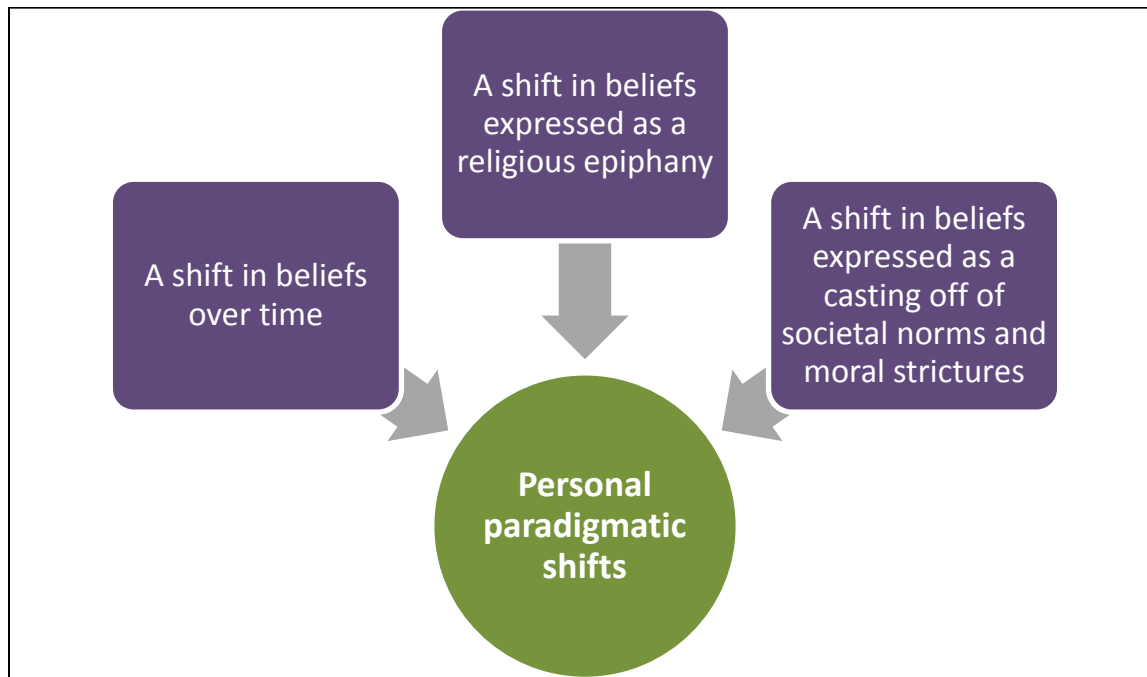


Figure 5.4: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “personal paradigmatic shifts”

A shift in beliefs over time. The fathers’ recollections indicate that they experienced a shift in beliefs over time, as illustrated in the quotes below:

“Now that I am older I have a completely different view from when I was younger.” (Kobus)

“Twenty years ago I would have given you a different answer as I would give you now. To me nowadays, as you grow and you learn more and you accept more in life. I still maintain, you know, gay men should...if they are so then it is so.” (Johan)

“...now I understand it different but in the past I thought gay people have sex with different men every day.” (Gideon)

“...my second reaction was that it was never too late to try and reverse it. But now I realise that I was wrong in that approach because I didn’t have enough knowledge on why it happened.” (Nico)

For these fathers, it appears that their beliefs shifted over time as a result of life experiences, and through the assimilation of new information. A belief can be understood as “subjective, experience-based, often implicit knowledge and emotions on some matter” or “some kind of tacit knowledge” (Pehkonen & Pietilä, 2003, p. 2). It has also been argued that “(b)eliefs are propositions that are endorsed and accepted as true” (Devine, 1989, p. 5). Furthermore, beliefs are believed to be episodic in nature in that they have a close connection to specific situations or experiences (Speer, 2005). As such, beliefs may shift or evolve over the life course. According to Phillips (2007), throughout the process of adjustment, parents examine and redefine their commitments to their belief systems and values, especially when these come into conflict with their growing understanding of their child as a gay person. These fathers appear to have gone through a similar process of examining and/or redefining their beliefs.

A shift in beliefs expressed as a religious epiphany. It appears that a religious epiphany may have led to a shift in religious beliefs, as reflected in the quotes below:

“...and then I had the revelation.” (Gideon)

“I think there are not only two sexes...male and female...but eunuch is for me a third kind of sex...a eunuch is a gay person.” (Gideon)

For this father, his sudden religious epiphany enabled him to reframe same-sexuality as a type of third sex, or as eunuchs (i.e. castrated males) thereby rendering it more acceptable in terms of his religious beliefs. One explanation might be that the so-called revelation emerged as a result of cognitive dissonance, as previously discussed. An alternative explanation, however, comes from the process of quantum change. According to Miller (2004), quantum change refers to a sudden subjective experience of profound enlightenment and permanent transformation. This is often referred to as an epiphany in the literature (Miller, 2004). Perceived as an authentic truth, these moments of profound insight potentially include a reorganisation of one’s perceptions of self and reality, and are accompanied by intense emotion and a cathartic sense of relief and release (Miller, 2004). It is possible that this father experienced a sudden and profound sense of enlightenment that brought about a permanent transformation in the way he viewed same-sex sexuality within his Christian beliefs.

A shift in beliefs expressed as a casting off of societal norms and moral strictures. A shift in beliefs was also revealed through the fathers' casting off of various societal norms and moral strictures, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

"...what I have picked up is that...the structures we have in society, are mostly outdated...like structures we have in religion, and in marriage...most structures I feel are hopelessly outdated." (Kobus)

"I think, men are probably subconsciously a bit scared of their own, maybe small bit of latent homosexuality" (Kobus)

"In the past it was totally negative. It was wrong. Now it is just people. I understand it as the third sex... a lifestyle" (Gideon)

From these quotes it appears that the knowledge of having a gay son may have compelled these fathers to examine and dismiss dominant societal norms and moral strictures either by classifying societal structures such as religion and the institution of marriage as being predominantly outdated, by reframing same-sex sexuality as an amoral issue, or by subverting the so-called problem and situating it among heterosexual men themselves, who appear unable to tolerate their own latent homo-erotic desires. It may be recalled from chapter two that the Afrikaner culture has been described in terms of the following dominant features: (a) hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, as a manifestation of Afrikaner Christian nationalist ideology, and buttressed mainly by the Dutch Reformed Church, which placed considerable emphasis on morality, ascetism, industriousness, and heteronormativity; (b) Puritanism; (c) calvinism; (d) patriarchal authority; (e) authoritarianism and militarism; and (f) traditionalism and conservatism; (du Pisani, 2001; Sonnekus, 2013; van Zyl, 2008; Vestergaard, 2001). It is reasonable to assume that these aspects may have shaped or informed the fathers' traditional beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, motivations etcetera. However, when confronted with the information of having a gay son, it appears that some fathers review and revise their beliefs in order to reduce the potential incompatibility that exists between their traditional beliefs and the meaning associated with same-sex sexuality. The theory of cognitive dissonance may again help to explain why these fathers appear to reject certain societal norms and moral strictures in order to accommodate same-sex sexuality in some way.

Acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process. The organising theme “acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process” refers to the fathers’ attempts at developing acceptance towards their son’s same-sex sexuality without necessarily being able to relate to or understand it. This ongoing and complex process appears to be mediated by a number of variables, including the presence of overt signs of same-sex sexuality, spousal involvement, encouragement and support, other sources of support, and the relational dynamic between father and son. The organising theme “acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process” comprises of the following basic themes: “ambivalent acceptance”, “discomfort with visible displays of physicality between gay men or attracting attention to same-sex sexuality”, “wife (and other family members) as a mediator in the acceptance process”, “extrafamilial sources of support as a mediator in the acceptance process”, and “the improving/maturing father-son relationship as a mediating factor in the acceptance process” (see figure 5.5 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes)

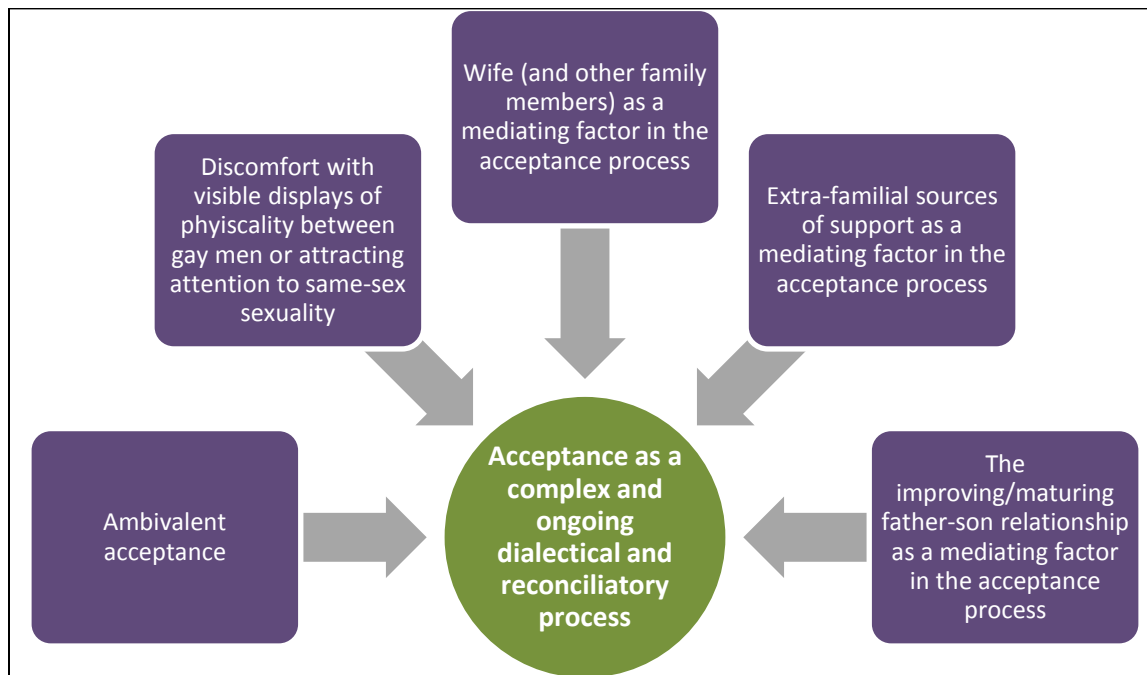


Figure 5.5: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process”

Ambivalent acceptance. Ambivalent acceptance was expressed as an acceptance of the son but an inability to relate to, understand and accept his same-sex sexuality, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

"I accept it but I don't agree with it. It makes me feel uncomfortable." (Thinus)

"Obviously I can't say I am happy that he is gay. Um, I don't think any father would really be happy with that, but I accept it. I accept it as something I will not be able to change." (Johan)

"I accept the gay thing...but I don't understand it...It doesn't make sense to me...I accept it but I don't understand it." (Gideon)

"You know, we watch movies like Brokeback Mountain together, me and my wife watched it...it doesn't bother us, it's just a bit of an uncomfortable feeling." (Kobus)

"... but I know he loves his family and we love him... and I know he wants to have a close relationship with us... so we will have to accommodate each other... and that is how I see it." (Nico)

"No, it doesn't fit in officially...I accept it, but it is against my values, and my religion." (Gideon)

"This is the thing... he is my son... but those things that are unacceptable to me... is caused by the gay personality." (Nico)

"I don't think it should only come from one side. I don't think the son should be able to do what he wants and that the father just has to accept it. So, therefore I would say it is conditional." (Johan)

"But, you know, I would not go out there and say it is my purpose in life now to mix with gay people. You know, I wouldn't even test the boundaries by saying I must go to a gay club. Why should I go and do that, you know." (Johan)

These quotes reveal that while fathers reported accepting their son's same-sex sexuality, this level of acceptance appears to be limited in that they did not fully understand it, did not totally

agree with it, viewed it as being essentially incompatible with their values and religion, or continued to experience a degree of discomfort associated with it. As such, their process of acceptance may be viewed as an ongoing and complex dialectical process whereby the fathers continuously navigate their way through conflicting, and often contradictory, forces. These findings support the view that the majority of parents are neither totally rejecting nor fully accepting (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). Furthermore, the pattern of acceptance among these fathers also suggests that the fathers may have attained a level of resigned acceptance in their relationships with their gay sons, similar to what Gottlieb (2000) observed. It may be recalled that resigned acceptance involves a degree of acceptance where fathers feel there is nothing they can do to change the situation (Gottlieb, 2000). So, although these fathers appear to be accepting of their gay sons' sexuality, this is invariably limited in scope and generally based on the view that there is very little they can do to alter their son's sexual orientation.

Discomfort with visible displays of physicality between gay men or attracting attention to same-sex sexuality. The degree of acceptance expressed by the fathers appears to be mediated by public displays of affection or physicality between gay men and by attracting attention to their same-sex sexuality, which are seen to illicit a degree of discomfort, as illustrated in the quotes below:

"...my daughter would bring her boyfriend and they would hold hands, and my son would bring his boyfriend and they would hold hands, and I would feel very uncomfortable...only in terms of my son holding hands." (Nico)

"I still don't like two men kissing each other in front of me. They should still do that in privacy." (Gideon)

"No, I don't like seeing two men together in public. 'Ek gril'... it makes me very uncomfortable." (Nico)

"Although, having said that, one needs to qualify that also by saying, you know, if a husband sort of hugs his wife or gives her a kiss or something, then that to me is fairly normal. But where gay people would do that, I do feel uncomfortable." (Johan)

“I have absolutely no problem with you being gay, but why do you want to go and absolutely market it out to the world, why don’t you rather focus on building a life, you know, instead of making an issue out of the gayship, it is a waste of energy in my mind.” (Kobus)

“At one stage, one thing I didn’t like at one stage, he was almost advertising it too much, not that I am shy about it, but he would make an issue out of his gayship. And I often said to him “I have absolutely no problem with you being gay, but why do you want to go and absolutely market it out to the world, why don’t you rather focus on building a life, you know...” (Kobus)

Although the fathers reported accepting their son’s same-sex sexuality, they demonstrated a level of discomfort or disgust when confronted by overt expressions of same-sex sexuality, particularly when seeing two men being intimate with one another or by drawing attention to their sexuality. The fathers’ general discomfort with overt expressions of same-sex sexuality appears to support the finding that while some parents indicate their acceptance of same-sex sexuality, they demonstrate a preference towards denying or avoiding aspects of its existence (Schoeman et al., 1993). One possible interpretation for this finding is the distinction made between explicit and implicit attitudes. According to Lemm (2006), people who explicitly deny negative attitudes towards gay people may still hold negative attitudes towards gay people at an implicit or subconscious level. A study conducted by Steffens (2005) suggested that while explicit attitudes appeared positive towards gay men, male participants’ implicit attitudes remained relatively negative. This finding suggests that while some males appear to have positive attitudes towards gay men, they may still harbour unacknowledged negative feelings towards them. These unacknowledged negative feelings may come to the fore when confronted with overt displays of same-sex sexuality.

Another possible interpretation, possibly linked to the first interpretation in some way, is the dominant view that same-sex sexuality represents a negation of traditional heterosexual masculinity (Connell, 1992), and a violation of traditional gender role expectations (Kerns & Fine, 1994). Viewed as such, gay men are typically regarded as a threat to heterosexual men’s sex-typed perceptions, expectations, and roles (Lim, 2002). The resulting anxiety leads many males with a traditional heterosexual masculine identity to respond negatively towards gay men so as to affirm their heterosexual masculine identity (Herek, 1986). For many heterosexual men,

being asked about gay men activates feelings and beliefs associated with a traditional heterosexual masculine identity and it's imperative to prove oneself by rejecting gay men (Herek, 2000b). This process is likely to be activated especially in contexts where men are confronted by overt displays of same-sex attraction and affection. Hence, the fathers appear accepting, but only to a point.

A third possible interpretation is that these fathers's relationship pattern with their gay sons may be described as "loving denial", as described by Muller (1987). It may be recalled that "loving denial" is characterised by a loving relationship, but where parents' acceptance appears conditional in that very little overt recognition of their sons' sexual orientation is tolerated (Muller, 1987).

Wife (and other family members) as a mediating factor in the acceptance process. The degree of acceptance reported by fathers also appears to be mediated by the wife's (and other family member's) support, involvement and encouragement, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

"And then my present wife knew about a gay pastor...um, who had written a book...and she tried to locate him so that we could introduce our son to him." (Pieter)

"His mother...,I think that is because of her relationship with gay people that she works with, she obtained knowledge of how it works and she informed me of how it works." (Nico)

"I spoke to my wife, and other people. I can't remember a lot. My wife wrote that book a year after he came out and we discussed it a lot. I gave her my input and understanding, and she worked it in. The book was very good for us, to try and make sense of this." (Gideon)

"My wife definitely coped better...she is remarkable...very loving. For me it was really difficult." (Gideon)

"I think my wife coped better...I think she understands the situation better than I do." (Johan)

"My one sister is very religious and she is like a soul mate...I would probably tell her something I wouldn't tell my wife because it would upset her...and she is my family and

between us we can relate to the problem...and when it came out she actually said, 'What is the sense in denying the truth?'" (Thinus)

From these quotes, it appears that their wives, and to a lesser extent other family members, may have played a significant role in supporting and encouraging their process of moving towards acceptance. The view that their wives coped better also lends some support to previous research that indicates that mothers tend to react less negatively than fathers (Ben-Ari, 1995; D'Augelli et al., 1998), and that relationships both before and after disclosure are more likely to be positive between mother and son than between father and son (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). The observation that these influential figures are women (i.e. wife or sister) is not surprising given the finding that men are more likely than women to demonstrate anti-gay attitudes (Castro-Convers et al., 2005; Herek & Capitanio, 1996). This finding suggests that women (as in wives and possibly even sisters) may have a vital role to play in encouraging gay-supportive attitudes among men as fathers (Castro-convers et al., 2005).

Extra-familial sources of support as a mediating factor in the acceptance process. A number of extra-familial sources, such as spiritual mentors, authors, religious figures, the bible, and health professionals, were identified as having played a role in the fathers' acceptance process, as revealed in the quotes below:

"I learned a lot from their [various author's] understanding, and their explaining of concepts in life, which I found extremely beneficial, and which helped me to get rid of shackles that I picked up from my younger years." (Kobus)

"Being friends with the gay pastor...and attending his congregation...it enriches my life...My wife...as I told you...she had gay friends for years...and it has also changed my view of what gay people are like...they are just people." (Pieter)

"So every Friday after school my son met with the gay pastor and they discussed various things like theology from a gay perspective, and life lessons relating to gay people...all things which I couldn't help him with." (Pieter)

"I didn't understand it but I accepted it. Like I said it is important for me what the Bible says about it, not the church, there is a difference...the church is man-made..." (Gideon)

“...psychologically, at one stage I thought I had a bit of depressing thoughts and I went to see our physician and he gave me a little ‘pilletjie’ that I take every morning. I don’t feel that way anymore, maybe if I stopped taking the ‘pilletjie’ I would still feel the same.” (Johan)

These quotes suggest that in addition to family members, external sources may have played a supportive role in facilitating the fathers’ process of acceptance of their sons’ same-sex sexuality. This finding is consistent with previous research (Gallor, 2006; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001).

The improving/maturing father-son relationship as a mediating factor in the acceptance process. The quality and evolution of the father-son relationship also appears to have played a role in the fathers’ acceptance process, as indicated by the quotes below:

“...I had certain expectations...he has exceeded my expectations. Now he is very intelligent, talented and very attractive...So...I think it was a very positive thing in my case...it definitely improved our relationship. We can talk about these things whereas before that we couldn’t talk about anything.” (Pieter)

“Ag, we are friends...I don’t understand everything that he is busy with. But we are now colleagues. That is a big difference. He is my son, but I can learn from him. We learn from each other...” (Gideon)

“I think it is the best relationship I have had with him...I am happy with the fact that he is conscientious about his work, and that he does well with it. This is easier for me than the time he was in school and where I had to cope with him not passing tests, and where he had been caught drinking at school and I had to go and face the whole bloody school board, and act as his advocate or lawyer...Nowadays it is so much easier, you know, and we have a very relaxed relationship as it were now.” (Johan)

“We are more friends now...there are no problems...I am very proud of him, especially where you look at where he was a year ago and where he is now.” (Kobus)

“I think our relationship has changed...and I would say that it has changed for the positive...I know he is a very good person...with a very good heart...and I know that he cares. I think that is the most positive.” (Nico)

From these quotes it appears that the fathers have noted a general improvement in their relational dynamic with their gay sons. Interestingly, this finding appears to be inconsistent with previous research that has found very little improvement in the father-son relationship following disclosure (Gallor, 2006; Matthews, 2002; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). The perceived improvement in the father-son relational dynamic is attributed to a number of different factors, such as the meeting of expectations, increased communication, cross-generational learning, the resolution of developmental conflicts, sharing of values, and renegotiating of boundaries. For some of these fathers, it appears that they have reached or are transitioning into the third evolutionary phase in the typical father-son relationship, as described by Yablonsky (1990). Yablonsky maintains that in this phase the father and son emerge as separate entities, yet equals, and are able to love and respect each other as men (Yablonsky, 1990).

Alternatively, it may be interpreted that the fathers' descriptions of their relationships with their sons appears may have included some idealisation of their sons (e.g., being intelligent, talented, attractive or conscientious, being a mentor or a good person with a good heart). This possible idealisation is similar to what Gottlieb (2000) noted in his study, in that the fathers appeared to idealise their sons in terms of their intelligence, creative or artistic talents, physical appearance, and specialness. Drawing again on the notion that sons are the narcissistic extensions of the father, Gottlieb (2000) argued that through idealisation, fathers are able to idealise themselves once these idealisations had been internalised, thereby restoring and strengthening their own narcissistic needs. Through idealisation, the son's gayness is deprioritised and neutralised (Gottlieb, 2000; Strommen, 1990). As a result, fathers are able to see their reflection in their sons' eyes once more, thereby facilitating a further strengthening of the father-son relationship (Gottlieb, 2000). As such, the healthy maturation of the father-son relationship, and the simultaneous process of idealisation, may have played a role in the fathers' acceptance process.

Ambiguous loss. The organising theme “ambiguous loss” refers to the fathers' perceived loss of an anticipated future for and with a son, especially in terms of the imagined father-son relationship and a continuation of the family line. The organising theme “ambiguous loss” consists of the following basic themes: “sense of loss connected to envisioned future father-son

relationship” and “sense of loss connected to not having grandchildren/ a discontinued family line” (see figure 5.6 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes).

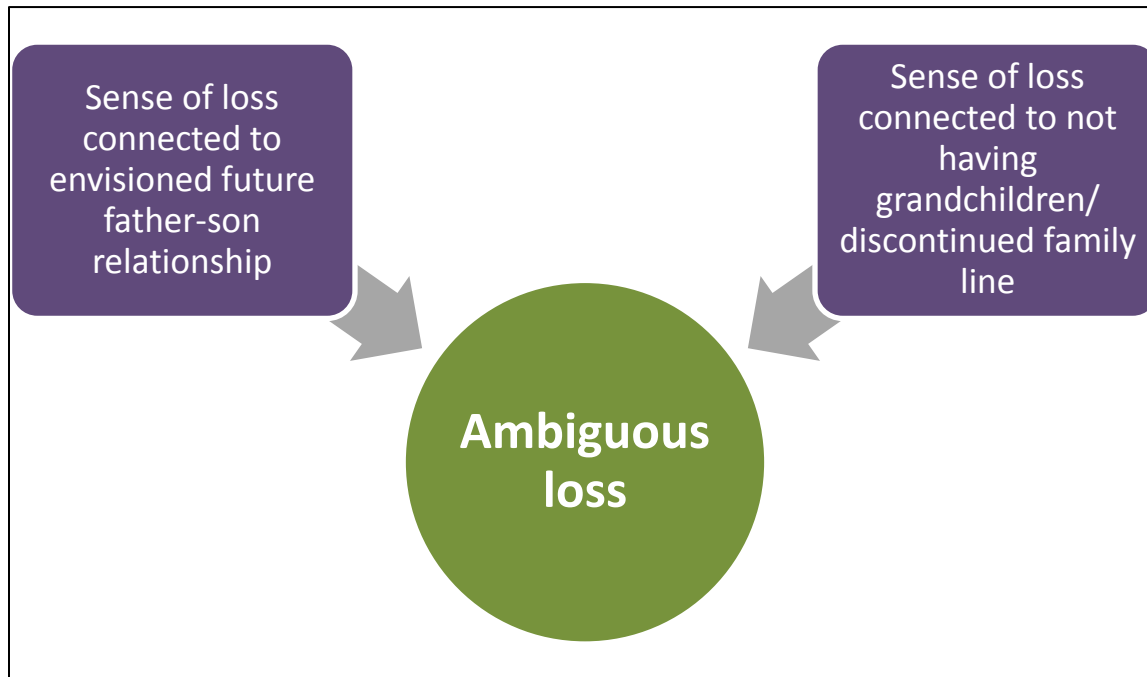


Figure 5.6: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “ambiguous loss”

A sense of loss connected to envisioned future father-son relationship. It appears that a sense of loss may have been experienced in terms of the idealised and gendered image of a typical father-son relationship, as reflected in the quotes below:

“Doing things together...I have just realised that that dream is just scattered” (Thinus)

“My son will never be my boy...never doing certain things together.” (Thinus)

“It was sad in a way...I think for me it was tough...it was a thing of where is that son to go fishing with... it is the thing about sharing whatever...and doing things together like father and son...you know, I would want to do things and he wouldn’t want to do it” (Thinus)

From these quotes, it appears that a sense of loss may have been experienced in relation to the father and son not sharing a common interest in what may be regarded as traditionally gendered activities. This loss is not an actual physical loss, as it appears that these elements may have never been present. However, a sense of loss may have been heightened with the growing

awareness that this reality cannot change and that the idealised and gendered image of the father-son relationship will never be realised. As previously discussed, grieving is seen as a central metaphor for families' adjustment processes following the discovery that a son is gay (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Potoczniak & Crosbie-Burnett, 2006). These findings support the view that parents of gay men appear to "grieve the loss of an image they had of their child, an image they built and socialized with over the years" (Ben-Ari, 1995, p. 93). According to Gottlieb (2000), in the process of working towards acceptance, fathers appear to relinquish some of the dreams they may have for their sons and are learning to accept the dreams they have for themselves.

In addition, research indicates that men typically adopt a more active, instrumental style in their male-male friendships, wherein closeness appears to be a function of similarity, and expressed through activities of mutual interest that are typically gender-validating (Floyd, 1995). In line with this research, it may be argued that the fathers perceive their envisioned relationship with their son as not conforming to their gendered expectations of sharing activities of mutual interest that also serve to validate their masculine identity. In the absence of these shared activities, the fathers may have viewed it as a lost opportunity to establish and maintain the closeness they desire.

A sense of loss connected to not having grandchildren/a discontinued family line. It also appears that a sense of loss may have been experienced in relation to the heteronormative expectation of having children (and grandchildren), which marked an end to the family line, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

"...sometimes I feel sad that my name stops here... there will be no child...you know, he has a good friend and she asked him to have a child with her...and I thought why don't you do it...I thought it was a very good idea (laughs)...even though they would not be married. And he decided not to...I can understand it...but I thought it was a very good idea...to have another grandson, or grandchild...I miss that..." (Gideon)

"That is one of my big concerns... how can a gay person ever be happy? Because one wants a family, one wants children" (Nico)

These quotes reveal how same-sex sexuality is viewed as being counter to heteronormative expectations, which include procreation. The understanding is that two men are biologically

unable to procreate thereby removing all possibility of having children. For these fathers it may have served as a reminder of their son's deviation from the norm. The sense of loss experienced in relation to not having children is consistent with previous research (Ben-Ari, 1995; Phillips, 2007).

A persistent history of thought. The organising theme “a persistent history of thought” refers to the fathers’ beliefs that are carried through life from their own upbringing, which was immersed within the Afrikaner culture, as revealed in the frequent tendency to stereotype in terms of traditionally male and female identities and roles, with references to gayness as falling outside of “normal” parameters. This organising theme may be linked to the organising theme “acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process”. The organising theme “a persistent history of thought” consists of the following basic themes: “early socialisation experiences around gender norms and roles”, “stereotyping of gender norms and roles”, “stereotyping of what it means to be a gay man”, and “differentiating along the lines of ‘normal’ (heterosexual orientation) and ‘abnormal/anomalous’ (same-sex sexual orientation)” (see figure 5.7 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes).

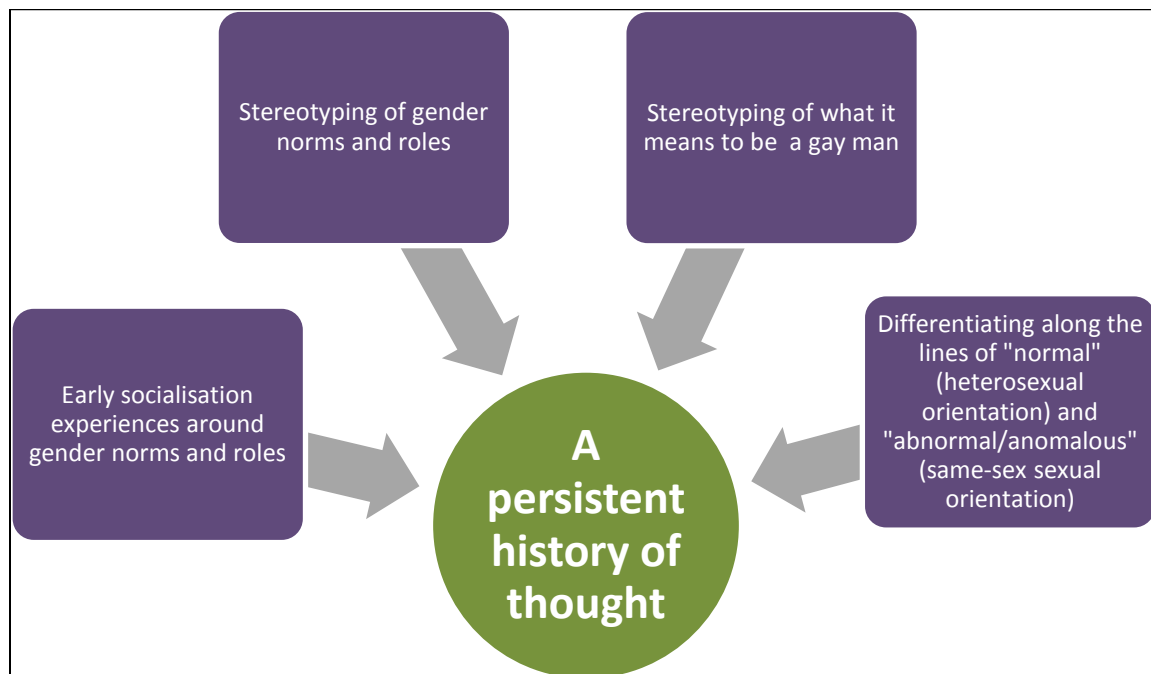


Figure 5.7: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “a persistent history of thought”

Early socialisation experiences around gender norms and roles. The fathers' traditional stereotypes around gender norms and roles appear to be rooted within their early socialisation experiences within the Afrikaner culture. The fathers' early socialisation experiences are revealed in their recollection of their parents, as indicated in the quotes below:

"With my father, again pretty normal as a child could have with his father...going fishing and doing that sort of thing...he was a building contractor...I had an appreciation for what my father did. He was the father figure in the house." (Johan)

"I think my father was a role model...he was a good man...he provided for the family...he actually trained me in terms of working with finances" (Thinus)

"[My mother] basically brought us up on her own, because my dad was working day and night, he was a confectioner." (Kobus)

"...when I was young, [my mother] was just there, you know, she cooked very good..." (Gideon)

"[My mother] was a non-working mother...she was a homemaker...or a housewife in my days...and she was always at home and she cared very well for me." (Johan)

"[My mother] never formally worked outside the house." (Nico)

"[My mother] raised us...she wasn't a career women...she was a housewife...she spent a lot of time with me and my brother...helping us with our homework, encouraging us with our sport...you know, the typical things that housewives did in those days..." (Pieter)

"[My mother] catered for our needs...she would make sure we were well clothed and looked after..." (Thinus)

From these quotes it appears that the fathers described their fathers' and mothers' roles in fairly traditional terms. For example, fathers recalled a more traditional division of labour within the household, where fathers assumed the primary role of breadwinner and provider, and mothers performed the role of homemaker and carer. These recollections are consistent with dominant gender-role expectations observed in the Afrikaner culture during that time period (du Pisani, 2001). According to Marks, Bun, and MacHale (2009), "gender role attitudes are connected to

aspects of family life, including relationship quality and division of labour, and are shaped by the family context in which they are embedded” (p. 14). As such, it is possible that these early influences may have informed, but not necessarily determined, the development of traditional gender role attitudes among the fathers. More broadly, the presence of traditional gender role attitudes has been linked to an increase in anti-gay attitudes (Keiller, 2010; Patel et al., 1995).

In addition, the fathers’ early socialisation experiences around gender norms and roles were revealed in their recollection of their male-male friendships, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

“We would play things like cowboys and crooks.” (Thinus)

“We did normal things boys did...like we played a lot of cricket and played rugby...those kinds of things.” (Gideon)

“And then during the holidays...on the plot...we tried to hunt water birds and those kinds of things.” (Gideon)

“...we had bicycles and we were extremely fit and we would ride all over town...and we formed gangs and had adventures...that sort of thing...” (Pieter)

“We would talk about mutual interest such as sport and politics, and so on.” (Nico)

These quotes reveal that the fathers’ male-male friendships were based on shared interests in gendered activities (e.g., playing games and sport, hunting, being active, having adventures, or discussing sport and politics). These recollections appear to support previous research that males tend to adopt a more active, instrumental relational style in their male-male friendships, wherein closeness appears to be a function of similarity, and expressed through activities of mutual interest that are typically gender-validating (Floyd, 1995). The early socialisation experiences with male peers may have informed and/or reinforced the fathers’ gendered expectations for male-male peer bonds in general, and may have informed their gendered expectations for their later relationships with their gay sons.

Stereotyping of gender norms and roles. It appears that a range of stereotypes have persisted among the fathers in terms of traditional gender norms and roles, as reflected in the quotes below:

“I think society expects men to achieve things ... I like that as a man. Women tend to be more on the caring side, and achievement is not so big.” (Kobus)

“...the traditional thing is still there, you know, that I still see that there is a specific role for a man and a woman to play.” (Nico)

“I did things that men normally do...Like I went hunting or fishing...and I manufactured things in my garage...I did things that men normally do and I was regarded like that in the family.” (Johan)

“But I think she is clever enough to know that still, as far as our children is concerned, that I am the father of the house and that I must make a ruling.” (Nico)

“I think for the children it was always clear who was the mother and who was the father. I did things that men normally would do.” (Johan)

“And this is very important to me...to provide security to my family and to do everything in my power so that they are safe and financially well looked after. And, um, now as far as the household is concerned that is a woman’s thing” (Nico)

“We talk about me as the minister of finance, and my wife as the minister of social affairs in the family (laughs).” (Kobus)

“... I don’t think my wife would agree with that. But it is actually so. Sometimes she thinks emotionally about certain things rather than being logical and she also follows the heart method of deciding on something rather than the brain method.” (Johan)

“...she experiences that it is very difficult to discipline males, and sometimes she would feel that they are not listening to her, and she would use me with my male power to assist her in her business... male power in my mind would be that one must not hesitate to do something... not be stupid but think before doing something.” (Nico)

“I like to fixing things...if something is broken I will repair it. I think my purpose is that of breadwinner” (Gideon)

“...she does more of the nurturing, and I am more of the provider” (Kobus)

“And the women thing is causing problems in households... where a woman feels she doesn’t need anyone, she can make her own rules, and she wants to be independent. And, um, so the traditional thing, you know, of having a structure in the family has broken down, and as far as I am concerned, this has made our society very sick” (Nico)

These quotes suggest the fathers’ continued endorsement of stereotypes pertaining to traditional gender norms and roles. For example, the fathers revealed a traditional division of labour within the household, where they assume the role of security and financial provider, disciplinarian/enforcer, or handyman, and where their wives perform the role of homemaker and nurturer. In addition, the fathers presented themselves as being typically masculine (e.g., pursuit of achievement, being logical, exhibiting male power or dominance, or being instrumental), while their wives were presented as being typically feminine (e.g., caring, submissive, domesticated, emotional, or nurturing). Furthermore, it appears that the fathers’ continued endorsement of traditional masculine norms and roles are expressed in gender-validating ways (e.g., “I like that as a man”, “I did things that men normally do”, and “my purpose”). In the literature, the endorsement of traditional gender role attitudes and heterosexist beliefs are generally associated with negative attitudes towards same-sex sexuality (Burn et al., 2005; Gallor, 2006; Kerns & Fine, 1994)

Stereotyping what it means to be a gay man. A number of stereotypes are evident among the fathers regarding the meanings they associated with being a gay man, as illustrated in the quotes below:

“But then I accepted responsibility because he is a boy and I should have done more boy things with him.” (Nico)

“...but I often get the impression that gay people are promiscuous and often very...um, because it is a suppressed and an oppressed community...they tend to indulge in unacceptable kinds of behaviour.” (Pieter)

“He never ever, well not never ever, he hardly ever gave us any signals of being gay. Because he was as strong as an ox, because he took part in swimming...even today he is as strong as an ox.” (Kobus)

“You know, rugby is a man’s thing... it is a game, and, um, it involves being active and kicking the ball. He was never fond of kicking balls. He didn’t want to do what little boys did.” (Nico)

It is evident from these quotes that same-sex sexuality was generally framed as a movement away from heteronormative ideals of traditional masculinity, and possibly perceived as a violation of traditional gender role expectations. For example, being gay is associated with not being masculine, with being feminine, and expressions of sexual immorality. These stereotypes are largely consistent with previous research (Madon, 1997). The apparent conflation of perceived gender nonconformity with a gay identity is also consistent with previous research (Aveline, 2006).

Kite and Whitley (1998) have offered an analysis of attitudes toward same-sex sexuality based on the assumption that heterosexuals’ evaluations of gay men are rooted in a broader belief system about men, women, and their expected roles. According to Kite and Whitley (1998), this belief system has two implications for attitudes towards same-sex sexuality. First, people’s gender-associated beliefs (e.g., stereotypes, gender role attitudes) appear to be inextricably linked (Kite & Whitley, 1998). For example, many people believe that individuals who possess stereotypically masculine traits also adopt stereotypically masculine roles and possess stereotypically masculine physical characteristics, and, similarly, that those who possess stereotypically feminine characteristics on one dimension are likely to be feminine on other dimensions (Kite & Whitley, 1998). Evidence that this belief system is tied to heterosexuals’ perceptions of gay men and lesbians comes from demonstrations that men who are described as having feminine characteristics are judged likely to be gay whereas women described as having masculine characteristics are judged likely to be lesbian (Kite & Whitley, 1998). People similarly infer that gay men have the gender-associated characteristics of heterosexual women and that lesbians have the gender-associated characteristics of heterosexual men (Kite & Whitley, 1998). Second, it appears that people’s evaluations of those who contradict traditional gender roles (e.g., people who engage in role behaviours associated with the other sex or who

possess characteristics associated with the other sex) are generally negative (Kite & Whitley, 1998). This may be particularly true for gay men, who, as discussed above, are stereotypically perceived as having cross-sex traits, roles, and physical characteristics and who are apparently disliked as a result, particularly by those with traditional gender role attitudes (Kite & Whitley, 1998). For example, as previously discussed in chapter two, Sandnabba and Ahlberg (1999) noted that parents generally prefer that their children adhere to traditional gender-roles and cross-gender behaviour is discouraged, especially among boys. This is evident from a number of studies that have revealed that boys who engage in traditionally feminine behaviours or activities are generally viewed more negatively than girls who engage in typically masculine behaviours or activities (Alanko et al., 2008; Lippa, 2008; Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999).

Noting the above arguments, an additional point should also be considered when interpreting the presence of stereotypes among the fathers. According to Madon (1997) a stereotype's strength is conceptually distinct from its content (Madon, 1997). The content of a stereotype refers to attributes believed to characterise a group of people, whereas the strength of a stereotype refers to the degree to which the content of a stereotype is believed to characterise a group of people (Madon, 1997). Drawing upon this distinction it is reasoned that strongly held stereotypes may bias person perception more than weakly held stereotypes (Madon, 1997). While this study does uncover some of the content of some of the fathers' stereotypes, it is unable to assess the strength of these stereotypes.

Differentiating along the lines of “normal” (heterosexual orientation) and “abnormal/anomalous” (same-sex sexual orientation). It appears that a differentiation is maintained between what is regarded as normal (heterosexual orientation) and anomalous (same-sex sexual orientation), as illustrated in the following quotes:

“I think it is nothing really in particular except that it is out of the ordinary. If a man is a man he shouldn't be gay.” (Johan)

“If I think about a gay male that I know, apart from my son, they are not really men.” (Nico)

“... I would think that homosexuality is probably out of the norm, but I wouldn't go as far as to say it is abnormal, because that would mean I am taking upon me the wisdom of all... divine wisdom which I cannot say I have.” (Johan)

“And as far as I am concerned this is one of the bad things of nature... that nature caused it... like a person that has a disability... so that is the conflicting thing in my mind.” (Nico)

From these quotes it appears that heterosexuality is presented as the norm against which same-sex sexuality is assessed as abnormal or anomalous. This heterosexist assumption is well documented in the literature (Burn et al., 2005; Gallor, 2006; Herek, 2004; Jung & Smith, 1993).

According to Herek (1986) heterosexuality is typically regarded an essential condition of being a true man. Furthermore, a traditional heterosexual masculine identity is generally defined by what it is and what it is not; a traditional heterosexual masculine identity means not being feminine (i.e. anti-femininity) and not being gay (i.e. anti-gay; Herek, 1986). As such, same-sex sexuality is generally regarded as a negation of traditional masculinity (Connell, 1992), and traditionally viewed as a direct threat to sex-typed perceptions, expectations, and roles (Lim, 2002). The presence of heterosexist attitudes has been found to predict parent-child relationship functioning, in that parents with greater heterosexist attitudes perceived less positive changes in their relationships with their children since their child's disclosure (Gallor, 2006).

As such, the presence of heterosexist attitudes may play a role in shaping the fathers' relationships with their gay son. However, if we note that the fathers revealed a general improvement in their relationships with their gay sons, this may mean that either the fathers possess few heterosexist attitudes (which appears unlikely given their endorsement of traditional masculine or gender-role attitudes and stereotypes pertaining to gay men, and the manner in which they differentiate between what is considered normal and abnormal or anomalous) or that their heterosexist attitudes may be moderated by internal and external motivations. Plant and Devine (1998) have previously identified two distinct sources of motivation to respond without prejudice, namely internal and external motivations. Internal motivation is described as motivation that is derived from personal values (e.g., being non-prejudiced is important to my self-concept), whereas external motivation is driven by social forces outside the individual (e.g., I try to hide any negative thoughts to avoid negative reactions from others) (Plant & Devine, 1998). Plant and Devine (1998) found that these sources of motivation operate independently, thus some individuals wish to be non-prejudiced primarily because it is important to their personal values, others feel compelled largely by social pressures to behave in nonprejudiced ways, some are driven by a combination of these two sources of motivation, and others endorse

no motivation at all. Further, their study demonstrated that explicit attitudes towards a social group were moderated by internal and external motivation (Plant & Devine, 1998). Furthermore, internal motivation was associated with lower explicit prejudice, whereas external motivation was actually associated with an increase in prejudice when not being observed by others (Plant & Devine, 1998). If we apply this finding to the current study, it is possible that fathers may have been internally (or externally) motivated not to be prejudiced, while simultaneously possessing traditional masculine or gender-role attitudes, and endorsing certain stereotypes about gay men.

Wrestling with the reason why. The organising theme “wrestling with the reason why” refers to fathers’ attempts to understand their sons’ same-sex sexuality by attributing causality to their sons’ sexual orientation. The organising theme “wrestling with the reason why” consists of the following basic themes: “attributing blame to self and/or others” and “choice versus design” (see figure 5.8 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes).

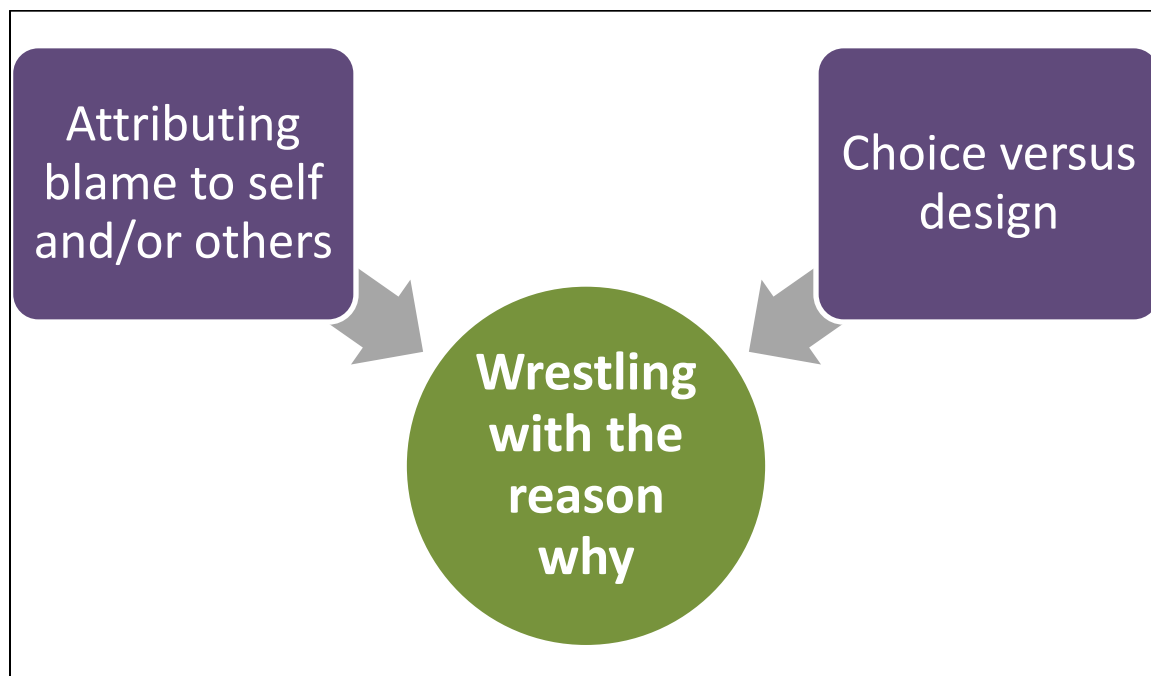


Figure 5.8: Basic themes linked to the organising theme “wrestling with the reason why”

Attributing blame to self and/or others. In the process of coming to terms with their sons’ same-sex sexuality, the fathers are seen to have engaged in a process of attributing blame to themselves and to others, as demonstrated in the quotes below:

“...of course we blamed each other.” (Nico)

“I always had the feeling that she was spoiling him too much.” (Kobus)

“I think it is carried...from my wife’s side...it is in her family there.” (Thinus)

“But then I accepted responsibility because he is a boy and I should have done more boy things with him.” (Nico)

“There are interesting theories about women using the pill...since women started using the pill...the percentage of gay people has increased...” (Gideon)

These quotes suggest that the fathers may have embarked on a process of self-blame (e.g., for being a poor role-model), blaming their wives (e.g., for being overly indulgent or for contributing the “gay” gene during procreation), or blaming medical science more broadly (e.g., contraceptives). These results partially support the findings from Gottlieb’s (2000) study where fathers blamed themselves for exercising too little discipline, being overly permissive or indulgent, or being neglectful. According to LaSala (2000b), the history of blaming poor parenting for “the problem” of same-sex sexuality may play a contributing role in negative parental reactions and subsequent adjustment process.

Choice versus design. In addition to attributing blame to themselves and to others, the fathers also wrestled with predominant discourses around the causes of same-sex sexuality, as revealed by the quotes below:

“To me it is still something that is probably not by design.” (Johan)

“Some people say it is a choice, but I don’t think someone will choose this...definitely not.” (Gideon)

“...they were born that way...I think there is some weight to that theory. In the second option, people made them that way because of circumstances...” (Gideon)

“He is human being. God made him like that...I didn’t make him like that I am sure...it isn’t me or my wife’s doing...he was created like that.” (Thinus)

“And as far as I am concerned this is one of the bad things of nature... that nature caused it... like a person that has a disability... so that is the conflicting thing in my mind.” (Nico)

“It has been said that you are born that way..., you can’t really say. Because I have all these experiences ...whether he has a beard and plays prop for Northern Transvaal or whether he is the pinky guy with a shrill voice...I know that homosexuality comes in all sorts of forms...so I have no preconceived ideas what a homosexual actually looks like.” (Johan)

“...that some people are born that way...while others are just simply promiscuous...or have a lack of self-confidence...and things like that. And I have experienced it first-hand...in my family...that people are born gay...” (Pieter)

“Now, after a few years, we see but that is how he was born. We believe that is how he was born.” (Nico)

From these quotes it appears that the fathers struggled with making sense of the cause of same-sex sexuality. This finding is consistent with prior research (Gottlieb, 2000; Phillips, 2007). In the absence of definitive answers, the fathers developed theories about causation based on what others have said or their own personal experience. Some of the fathers indicated a biological basis, whereas other fathers indicated a combination of biological and psychological factors. The nature versus nurture debate demonstrated by the fathers mirrors the dominant discourse on the origin of same-sex sexuality found in society (APA, 2008). Furthermore, these results are similar to the findings from Gottlieb’s (2000) study where he found that fathers located the cause of same-sex sexuality within biological and/or psychological origins.

Attribution Theory suggests that people are evaluated more negatively when they are observed to have caused their own stigma than those who have not (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Asserting that same-sex sexuality is biological in origin suggests that sexual orientation cannot be controlled (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Believing that same-sex sexuality is acquired, learnt or a personal choice suggests that gay people can control, and therefore assume responsibility for their sexual orientation (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Research suggests that when people believe that sexual orientation has a biological origin and is therefore not controllable, they are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards gay people (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Conversely, when people believe that sexual orientation is a matter of

personal choice and is therefore controllable, they are more likely to demonstrate negative attitudes towards gay people (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). It is possible that the attributions held by these fathers, in terms of whether same-sex sexuality is biologically determined or simply a matter of choice, may have shaped their attitudes towards gay men. Interestingly, most fathers appear to be leaning towards the view that same-sex sexuality is biological in origin.

Coming out as a dual experience. The organising theme “coming out as a dual experience” refers to fathers’ experiences of their own process of coming out as a father of a gay son. The organising theme “coming out as a dual experience” consists of the basic theme “shared experience facilitates identification” (see figure 5.9 for a graphical representation of the organising and basic themes).

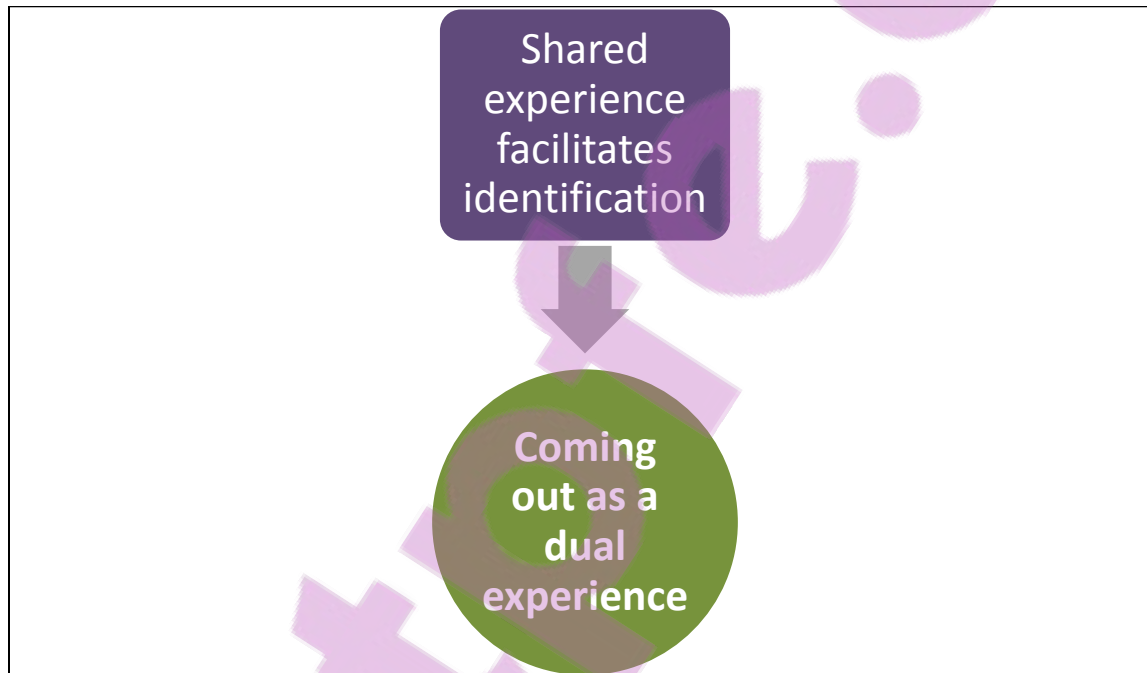


Figure 5.9: Basic theme linked to the organising theme “coming out as a dual experience”

Shared experience facilitates identification. It appears that a shared coming out experience (i.e., a son coming out as a gay man, and a father coming out as the father of a gay man) may have facilitated a process of identification, as demonstrated below:

“...it was not only him who came out the closet, but we also came out with a gay son.”
(Gideon)

“I think the stigma attached to having a gay son is negative...and that’s why it is hard. People don’t understand it.” (Gideon)

“I can remember one of our friends...a farmer...his daughter brought him the magazine with the article...and she told him to look at what I had said...and since then they have been negative towards me...I am ok with this...it is as it is...God provides, not people. But he uses people. Ja, there is definitely a stigma, and I feel it too.” (Gideon)

From these quotes, it appears that some stigma may be experienced as a result of having a gay son. This finding is similar to what Gottlieb (2000) found in his study, in that the fathers became acutely aware of the fact that as parents of a gay child they shared their sons’ stigma and that they too were embarking on a parallel process of coming out. For Gottlieb (2000), this awareness has the potential to facilitate a process of identification, which, in turn, has the potential to further attachment, and facilitate longer term adaptation. According to Goldfried and Goldfried (2001), in order for parents to come out, as the parents of a gay son, they first need to recognise and accept the fact that their son is gay.

Summary

A summary of these findings is provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a restatement of the purpose of the research, as well as a summary of the overall findings of this thesis. This is followed by recommendations and a consideration of the limitations of this study.

Purpose of the Research

According to my knowledge, very little is known about the nature of the father-son relationship before, during, and after disclosure, especially from the father's perspective. This research project aims to fill this apparent gap by exploring first-hand accounts of the experiences and taken-for-granted meanings that potentially shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons. In doing so, this thesis aims to stimulate new understandings about and further investigations into this unique father-son dyad. In addition, this thesis also aims to encourage the development of appropriate models and interventions in order to challenge and support heterosexual fathers of gay sons more broadly.

Summary of the Research Findings

Drawing upon the experiences and meanings of six South African Afrikaans-speaking white fathers, this thesis identified five organising themes, namely (a) subliminal awareness prior to coming out; (b) epistemic rupture of internal systems of beliefs; (c) personal paradigmatic shifts; (d) acceptance as a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process; (e) ambiguous loss; (f) persistent history of thought; (g) wrestling with the reason why; and (h) coming out as a dual experience. These organising themes are viewed as interlinking and together form the global theme "experiences and meanings that shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their gay sons". Furthermore, each of these organising themes is seen to comprise several basic themes.

The thematic network analysis revealed a central storyline about the experiences and meanings that shape heterosexual fathers' relationships with their sons. The fathers demonstrated an early subliminal awareness of their son's same-sex sexuality, based on various signs and "telling" incidents, which prepared them to some degree for the moment of their son's

coming out. Despite this subliminal awareness though, the fathers still seemed to experience an epistemic rupture of sorts, in that their taken for granted ways of knowing and/or being, in terms of their fathering role, masculinity, and religious ideology, were shattered or at least challenged. This prompted a process of questioning and necessitated personal paradigmatic shifts especially in terms of self and others, fatherhood, human and personal sexuality, as well as societal and religious or spiritual beliefs. Acceptance, which was professed to some degree by all of the fathers, appeared to be a complex and ongoing dialectical process (i.e., vacillating between opposing viewpoints and/or emotions), often expressed as acceptance of the son but not as acceptance of his same-sex sexuality. The process of acceptance appeared to be mediated by a host of variables, including the presence of overt signs of same-sex sexuality, spousal involvement, encouragement and support, other sources of support, and the relational dynamic between father and son. Some fathers also experienced an ambiguous sense of loss related to the future they had anticipated for their son and/or their relationship with their son. Attempting to understand why their son was gay also came through strongly, with some of the fathers attributing blame to themselves, their spouses, and/or external causes. The dual experience of also coming out as a parent of a gay child was seen as a potentially transformative experience. Alongside these experiences lay a persistent history of thought that demonstrated the presence of heterosexist and heteronormative beliefs that may further complicate the acceptance process.

The themes revealed through the thematic network analysis supports the view that most parents are neither totally rejecting nor fully accepting of their gay sons (Beeler & DiProva, 1999). Furthermore, all of the fathers are seen to navigate their way through a plethora of experiences and meanings that are not only likely to inform the development of their multidimensional identities as men and fathers, but also shape their unique relationships with their gay sons. While the fathers may have attained a level of “loving denial” in the relationships with their gay sons, most continue to struggle with the meaning and expression of same-sex sexuality. Furthermore, most of the fathers appear to wrestle with the challenge of integrating their understanding of same-sex sexuality with their constructions of traditional masculinity as well as their meanings associated with having a gay son.

However, one notable difference was observed. Unlike prior reports of a poor father-son dyad, the fathers reported a general improvement in their relationship with their gay son after he

came out. The fathers attributed this perceived improvement to a number of factors, including the meeting of expectations, increased communication, cross-generational learning, the resolution of developmental conflicts, sharing of values, and renegotiating boundaries. Although inconsistent with prior research, it is perhaps not surprising that they reported a general improvement in the father-son dyad as these fathers were willing to participate in the study, and were keen to share their experiences, thus indicating greater progress towards acceptance. Furthermore, these fathers' experiences cannot be generalised to the full spectrum of fathers of gay sons, and their associated experiences.

On the whole though, it is clear that these fathers are all facing what may be considered a non-normative life event that is presenting them with numerous challenges. Despite these challenges, against a cultural and social backdrop that remains largely unsupportive of same-sex sexuality, it is recognised that the fathers are adapting to changing circumstances and are trying to find ways to tolerate, accommodate, and in some ways accept their gay sons in the best way they know how. This suggests, in the words of one of the fathers, that:

"...there is light. It is difficult, it is not easy. But there is hope." (Gideon)

A Final Note on My Reflections

Looking back, and reflecting on the process, I am aware of a few personal and professional shifts that have occurred throughout my journey. I commenced the process with a developing sense that many gay sons experienced unsatisfactory relationships with their fathers. As a gay man, an immediate and easy response would have been to blame these fathers for being unreasonable, inflexible, and simply detached. However, I acknowledged at the outset (and repeatedly reminded myself) that I had a limited understanding of this social phenomenon, especially from the perspective of fathers. Although I initially felt apprehensive about embarking on this journey, my confidence as a researcher increased with each interview I conducted. During the process, I learnt to suspend my personal beliefs, feelings, and attitudes so as to allow the fathers the space to be heard. What has emerged as a result of this process is a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the varied and common experiences among the fathers, and the possible ways in which these experiences inform and shape their relationships with their gay sons. A particular realisation for me relates to the finding that the fathers are all

struggling to make sense of same-sex sexuality and generally experience difficulty in integrating aspects of same-sex sexuality into their personal values, traditions, religion, and constructions of masculinity. It is sometimes easier to ignore fathers' humanity when focusing solely on the experiences of gay men. Another realisation is the extent to which the beliefs and meanings held by the fathers are influenced and constrained, but not defined, by the social context (e.g., traditional, conservative, heterosexist, homophobic, patriarchal, etc.). It is easy to overlook the broader social context, while holding fathers solely accountable for their beliefs, meanings, and actions. A third realisation is that despite their personal struggles, these fathers are seen to be finding ways to tolerate, accommodate, and accept same-sex sexuality in some way. For me, these signs are encouraging and suggest the possibility for adaptation even within a social context that remains largely unsupportive. Having had the opportunity to embark on this journey, I am left with an immense sense of gratification. I am also inspired to continue making a meaningful contribution towards this under researched area, which may eventually hold some benefit for the father-son dyad.

Recommendations

Although this research supports the broader view that most parents are neither totally rejecting nor fully accepting of their gay sons (Beeler & DiProva, 1999), and builds towards a better understanding of a range of variables that potentially frame, and shape some fathers' experiences and relationships with their gay sons, further research is needed. Given that the fathers are seen to endorse dominant images of traditional heterosexual masculinity, it may be meaningful to explore more fully the dynamic interaction between heterosexual and gay constructions of masculinity within the father-son dyad before, during and after disclosure. As already noted by Morrel (2001; 2006), the father role is not simply occupied by men – it is where men reflectively and reflexively act out their masculinity in different ways. Although some consideration was given to the fathers' wives and potential role they play in mediating the fathers' process of acceptance, more research is needed in order to fully understand the role that mothers play in influencing the quality of father-son relationships before, during and after disclosure. While this research explored a range of variables that potentially shape fathers' relationships with their gay sons, further research is required to explore the intra- and interpersonal variables that may facilitate adaptive adjustment processes among fathers over the

longer term following the discovery that their sons are gay. Lastly, although this study touched on some of the biographical histories and roles of the fathers, more research is needed to explore the contexts and processes associated with transitions within fatherhood across the life course of fathers of gay sons. In so doing, researchers could uncover the ways in which men change and grow through the myriad experiences of fatherhood and how this impacts their relationships with their gay sons. By exploring these areas, researchers could develop new insights and further stimulate the development of appropriate models and interventions in order to challenge and support heterosexual fathers of gay sons more effectively.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study that require careful consideration. The first limitation relates to potential interaction effects between me as the interviewer and the fathers as participants. I introduced myself to the participants as a psychologist. I introduced the study as a part of my doctoral thesis. Furthermore, the fathers may have perceived me as a gay man. These revelations and observation may have informed the manner in which the fathers presented themselves and their relationships with their gay sons in a particularly favourable light. While it is argued that social desirability bias appeared to be minimal amongst the fathers given how frank they appeared with some of their responses, one cannot completely deny or ignore the presence of this form of bias and the possible ways in which it mediated some of the fathers' responses.

With regards to the second limitation, most of the participants were requested to provide personal accounts of past experiences. According to Raphael (1987), the potential for recall bias exists whenever historical accounts are given by participants. Recall is considered to be particularly prone to bias when the period of recall is especially long, during which time participants can reassess their memories in the context of their current life situation (Holland, Berney, Blane, & Davey Smith, 1999). Therefore, caution must be exercised when interpreting the results of this thesis. It would have been preferable to triangulate these accounts with the accounts of other sources (e.g., mothers, sons, other family members), but this was not practically feasible given the constraints in time and resources.

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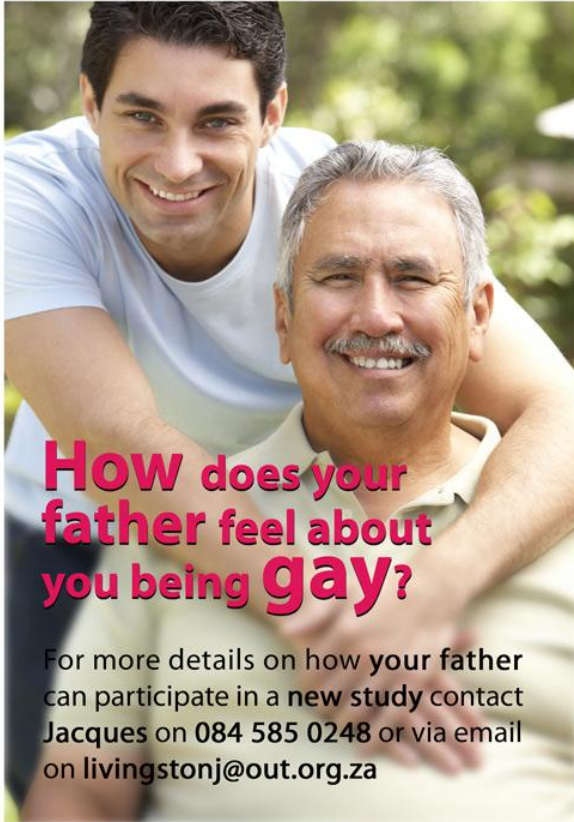
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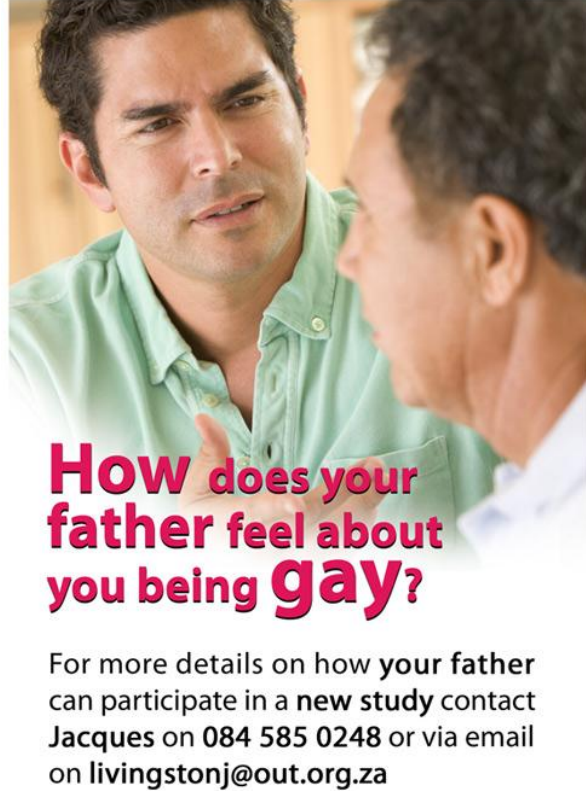
APPENDIX 1

ADVERTISEMENT USED TO RECRUIT FATHERS AS PARTICIPANTS



How does your father feel about you being gay?

For more details on how your father can participate in a new study contact Jacques on 084 585 0248 or via email on livingstonj@out.org.za



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APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Number of participants	6
Date of interviews	23/03/2011 – 23/12/2011
Age	Age range: 53 – 61 years Median: 55.5 years Mean: 56.6 years
Race	White (6)
Home language	Afrikaans (6)
Residential area	Pretoria (5) Johannesburg (1)
Level of education	Matric (1) Diploma (1) Undergraduate Degree (4)
Employment status	Employed full-time (3) Self-employed (2) Retired (1)
Vocational area	Various (6)
Income (before deductions)	R 10 001-00 – R 15 000-00 (2) Above R 25 001-00 (4)
Residential income status	Single-earner (1) Dual-earner (5)
Religious affiliation	Spiritual (1) Christian (5)
Relationship status	Married (6)
Relationship status with mother of son	Married (4) Divorced (2)
Residential status	Stay with partner only (2) Stay with partner and all children (1) Stay with partner and some children (3)

Total number of children	Two (3) Three (3) Average: 2.5 children
Number of children with son's mother	Two (4) Three (2)
Position of son among siblings	First born (2) Second born (4)
Sex ratio of children (male:female)	(3:0) (1) (2:0) (1) (2:1) (1) (1:1) (2) (1:2) (1)
Son's age	Age range: 19 - 36 years Median: 27 years Mean: 27 years
Son's residential status	Stays at home with parents (2) Stays with his partner (1) Stays on his own (3)
Age of son when suspected he is gay	Age range: 13 - 20 years Median: 17 years Mean: 16.6 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	Age range: 14 - 22 years Median: 17 years Mean: 18 years
How father found out	Directly from son (3) From son's mother (2) By accident (1)
Frequency of contact with son	Daily (2) Every second day (2) Once a week (2)

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Who are you? How would you define yourself?
2. How would you describe your childhood?
 - Tell me about your relationship with your parents: Mother/ Father.
3. Tell me about your role models while growing up.
4. Tell me about your relationship with your sibling(s).
5. Tell me about your male friendships while growing up.
6. (If in the army) Tell me about your experience with other males while serving in the army.
7. Tell me about any same-sex experiences while growing up (direct/indirect). Did this affect how you see gay men in general?
8. Tell me about your relationship with the mother of your son.
9. Describe the different roles you have assumed in your adult life:
 - Role as a man;
 - Role as a husband;
 - Role as a father.
10. Which of these roles are the most important and why?
11. What is the best part about being a man/father?
12. What is the toughest part about being a man/father?
13. How did you learn to be a man and a father?
14. Tell me about your thoughts and feelings when your son was born – how did having a son mean to you?
15. What in life had prepared you to take on the role of father?
16. What did having a son mean to you?
17. Tell me about your relationship with your son:
 - As a child;
 - As an adolescent.
18. Tell me about your son's relationship with his siblings.
19. Tell me about your relationship with all of your children.
20. Describe your pattern of involvement with your son while growing up.
21. How does this compare to your wife's involvement as mother?
22. Tell me about when you first learnt your son was gay:
 - How did you find out;
 - Initial reactions – thoughts, feelings, behaviours.
23. Did you ever suspect before that that your son was gay? Explain.
24. Who do you think coped better with your son's coming out – you or your wife - and why?
25. Tell me about your relationship with your son as an adult.

26. Is your current relationship with your son what you expected it would be? In what way has he become/not become as you expected?
27. What are your current primary feelings/emotions, positive and/or negative, towards your son? Why?
28. Do you think your son ever struggled with his sexual orientation?
29. Tell me about what you know about homosexuality. What do you think causes homosexuality?
30. Tell me about your feelings about your son being gay. Why?
31. Tell me about your feelings when your son was in a relationship with another guy.
32. What do you associate with being gay?
33. How does homosexuality fit in with your:
 - Tradition, culture, values;
 - Religion;
 - Norms for heterosexuality, masculinity, and view of men in general.
34. How do you feel about gay men in general?
35. How do you feel about gay people getting married and raising children?
36. How do you feel about two men being intimate in public?
37. Did you ever discuss your son's homosexuality with your wife or other family member?
38. How do you feel when others find out that your son is gay?
39. Have you ever discussed issues on sex, sexual health, safety, and relationships with your gay son?
40. In what way, if any, has your son being gay affected your relationship with your wife?
41. In what way, if any, has your son being gay affected your relationship with your son?
42. In what way, if any, has your son being gay affected how you see/feel about yourself?
 - As a man;
 - As a heterosexual;
 - As a father.
43. What support did you get/need while trying to come to terms with your son's homosexuality?
44. What support do you think would have been helpful in coming to terms with your son's homosexuality?
45. Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting people who are gay?
46. Why do you think men in general are more reluctant in seeking out support?
47. What do you think fathers need to help them deal with the fact that their son is gay?
48. What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?
49. What would you like to say to other fathers' experiencing difficulty coming to terms with their son's homosexuality?

The End.

Version 3: October 2011

APPENDIX 4

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please answer/circle appropriate responses)

1. Age:.....

2. Race:.....

3. Home language *(please circle appropriate response)*:

3.1 English 1

3.2 Afrikaans 2

3.3 Other *(please specify)* 3.....

4. Area that you reside:.....

5. Highest Level of Education Obtained *(please circle appropriate response)*:

5.1 Standard 8/Grade 10 or below 1

5.2 Matric 2

5.3 Certificate/Short Courses 3

5.4 Diploma 4

5.5 Undergraduate Degree 5

5.6 Postgraduate Degree 6

5.7 Other *(please specify)* 7.....

6. Current Employment Status *(please circle appropriate response)*:

6.1 Employed full-time 1

6.2 Employed Part-time 2

6.3 Self-employed 3

6.4 Student 4

6.5 Unemployed – Looking 5

6.6 Unemployed – Not Looking 6

6.7 Retired 7

- 6.8 Other (*please specify*) 8.....
7. Occupation:.....
8. Current Monthly Income – Before Deductions (*please circle appropriate response*):
- | | |
|------------------------------|----------|
| 8.1 No income | 1 |
| 8.2 Below R5 000-00 | 2 |
| 8.3 R5 001-00 to R10 000-00 | 3 |
| 8.4 R10 001-00 to R15 000-00 | 4 |
| 8.5 R15 001-00 to R20 000-00 | 5 |
| 8.6 R20 001-00 to R25 000-00 | 6 |
| 8.7 Above R25 001-00 | 7 |
9. Household Income Status (*please circle appropriate response*):
- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| 9.1 Single Earner Household | 1 |
| 9.2 Dual Earner Household | 2 |
| 9.3 Not Applicable | 3 |
10. Religious Affiliation (*please circle appropriate response*):
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 10.1 Atheist | 1 |
| 10.2 Agnostic | 2 |
| 10.3 Not Religious But Spiritual | 3 |
| 10.4 Christian | 4 |
| 10.5 Other (<i>please specify</i>) | 5 |
11. Current relationship status (*please circle appropriate response*):
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 11.1 Single | 1 |
| 11.2 Involved | 2 |
| 11.3 Married | 3 |
| 11.4 Divorced | 4 |
| 11.5 Widowed | 5 |
| 11.6 Other (<i>please specify</i>) | 6 |

12. Current relationship status with mother of your son (*please circle appropriate response*):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 12.1 Involved | 1 |
| 12.2 Married | 2 |
| 12.3 Uninvolved | 3 |
| 12.4 Divorced | 4 |
| 12.5 Widowed | 5 |
| 12.6 Other (<i>please specify</i>) | 6 |

13. Current residential status (*please circle appropriate responses*):

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 13.1 Stay with partner only | 1 |
| 13.2 Stay with partner and all of my children | 2 |
| 13.3 Stay with partner and some of my children | 3 |
| 13.4 Stay with all my children only | 4 |
| 13.5 Stay with some of my children only | 5 |
| 13.6 Stay on my own | 6 |
| 13.7 Other (<i>please specify</i>) | 7 |

14. Number of children (in total):.....

15. Number of children with the mother of your son:.....

16. Numerical position of your son among his siblings:.....

17. Sex ratio of all children:.....male/.....female.

18. Son's current age:.....

19. Son's residential status:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 19.1 Still stays at home (with me and his mother) | 1 |
| 19.2 Still stays at home (with his mother) | 2 |
| 19.3 Still stays at home (with me) | 3 |
| 19.4 Stays with family | 4 |
| 19.5 Stays with friends | 5 |

- 19.6 Stays with his partner 6
- 19.7 Stays on his own 7
- 19.8 Other (*please specify*) 8.....

20. Son's age when you suspected his sexual orientation:.....

21. Son's age when you explicitly learnt about your son's sexual orientation:.....

22. How did you explicitly learn about your son's sexual orientation? (*please circle appropriate response*):

- 22.1 Directly from your son 1
- 22.2 From your son's mother 2
- 22.3 From another family member 3
- 22.4 From someone outside the family 4
- 22.5 Indirectly, by accident 5
- 22.6 Other (*please specify*) 6.....

23. Average frequency of contact with your son (*please circle appropriate response*):

- 23.1 Daily 1
- 23.2 Every second day 2
- 23.3 Once a week 3
- 23.4 Once a month 4
- 23.5 Few times a year 5
- 23.6 No contact 6
- 23.7 Other (please specify) 7

The End – Thank You

APPENDIX 5

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study focusing on the life experiences of heterosexual fathers. This study is conducted by myself, Jacques Livingston (a counselling psychologist), with the aim of completing my PhD in Psychology through the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa (under the supervision of Prof. M. E. Fourie). Your participation is appreciated and is confidential.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you appear to belong to the target group that I am interested in getting to know. This study is designed to gather qualitative information on the life experiences of heterosexual fathers of gay sons.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of general and specific questions. These questions concern relevant demographics, life experiences, perceptions, opinions, values, and relationship dynamics. Some of the questions might make you feel uncomfortable as they ask about personal and sensitive issues pertaining to your life experiences. You are free to choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer in this study, you may withdraw at any time, without any consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any question you don't feel comfortable answering. There are no right or wrong answers, only your personal experience. Your participation in this study is voluntary; as such there will be no monetary compensation.

The interviews will be audio-recorded. No personal identifying information (such as your name) will be included in the interview. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed (and verified) by myself. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a numbering system (i.e. your name will not be identified anywhere) and the information (transcripts) will be stored securely in my office or on a computer with secure access and only I will have access to it. Any written notes that are taken during the interview will not contain your name or information that could be linked directly to you. The duration of the interview will be approximately one and a half hours. The transcripts (including quotes) will be used in the development of the research report. Once again, no personal identifying information will be used. If necessary I will use fictitious names or references for consistency.

I may need to contact you again for further clarifying questions. You may refuse this without any consequence.

Should the interview elicit emotions and/or insights that you find difficult or uncomfortable we can stop the interview at any point. Should you or I feel that we cannot continue I will provide you with a referral to a psychologist who will be able to assist you further. Your needs and well-being is a priority in this study. At the end of the interview I will provide you with the contact details of a psychologist should you experience difficult emotions or insights after the interview.

You are welcome to contact me should you have any questions or concerns at a later stage. Should you wish to see the results in the research report, you are welcome to request this. My contact details are

Jacques Livingston

Office: 012 430 3272

E-mail: livingstonj@out.org.za

Do you have any questions?

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The information above was explained to me by Jacques Livingston in English, and I understand this information clearly. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study (which will be audio-recorded) and I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to the study participant. He was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX 6

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Pseudonym	Kobus
Date and time of interview	23-03-2011 / 16h50
Location	Participant's home
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	53 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Centurion, Tshwane
Level of education	Diploma
Employment status	Employed full-time
Vocation	Information Technology
Income (before deductions)	Above R 25 000.00
Residential income status	Dual earner household
Religious affiliation	Spiritual
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Divorced
Residential status	Stays with second wife and 2 youngest sons
Total number of children	3
Number of children with son's mother	2
Position of son among siblings	1 st / Eldest
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	3 : 0
Son's age	24 years
Son's residential status	Stays with his partner
Age of son when suspected he is gay	18 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	18 years
How father found out	Directly from son
Frequency of contact with son	Once a week

Pseudonym	Gideon
Date and time of interview	25-05-2011 / 09h15
Location	My office
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	61 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Pretoria, Tshwane
Level of education	Undergraduate degree
Employment status	Self-employed
Vocation	Missionary
Income (before deductions)	Between R 10 001.00 and R 15 000.00
Residential income status	Dual earner household
Religious affiliation	Christian
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Married
Residential status	Stays with wife only
Total number of children	2
Number of children with son's mother	2
Position of son among siblings	1 st / Eldest
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	1 : 1
Son's age	36 years
Son's residential status	Stays on his own
Age of son when suspected he is gay	17 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	17 years
How father found out	Directly from son
Frequency of contact with son	Once a week

Pseudonym	Johan
Date and time of interview	25-07-2011 / 12h25
Location	Participant's office
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	55 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Newlands, Pretoria
Level of education	Undergraduate degree
Employment status	Employed full-time
Vocation	Architect
Income (before deductions)	Above R 25 000.00
Residential income status	Dual earner household
Religious affiliation	Christian
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Married
Residential status	Stays with wife and eldest daughter
Total number of children	3
Number of children with son's mother	3
Position of son among siblings	2 nd / Middle
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	1 : 2
Son's age	29 years
Son's residential status	Stays on his own
Age of son when suspected he is gay	17 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	22 years
How father found out	From wife / son's mother
Frequency of contact with son	Every second day

Pseudonym	Nico
Date and time of interview	30 September 2011 / 14h15
Location	Participant's home
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	56 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Centurion, Tshwane
Level of education	Undergraduate
Employment status	Self-employed
Vocation	Attorney
Income (before deductions)	Above R 25 000-00
Residential income status	Dual earner household
Religious affiliation	Christian
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Married
Residential status	Stays with wife only
Total number of children	3
Number of children with son's mother	3
Position of son among siblings	2
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	2 : 1
Son's age	25 years
Son's residential status	Stays on his own
Age of son when suspected he is gay	20 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	20 years
How father found out	From wife / son's mother
Frequency of contact with son	Every second day

Pseudonym	Pieter
Date and time of interview	16 December 2011 / 09h05
Location	Participant's office
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	54 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Melville, Johannesburg
Level of education	Undergraduate degree
Employment status	Employed full-time
Vocation	Journalist
Income (before deductions)	Above R 25 000-00
Residential income status	Dual earner household
Religious affiliation	Christian
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Divorced
Residential status	Stays with wife and both sons
Total number of children	2
Number of children with son's mother	2
Position of son among siblings	2
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	2 : 0
Son's age	19 years
Son's residential status	Stays with father and step-mother
Age of son when suspected he is gay	13 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	14 years
How father found out	Directly from son
Frequency of contact with son	Daily

Pseudonym	Thinus
Date and time of interview	23 December 2011/ 11h30
Location	My office
Data obtained from demographic questionnaire:	
Age	61 years
Race	White
Home language	Afrikaans
Residential area	Pretoria East, Tshwane
Level of education	Matric
Employment status	Retired
Vocational area	Banking
Income (before deductions)	R 10 001-00 to R 15 000-00
Residential income status	Single earner household
Religious affiliation	Christian
Relationship status	Married
Relationship status with mother of son	Married
Residential status	Stays with wife and son
Total number of children	2
Number of children with son's mother	2
Position of son among siblings	2
Sex ratio of children (male : female)	1 : 1
Son's age	29 years
Son's residential status	Stays with father and mother
Age of son when suspected he is gay	15 years
Age of son when learnt he is gay	17 years
How father found out	Indirectly, by accident
Frequency of contact with son	Daily

APPENDIX 7

CODING CERTIFICATE

Coding Certificate | 2013

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Jennifer Graham has co-coded the following qualitative data

for the study exploring:

**Heterosexual fathers' relationships with their
gay sons**

I declare that I have reached consensus with Jacques Livingston on the major themes of the data during a consensus discussion. I have also provided him with a report.

Sign:



Date: 25 - JUNE - 2013

APPENDIX 8

TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW 1: KOBUS (23/03/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to begin?

Kobus: Yes.

Interviewer: Broadly, who are you? How would you describe yourself?

Kobus: Ok, I am a Dutch male immigrant. Um, when I was nine years old my parents immigrated to South Africa. So I've basically grown up here. And I work in IT, all my life. Ja, and I've got three boys. And, I'm happily married. I am a very passionate chess player. I regard myself as a permanent student of life. I absolutely love learning. I read all the psychology books that I can get my hands on. But, more the lay man's psychology, you know, like the New Earth, by Eckart Tolle, and The Power of Now, and The Divine Matrix, those kinds of books. I just can't get enough of them. Ja, I have a passion for learning, as a permanent student of life.

Interviewer: Going back now, how would you describe your childhood?

Kobus: My childhood was, um, not that ideal, um, because my parents moved a hell of a lot. I've been in about six secondary schools, and I don't know how many primary schools, there were too many. My parents were very, very poor, although we never slept hungry, but we were very poor. Um, ja, and my dad would move for a R100 a month more, he would move again. So, um, ja, my childhood, um, I can't say it was unhappy, because we had love in our home, um, but it was not ideal, we had very little opportunities, and so forth. So, I've over-compensated in a lot of ways, um, with my kids. All my kids went through one primary school, and one secondary school (laughs). I had an obsession with this because I had to move so often. After a while you don't make friends anymore, and if you go to X school with Y's school clothes still on, because there is no money for new school clothes. Ja, so, but in general you know, um, I would say not an unhappy childhood, but not an aesthetically happy one. Um, and I went into life with a very low self esteem, um, and fortunately things worked out well for me, and I am extremely content and happy with life, and where I am currently, you know. So, I am very grateful for that.

Interviewer: Given that you moved around a lot, would you say that stability is very important for you?

Kobus: Yes, absolutely, ja! I am more conservatively minded where that is concerned. Not for me, for my kids, um, when they leave home, my wife and I are going to do lots of exciting stuff (laughs). For my kids' sake I really liked the stability. Ja.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your parents.

Kobus: My parents...me and my dad were like really, really good friends. We shared a lovely sense of humour. He had an absolute abundance in humour, although he was so poor. Me and my mom didn't have such a good relationship, um, until much later in life. She basically brought us up on her own, because my dad was working day and night, he was a confectioner. So, they worked sixteen hours a day standard, even weekends included. So we hardly knew our dad, until much later. My mom was an iron lady. She would often grab us by the scruff, and my dad saved our lives a couple of times (laughs). So I wasn't on a good foot with her for a long time, till I made peace with my upbringing, and then our relationship started becoming much better. They both passed away in 2009.

Interviewer: So, you had a more tense relationship with your mother until much later on. Can you tell me more about that?

Kobus: We had a very tense relationship during my teenage years until my early forties. My mom used to be extremely negative as well. So, I would never ask her how it was going, because then I would get the whole spiel (laughs). My dad was extremely positive, and I tended to be more like him. So, I would never ask her how it was going. But later on, it went much better, ja.

Interviewer: And you didn't really know your father until much later on? When did that change?

Kobus: That changed quite considerably when I got divorced from my first wife in 1992. And then, I had to lean on my parents for support, because I was a freelance lecturer, and I had to travel all over South Africa. And then, at the time, my sons were five and a half, and one and a half. They stayed with me. And, they needed someone to look after them. I was able to offer my parents very cheap accommodation, with two small flats close to one another, where me and the

boys stayed in the one flat and they stayed in the other flat. This was so that they could look after the kids when I was out of town. It is during this time that me and my dad bonded more.

Interviewer: Towards your later years, how would you describe your relationship with them?

Kobus: First of all I had to support them quite a lot financially, um, because I was the only child that stayed close to them. We did a lot of support work, we took them to the shops, and to the doctors, and helped them financially, and visited them socially, um, so that started to improve the relationship considerably. Um, fortunately my second wife, um, she really bonded a lot with both of them. So, we socialised a lot more with them. And then, my dad was also partially retired already, so he had a lot more time as well. I think subconsciously I always wanted my dad and mom to be proud of me. My dad taught chess and was an average club player. But I was one of the best players in the country, and he never complimented me on that. Only in his last years did he show he was proud of my achievements.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about getting custody of your children after divorcing your first wife?

Kobus: I thought that my ex-wife would get the kids automatically because in those days the law was leaning more heavily towards the mother's side. But my ex-wife had severe psychological problems. She had a terrible upbringing, and the psychologist told me that the only cure would be a complete re-parenting, and electrical shock treatment. But just before she started the psychotherapy, she had an aneurism in her brain. So, she had an op, and they put a steel clamp on the vein, so then she couldn't get the electrical shock treatment because of the steel clamp. So there was nothing they could for her, and she eventually ended up in voluntarily in an institution for ten years. Then she came out after that. So, that's why I got the kids. There was not even an argument.

Interviewer: Looking back again, who were your role models while growing up?

Kobus: Um (laughs), that's a good one. Um, well I would say in my chess career my role model was Bobby Fisher...On the chess board he showed a tremendous fighting spirit, very creative, and an immense belief in himself...that I would say really attracted me to him as a person...um, and then in my occupation my role model was, a guy I worked with, as a work contractor, in

Sasolburg...he really stood head and shoulders above my peers. Computer science in the old days was not really a science. He was the first guy that introduced IT to me as a science. Everything that we do there is based on logical reason, you know. So the design of a data base, design of the programs, everything has a good logical reason...and with a chess background, that appealed to me. He was also an IT guy that could work very well with all levels in the company, from the CEO to the bottom. And then, from a personal point of view, I would say my role models were mainly authors, like Scott Peck, Eckart Tolle, and those kinds of guys. I always had this, um, feeling that there is much more to life than we normally see. I always had the feeling that normal religion was a bit of a blind alley, so to speak, and I always felt more like a free spirit. And these authors are typically guys like that, much more free spirited than just having a blind faith. And, um, I learned a lot from their understanding, and their explaining of concepts in life, which I found extremely beneficial, and which helped me to get rid of shackles that I picked up from my younger years, much faster than I would have picked up if I had gone normally through life. By shackles I mean like having a mindset that it is normal to be poor, and not being good enough to make it financially and otherwise in life...also religious shackles, like being born a sinner, and therefore not good enough. So these authors really, um, inspired me.

Interviewer: Were there any other role models during your childhood?

Kobus: No not really.

Interviewer: Tell me briefly about your relationship with your siblings?

Kobus: I have one brother and two sisters. I am the oldest. Then I have a sister a year younger than me. She is in Durban. We have a very good relationship, I would say, although she is very conservative and religious, while I am the opposite. Otherwise, we are on a very good foot. Um, then there is my brother, who is four years younger than me. He stays quite close to me nowadays. Um, and we are absolutely best buds. We really, really get along well. And, then I have a baby sister, fourteen years younger than me, who stays in America. We never had a relationship because I had already left for the army and she wasn't in school yet. So, there was a big age gap. Then in 1997, we started working together in the same IT Company. Well, she, and her future husband, and myself started working together. And from then on we've just bonded

more and more. We have a really good relationship now. So whenever they come and visit they always stay with us. I am also the god father of their children.

Interviewer: Who would you say you are the closest to and why?

Kobus: I would say I was closest to my brother, although my sister in America would be a very close one. But, me and my brother can speak openly about anything, you know, I can speak to him about anything under the sun, without any reservations, from religion, to marriage, spirituality, sexuality, work and so on. I would say he is probably the closest. Ja.

Interviewer: Tell me about your male friendships while growing up.

Kobus: It was really difficult making friends because of all the moving, so I tended to have one friend. I almost never had more than one friend at a time. Um, but, when I was 15 years old, I made friends with two guys, one from my school and one from another school in Pretoria. We are still good friends till today...for almost 40 years now. We still see each other, and are still good friends. So, um, otherwise, friends wise, now I have quite a few friends, not many, but I would say recently good friends, at least four. Um, and my friendships with them are generally polite, task-oriented friendships. We are all very busy and only really see each other maybe twice a year or so.

Interviewer: Tell me more about those two earlier childhood friendships.

Kobus: I think the friendship was formed because of the common interest around chess, playing chess. The one guy stopped playing many years ago, um, and our friendship has actually sort of started dissolving, because he's actually a complete nerd (laughs). And, um, but he hasn't played chess in a long time. But his wife and my wife have become fantastic friends, so that's why the relationship is still going. We are still on a good foot, and I know if I have a problem I can phone him and vice versa. But we don't kuier (visit) often, not the two of us. The other friend, um, he, um, he is still playing chess. I am not playing competitively anymore, but I am still involved in coaching and playing on the internet. So we still have that common interest, so we see each other at least every quarter. Both of us have very busy lives, and he works extremely long hours. When we get a chance, we still get together for some chess, and some jokes, and stuff. So that was basically the bond. We played tournaments together. Me and the other friend were actually in the

same class, and every two years they selected 14 top players in the country, and the one year we were both selected, which is amazing. Same school, same grade, sitting there next to each other...so we have been chasing each other all these years. Um, ja, it's mainly the common interest that bonded us.

Interviewer: Tell me more about your experience while you were in the army?

Kobus: Ok, first of all, I still can't believe that, I volunteered for military service because I was a Dutch citizen. I left school early, and my friends were going to the army and I was thinking this would be a great adventure, hunting terrorists, so I volunteered for military service. Then I was very fit in those days, I loved any kinds of sports, so I related very well with the butch crowd. Um, but I had one or two friends, and we were good buddies, but I had a big conflict with one of the Majors there, because our chess club had a final in Gauteng, and I was playing number one for that club. When I asked for a pass for that, they said it was not an official sport. I told them they could confirm it with the department of sports and recreation. But they said because I challenged them I wasn't allowed to play chess again. I didn't accept this and often went AWOL to play at the chess tournaments. I don't regret my time in the military, but I wouldn't want to do it again. Sometimes I was really shocked when I saw what some of the guys did. Like they would drive and hit a black person walking along the side of the road. And of course in those days they were really hard on the gay guys, which I just couldn't handle. They would like, bully them, and make remarks, more like emotional bullying, but sometimes even physically.

Interviewer: So, did you know any gay guys in the army?

Kobus: Yes, but I was never friends with one of them. Quite often in those days they would end up with us and then they would disappear. I don't know if they were posted to a safer or better place. I don't know. But they weren't placed with us for long. And we never saw them again. I have read some of those books that my son lent to me. There is one book called Moffie, where the guy was in the army. A lot of that stuff I know happened, you know, it is not fiction, it is very much the truth.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the bullying of gay people in the army?

Kobus: I was quite upset about it. I think because, um, maybe, because I also went through those kinds of experiences, being somebody from a different school all the time, being a small guy, being a Dutch guy, you know, coming from the Netherlands, and with a name like mine, which is like a nickname for a baboon, I had my share, so I just couldn't handle any form of discrimination whatsoever.

Interviewer: So you could identify in some way with that experience?

Kobus: Yes, I was very sensitive and I could sense that this was not my crowd and I would move on.

Interviewer: Did you have any direct or indirect same-sex experiences while growing up?

Kobus: Yes, the only that stands out, um, was when I was about 14, um, there was a girl in my class that I liked. I was in the hostel at the time. She invited me to her parents' house, which was close by. She had a brother, who was two years younger than me, and we actually developed some feelings for each other. It never went any further. It was just like, um, to me it was strange. I liked the sister, but I liked the brother as well, more than just friends. But that was just a passing thing. Maybe like a month or so, and then never again.

Interviewer: Can you describe the feeling?

Kobus: It was like a warm fuzzy feeling, more than I just like you as a friend, like an attraction. I would say like a romantic attraction. And it was vice versa. Definitely I know it for sure. I could tell from the looks we gave each other, and the way we would touch each other.

Interviewer: So, it never went any further?

Kobus: We never went any further, perhaps also because his sister was always there (laughs).

Interviewer: Looking back, how do you understand that experience now?

Kobus: I think that males all have male and female hormones, and I think from what I have heard and read, it is pretty normal to go through a phase like that. So, I don't see it as anything more than a normal phase.

Interviewer: Any other experiences?

Kobus: Perhaps because I am a sensitive person by nature, and I don't discriminate, um, I have been approached by gay guys occasionally, and then I am quite shocked, because I know I am not gay. That I have found very curious, why, you know, but I think it is because I am friendly with everybody. One time I remember, when I was 19, I went to the Netherlands for the year, to play professional chess. I went on a train trip, and there was a guy much older than me sitting in the same compartment as me. He started to put his knee against mine. I felt very uncomfortable and I walked out. So, there have been incidents like that.

Interviewer: Has that affected how you see gay people in general?

Kobus: No, no, not at all. To me it is a sexual preference and there is nothing wrong with that.

Interviewer: Turning now to the mother of your son, tell me about your relationship with her.

Kobus: I came out of school with a rock bottom self image. I somehow got attracted to rich girls. I don't know why. I had about three girlfriends which were pretty serious. They all had pretty good upbringings. And I think the reason why it failed was because I couldn't handle them being spoilt. They were really spoilt brats. Um, and ja. So I think the three of them eventually dissolved. Um, then, I think, I was working at a company where I met a woman who was divorced. She made me feel like I was important and a protector. She had no kids. She was almost four years older than me. We started talking socially at the company, and then we went for coffee. And so it developed from there. We got married. She would be alright if there were no kids and no responsibility. She is fine with normal things. But as I moved up in my career, and the kids came, the pressures became too much for her. She couldn't handle the responsibility, and it started becoming a bigger and bigger hassle. After doing some self help courses like quest and inquest, it made me see more clearly that this was never going to work. For 11 years I just went on, and you don't see too many happy marriages around, so I just thought I had to continue regardless. But after doing those courses, I knew this was never going to work, and there must be more to life. I then said to her we needed to break, and she started to collapse, with constant suicide threats. And she tried to commit suicide. And then when we broke up, she was going to stay in the flat where I eventually stayed with the boys. She was going to stay there, and that night she tried to commit suicide. I phoned her family, and they picked her up, and looked after her. I then basically moved in the flat. While staying with her sister for three

months, and in that time she went for treatment. The psychologist suggested that she go for one week intensive therapy at an inpatient treatment facility. Me and my dad took her, and then when we dropped her there, my dad said she is not going to come out, I couldn't understand why he said that. I didn't realise it was a big problem I thought it was just her upbringing. Obviously being emotionally involved I didn't see how bad it was. That one week became 10 years. Now we are on a good foot. She and my wife were actually friends, and she actually worked for my wife. Ja, so that's more or less the scenario there.

Interviewer: How involved was she in raising your two sons?

Kobus: Obviously, my oldest son was five and a half, and my second son was one and a half. The normal stuff she could do and she did it fairly well. You know, like, cooking food, nappies, bathing, all those normal things. She did this fairly well, and without much problem. The older one she spoiled rotten, and she was clingy towards him. A reason might be that I was away a lot of the time for work. As such he would sleep with her, until he was about five, and I always had the feeling that she was spoiling him too much.

Interviewer: How were your roles in the household divided between the two of you?

Father: She was more involved in the child care and I was more responsible for providing for the family. She did work at times. She would work one or two days, and then come home and say that everyone was gossiping about her and that nobody likes her. She would have a low paying job and so we would rather sacrifice the job and she would stay at home and look after the kids. But, even so I sent the kids to crèche fairly early on because it was too heavy on her.

Interviewer: Given that you separated and she entered treatment, how did your role in the family change as a result?

Kobus: Of course, I had to do both roles now. And to me it wasn't that difficult because that is the way we were brought up. In the Netherlands we didn't have such separation in roles. There everybody is involved in the house. So it wasn't that difficult for me. But I had to make some big decisions, like stopping with chess, which I was doing extremely well at that time. But I did carry on with the coaching. I just couldn't see myself doing that and being a dad, and being a provider. So, um, I did it on my own for a while. And then my parents moved in next to me and

assisted me where possible. That lasted for about a year and a half, and then I married my second wife. Then things changed drastically.

Interviewer: How did it change drastically?

Kobus: Well, she is amazing. She, um, she immediately accepted the kids like her own. She comes from a fantastic family, with a good and solid upbringing. The boys absolutely adored her. She disciplined them when needed. She formally adopted them within a year or year and a half. We are both involved. She will make food and I will do the dishes. We do things together, as a team. But she does more of the nurturing, and I am more of the provider. She does work. It has worked out fantastically. She has basically brought up the boys as her own. She brought up those two boys for four years before we had our third son.

Interviewer: Although you work as a team it still somewhat traditional in the sense of who does what in the household?

Kobus: Yes in a way.

Interviewer: After assuming the role as their mother, did she still involve you in their childrearing?

Kobus: Yes, she loved it, she doesn't feel threatened at all. It has worked extremely well. Over the years you adapt, you see. I can make food but it isn't nearly as nice as hers. So that is why she is in that role. But I will help and assist where I can. We do what we can and we help each other.

Interviewer: Let's look at some of the roles you have performed in your life, like being a chess player, working in IT, and being a father. How would you define your role personally as a man?

Kobus: (laughs) Well, it's not a traditional role, that's for sure. Um, in our family my wife is a complete social animal. She loves people and they adore her. So, she tends to be more outgoing. I love being at home, and I am on my happiest at home. So, um, I would do lots of work here, while she is away. And then when she is back then we can enjoy ourselves, and be rustig, you know. So, um, I don't do the normal man thing, I don't do hunting, I am not into cars, I love

rugby, but watching games and stuff. But, I don't do the normal stuff that most men will do. I don't do the camping thing. Ja. So it's not a normal role in a large sense.

Interviewer: So would you define yourself as non-traditional?

Kobus: I would call myself a new age man. I still take charge of the finances. We talk about me as the minister of finance, and my wife as the minister of social affairs in the family (laughs). And, when there is a problem, she will always come to me. Um, and I see myself as a spiritual leader to the family. I am more the financial and spiritual one, and my wife is more the social and nurturing one. I would say it's been a little detrimental to my relationship with my boys, because before I can talk to them she has found out everything and she shares it with me. So it makes a few channels closed between us. But, I have a good relationship with all three my boys. But I would say she has a much stronger bond, socially.

Interviewer: Tell me about your role as a husband.

Kobus: I would say, um, as a husband I feel strongly responsible for the financial well-being of the family. I feel strongly responsible for the spiritual well-being of the family. Although I know I can't force it down their throats. Um, I don't see myself as the head of the household, but my wife sees me like that, especially when there is a problem situation. I don't mind it. I see myself as responsible for the safety and security of the family. Very much so. The rest of the family don't give a damn by the way (laughs). Me and my wife are equal and we work as a team. We communicate a hell of a lot. I don't think it is like a lot of relationships but we have found a happy medium that works for both of us.

Interviewer: Tell me about your role as a father.

Kobus: Now that I am older I have a completely different view from when I was younger. When I was younger I had a more the traditional view, where you had to teach the kids things by doing things. Which was for me difficult because I am not handy at all, with five thumbs on each hand (laughs). And, um, Renier, by the way, was more the handyman in the family, he is like the strong one in the family, physically strong. Um, I saw myself more as pushing the kids in certain directions, softly, and even sometimes a bit harder, you know, um, but I quickly found out it doesn't work. Nowadays, and I am very, very grateful for that, um, I see that my role as the

father, the most important, is my being, you know, what I am doing, and what I am being. Because I can see in the kids they have picked up some of those. Unfortunately, sometimes the not so good sides as well (laughs). But, um, I am very grateful that some of the good things, um, that I value, um, they have picked up as well. Renier, for instance, surprise the hell out of me because when he, um, when he was in the house he always had this, um, sense of entitlement, which is very common among kids today. I need everything, I must get everything, it belongs to me, you know, no gratefulness, no appreciation. Renier went through that phase very seriously when he was a teenager. He was really bad at one stage. We had like one major fight, and then it became slightly better, slowly, and then when he left the house, it improved like absolutely dramatically. He turned around 180 degrees towards the family. But then he started working, starting in like the most bottom job you can get, with a low salary. He then became very conscientious and started working really hard. He is doing extremely well for himself, um, in this one year he has been doing that. I am like that. I am also very conscientious, hard working, very reliable, you know, and, um, very alert, conscious, and I am very thankful that Renier is showing those traits. And that I never taught him formally, he just saw me operating, you know. Looking back, I think the most important thing you as a father can do is, um, is to just be, be as good as you can be. You don't have to do anything else. The kids pick it up, they pick those signals up.

Interviewer: With your second wife stepping into the care-giving role, how would you describe your care-giving involvement?

Kobus: My care-giving role is often (laughs) influenced by Anna. I would still be a bit 'harregat', but she knows how to tune my buttons, and I would usually give in and we would support the guys financially, or whatever the situation was. My role is to encourage them with things that they are doing, and making a point in complimenting them on things that I think are good, like complimenting my youngest son on his guitar playing. So, that's my care-giving role quite often. While Anna would be more like "How's this girlfriend doing?", "How's this boyfriend doing?", "Is there a problem", much more than I would.

Interviewer: We have spoken about a few typical roles that you play. Which would you say is the most important for you?

Kobus: Again, to me, I don't want to put it in a box. To me, the 'being', um, being myself, that is the most important role I can play. Nobody is perfect. But, your 'being' is the biggest lesson you can give your kids. I received an amazing compliment from my youngest son's friends, he is 16 years old, and for him dad and mom don't know anything, but they have said to him, you know, that your dad is really cool. That to me is a huge compliment. And I am not being cool like giving them booze and letting them do what they want. That, to me, touched my heart and made me very humble.

Interviewer: What would you say is the best part about being a man?

Kobus: I think society expects men to achieve things...and I am like that. And by achieving things, it might be small things, it might be big things, it might be sport, it might be work, it might be relationships, working towards things and achieving them. I like that as a man. Women tend to be more on the caring side, and achievement is not so big. I like to grow and achieve things. And then the provider thing is also important...even though my wife also pulls her weight, I am still the main provider...I must say that if I look at my journey so far, in terms of the providing issue, I have found it tough at times, tough on myself at times, and has provided the impetus to grow in many spheres. I have sacrificed things but I have gotten a lot in return.

Interviewer: What would you say is the best thing about being a father?

Kobus: I absolutely love being a father...and the main reason is humour...you get an amazing amount of humour from your kids. The second thing is, I don't know if it would be the same if I had daughters, but my sons keep me on my toes, they challenge me, they go for my values. I absolutely love that, the reason being again, an impetus for growth, because I learn from them. So that, and the playfulness...from a young age, they bring you back to mother earth, very quickly.

Interviewer: What would you say is the toughest part about being a man?

Kobus: The toughest part of being a man is, in my opinion, is also having to be tough at times, when you don't feel like it, either in a discipline position, or just because you can't afford to be weak. To be the provider all the time, is also tough because the pressure is non-stop...the more kids you have, the bigger they become, the more expensive they become, the more constant the

pressure there is. And it's a lot of responsibility. There is a phase where you tend to worry about your kids, will they be ok, but then you learn to make peace that you can't live their lives for them and they have to learn their own lessons. This is part of life and they have to go on their own journey. So, it takes a while to get to that point. My dad always used to say, when I left school early and my mom was in a state, and she wanted me to become a medical doctor, and so, my dad said "Don't worry about the boy, if there is something in him, it will come out". Those words often ring in my head. Let them make their own minds up, if there is something in them then it will come out.

Interviewer: What would you say is the toughest part about being a father?

Kobus: Sometimes, the toughest part is having to practice tough love. That to me is the hardest...knowing that you just have to, even when it is breaking your heart. That I find extremely hard. But it has to be done, so do it.

Interviewer: How did you learn to be a man and a father?

Kobus: Observing, you know...um, of course you learn a lot from your own dad, um, his weaknesses and strengths, and then you see your friends' dads, and you see movies. So through observing...I think subconsciously you just make some of those values your own, and some not. Don't ask me how it happens (laughs), it just happens. And of course, as I said, I read a lot of good literature, and through that I had certain realisations and I adapted, you know, as I went along.

Interviewer: Tell me about your feelings when your gay son was born, what was going through your mind?

Kobus: When my son was born I think I immediately felt an immense bond, you know, immediately. And you just know you are going to provide for this child. You just know that. There are no "ifs" or "buts" about it, you just know. And, ja, it's like an amazing emotional feeling. But I must say the more kids you have the less strong you experience that (laughs). The first one is amazingly strong. I would say I felt a mixture of emotions, you want to cry, you want to laugh, you want to jump, you want to hide, it's almost too much to handle, you know. Um, it's really a mixture of positive and negative feelings.

Interviewer: What did having a son mean to you?

Kobus: It's interesting, for some reason I always wanted sons. I never had a strong feeling to have daughters. I don't know why. Maybe because I know what males are like (laughs), and I would never have to worry about the daughters. I don't know why. I just love having boys. Boys are simple. They are straightforward and simple. You don't have to worry so much about them. They are easy to get along with, especially when they are young, because they have no hang-ups, stuff like clothing and eating, and those kinds of things. Boys are just very easy. So, that's one of the main reasons. If I had a daughter it would be fine, but I prefer boys.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with Riaan as a young child.

Kobus: As a young child we, um, I remember, those were the days when I had to work all over the country. So, the thing that I remember, that stands out, is that whenever I came back after a week away, I always had a gift for him, and it used to be little dinky toys. He absolutely loved his dinky toys. Even today, strangely enough. And then as standard practice I would always come home, and he would always ask me about the new wrestling trick I've got up my sleeve, and I would always think of something, and I would get him in some kind of grip, and I would call it some funny name, and then I would dare him to try and come out of it. That became great fun. And, then of course I always let him come out, but I made it difficult, but I always let him come out. So then he would always laugh and say I must think of a better one (laughs). So, that was like a ritual we had, all the time. At home, we loved to swim a lot. Especially Riaan, he was like a fish, from about the age of two. It was the first time we had a home with a swimming pool and you couldn't get him out the pool unless you were very strict with him, and I also loved to swim. So, um, we would do that together, quite often. And then when I would do the garden, and mow the lawn, or whatever, he would always be around me, you know. But Riaan was quite often on his own, he loved playing on his own. And he would take his dinky toys, he was so immersed in his games, that he would at times wet his pants. Not because there's a problem. He was just so immersed in his games. Concentrating so hard on his little paths, and the cars, and the homes, and the farm stalls, and so on. But in those years, my ex was very protective about him. Um, and I was very hesitant to discipline him, if he would do something wrong, often because of her, because of the commotion it would cause. And also because we were not very happy, I also started to withdraw, so that couldn't have been very good for Riaan's early years. Then when

were on our own, when he was five and a half, he became like a responsible person overnight, because his little brother was quite sickly, and he then helped to look after him, especially when I quickly went to the shop. He was very responsible. He was also very tough. He never ever, well not never ever, he hardly ever gave us any signals of being gay. Because he was as strong as an ox, because he took part in swimming...even today he is as strong as an ox. But once, when I was still married to my ex-wife, she found some of her stockings, and stuff, under his bed. And, agh, we took note of it, but we didn't make an issue of it. I said to her also not to worry about it. At the time I thought, you know, it might be a sign, but I also thought let's not make an issue of it. I didn't think it was a big thing because he was a lively boy, and strong, and not the typical gay image that I had in my mind in those days. And then, quite a few years later, the same happened when I was married to Anna for quite a few years, we also found some of her stuff missing, and she found it in his room as well. But we also didn't make an issue. I think she did ask him about it, or talk to him about it. But he was very quiet, very into himself, probably wrestling with his sexuality, and whatever, but he was very quiet, and hardly ever naughty. I think, in the early days, I did give them hidings when they were naughty, but I can count them on my one hand, it was very seldom. But Riaan was almost never naughty, he was rustig and quiet, and would do his own thing. He loved his music. At secondary school he was the sound and lights guy in the school. So he was there day and night. We often had to fetch him in the middle of the night. And then in matric he came out of the closet. But, otherwise it was pretty normal, you know, we used to wrestle, have fun, play ball at times, and swim, ja.

Interviewer: Tell me some more about your relationship with your gay son during his adolescence.

Kobus: It was a bit of a storm, mainly because after school, we thought he would study sound and lighting engineering, because it is a fairly popular direction nowadays, and you do a diploma at a techikon. But he worked like a slave the last three years in secondary school, and he decided no. So, I understood that and I took him to a place, and we looked at what they do, and the prices, and the duration, and the subjects, and then he said to me no. And then he couldn't decide what he wanted to do I think, and then he thought maybe he should do accounting. He had three distinctions in Matric but he never studied hard. So I was not keen to put a year's tuition down for him because of his track record. So I said to him, 'ok, why don't you try and do a few

accounting subjects through Unisa? We would see how it goes, and if it goes alright then you could look at going full time at a local university. Find yourself a job, and study a few accounting subjects'. So he did that. He did that for about three months, and he then decided this was not for him. Then he went abroad for a year. We encouraged him. We thought maybe this would be good for him to find his feet. I was then extremely impressed with how he organised and handled the whole thing, very mature, he was only 18 years old. And, um, he found a job in Wales, in a small little hotel, in the kitchen. And, um, so, he worked there for six months, and then he worked a couple of months in the Isle of Man, also in a hotel, also in the kitchen. And then he came back. Then he was hanging around for a while, working on our nerves, and we working on his nerves, and then he decided he wanted to study BCom, Human Resources. So we decided, ok, we decided we would give him a chance. So he went to university for the first year, and he didn't do too well. He passed a few subjects, but there were a few he didn't pass. The next year it was much worse. I started working myself up, because he was wasting all my money. And he didn't show any gratitude. Not at all. I asked him one day how much I owed the university, he said R20 000, and I said ok, come and sit here, lets pay it in one go. He quite often wouldn't even say thanks. Typical of kids that age I would say now. Um, but that didn't sit too well with me of course, having to work hard for that money. Then about three quarters through the second year, I could see no results, and he was failing subjects left, right and centre, and partying with his friends. So, one night, we had a major, major fight. He was coughing, you know he was smoking as well, but he had this bad cough. I said to him he should maybe go and see the doctor. Maybe it is not just the smoking, and maybe it is something else. So because he is so strong he doesn't look like he is really sick, you know. So he went to the doctor, and the doctor said look you have a serious cold actually. And he gave him medicines. And I gave him the money, and said to him "look Riaan we have a hospital plan, so all this money comes out of our pocket, please use it conscientiously like the doctor says". So, of course, you know, it lasts one day, and he went for another party, drinking again, and he didn't get healthy, and he went to the doctor again. And then I flipped, and I said to him "you are going to pay that money, I am not going to pay for the medicine". And then it exploded, and we had a huge argument. And then he said to me "it's my life and I am going to live my life the way I want". And I said "its fine as long as it's on your own account". But we were like screaming. And, um, then he flipped, and he took his stuff, slammed the door, broke my one gate (laughs) and almost wrote his car off, he

went over this big speed bump in front, and then he went to Charlie. He stayed there for six days, and he said that we chased him away. And I said “no I never chased you away, I said if you wanted to stay here these are rules”. We have very few rules, so if he didn’t want to fit in he was welcome to go. So it took him six days to cool down, and we smsed each other a couple of times, and then fortunately Charlie’s parents told him he has this golden opportunity, he is studying without any debt, he gets reasonably good pocket money, and that he shouldn’t throw it to the wolves. So, he came back. Then he heard a month later that he was the chairman of the University HR Board. I wasn’t going to pay for the next year because he had too many subjects in his first and second year that he failed. But then me and the wife spoke and we decided to give him one more chance. So he did that and failed again a couple of subjects (laughs), but he did extremely well with his HR chairmanship. So I don’t regret it. Then after we had that major fight, when he came back, our relationship improved considerably. Now it’s great, we have a great relationship.

Interviewer: How does your relationship with your gay son compare with your relationship with your other sons?

Kobus: In general it is the same. Um, the only thing that is different is that we talk more about woman, and joke about woman, much more so than with Riaan. With Riaan I can make jokes about his mom, and her funny side. But on the more sexual side, that’s the only difference. Otherwise, it is pretty much the same. I think it is a very normal father son relationship.

Interviewer: We have touched on two instances where Riaan had taken stuff from his mothers, but was there any other point that you suspected that he was gay?

Kobus: Well, just vaguely, you know, he was quite attractive. The girls fancied him quite a lot at school...because he was this strong, manly guy, but he had this soft side. He was also a student counsellor at school. And, um, a lot of girls went to him just to be with him. He did bring girlfriends home, from time to time, but he was never really that physical with them...no hugging, and hand holding...the normal stuff. So, and that went on until about Grade 11, I would say, that was the last time he brought a girl home. It was actually a hell of a surprise to us when he came out of the closet. Although, as I said, we see it as a sexual preference, and so we were not shocked. It was just a surprise. I am very glad to say that the boys, the brothers, accepted him

like that. And me and Anna had no problem with it. I had already made up my mind that if any of my boys came to me and said they were gay, then so what? I see some of the commotions with some people when their sons are gay then ask “why, what a sad waste”. I think I already made my mind up upfront and that is why it was more of a surprise than a shock.

Interviewer: Tell me about the time when you found out and how you reacted.

Kobus: If I remember correctly, um, it was about six years ago, so it was 2005, more or less, I can’t remember if it was an e-mail or a sms, I think it was a sms. He sent me and Anna the same message, and he said he didn’t know if we will be shocked, but that he was gay. I immediately sent him a message back, and said it was fine with me, to me it is a sexual preference, and that there was no problem whatsoever. And I think Anna also said it was not a problem. And the boys (laughs), when they found out, the one said “as long as you are happy than it is fine with me”, and the other one also said something like that. They were very non-judgemental, which I am very grateful for.

Interviewer: What is your gay son’s relationship like with his brothers?

Kobus: Riaan and my second oldest son were very close, they would play like for hours, doing normal boys’ stuff, playing with Lego and cars and stuff. Sure they had fights, but they were like big buds. And then when the youngest was born and he was old enough to play Riaan just pulled away. Then the two youngest became very close. Riaan started doing more of his own thing, you know, more the big brother stuff. But today all three have a very good relationship.

Interviewer: Who do you think coped better with your son coming out?

Kobus: I think Anna coped better. To me, I was a little bit uneasy with it. Should I talk about it more, should I not? Anna would always have lengthy discussions with the kids, one thing she does fantastically, which I am quite weak with, when I am preoccupied, I’ve got these goals and this to do list, and get stuck in it. But with Anna, when you go to her, and want to discuss something, even if it’s completely unimportant, she will make time for it. Typical of being a female, you know. She, um, all these kind of uncomfortable situations, like my parents’ death, she was much better than I was. But it wasn’t a problem, for me it was just a bit awkward. Now, I must all of a sudden think about the jokes I tell, you know, will it go down well or not. Anna

never has a problem because she just says what is on her mind. So she definitely copes much better.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your gay son as an adult.

Kobus: We are more friends now, you know, but it's great. There are no problems. He and Anna converse a lot more by e-mail. But, you know, when there is an issue, or something important, than he would mail me, you know. And we send jokes constantly, and sometimes we would chat as well.

Interviewer: If there is something serious or important does he feel comfortable talking to you directly or would he communicate this to or through Anna?

Kobus: (laughs) Look they have used that channel a lot before. Whenever they need something in of a financial nature, they know how to work dad, so they often used to go through Anna. But now we talk more directly with each other.

Interviewer: Given your personal history and background, do you think your gay son has turned out as you hoped when he was born?

Kobus: I have no idea. To be honest, when he was born there was no picture or goals in my head whatsoever. It was just the emotional experience when he was born. At the time we didn't know what sex he would be, so there were no expectations at the time. If there is one thing I could mention, out of interest, I was always a bit of a nerd at school, being this chess player, never good academically, I wasn't interested in school at all. As a matter of fact, if I didn't leave Matric, I would have failed. I know that for sure. I barely made it in grade 11. Um, but I was, like a total nerd, chess wise, and I found it sometimes hard, even today I find it hard in groups. I am not a group person per se. Although I do very good in lecturing, um, and small meetings. But big meetings, big groups and socials, are not my scene. Um, but I found it emotionally a bit difficult, and I think it is also because I had such a low self esteem early on, and I thought to myself, you know, that I hope my kids are going to be more normal than me. I knew I was pretty intelligent, I unfortunately found out my IQ when I was still in school, which was the worst thing possible. Um, so I was hoping my kids would be more normal, you know, intelligence wise, and stuff like that, and that they would be able to cope better in life. Because I found it quite difficult,

especially when I was younger. So, um, the older I get the happier I become. But school wasn't to me a joy at all. It was alright, but it is not something I want back. There were too many things that I was wrestling with, like being more socially acceptable. So I was hoping that they would be more normal. I regard myself as more of a nerd and I find it difficult coping in groups and stuff.

Interviewer: What would you say is your general feeling towards your gay son, positive and/or negative?

Kobus: Um, I would say that I am very, very proud of him, especially where you look at where he was a year ago and where he is now. There is nothing really that bothers me about him. He has his weak points, you know, but so do I. He has a bit of a short temper, um, but not severely, you know, especially with Charlie in his life. Charlie is very rustig, and he keeps Riaan calm, you know. But I don't think this is a problem, you know, I like him as he is, and I am very proud of him actually. I am also proud for the way he is handling his gayship, because although society has improved dramatically from when I was his age, there is still a lot of discrimination, you know. So, I am proud the way he is handling that, being a minority, being in a minority group. I am very proud of that, he is standing strong, he is not shy about it. At one stage, one thing I didn't like at one stage, he was almost advertising it too much, not that I am shy about it, but he would make an issue out of his gayship. And I often said to him "I have absolutely no problem with you being gay, but why do you want to go and absolutely market it out to the world, why don't you rather focus on building a life, you know, instead of making an issue out of the gayship, it is a waste of energy in my mind". But that has changed as well. He doesn't make an issue out of it anymore. So I am really proud that he is handling it extremely very well, being part of a minority group, which is still ostracised in today's society, although fortunately it is not as bad as it was years ago. If you asked me this a year ago I might have given a different answer. Then I was worried because in my eyes he was being a slapgat. He didn't want to study and he just wanted everything. But he has shown me he has some good stuff in him, you know, and I am very proud of him. Of the three boys I was the most worried about him, what's going to happen to him someday, but now I have a strong belief in him.

Interviewer: What do you know about homosexuality?

Kobus: What I know is basically what I have read and what I have heard from my son Riaan. I have read a few books passed on to us by Riaan and his boyfriend. One or two were story books, and one was that army book, Moffie, and that's about it. So, um, what I have sensed, and what I have picked up is that, um, I have always believed that the structures we have in society, are mostly outdated, that is mostly my opinion, and that is like structures we have in religion, and in marriage, uh, in general, um, most structures I feel are hopelessly outdated. Although I sit in those structures (laughs), and I have made some of them work for me. Um, and what I have picked up, from Riaan and Charlie, is that in the gay community, a lot of the structures we value in the heterosexual community, are of little value in the homosexual environment. And, that then makes me think "why do we have these structures in the heterosexual environment?" Then I realise that it is often been for protection, with the pregnancy thing for example, the providers and the care-takers, and those roles. It is much freer in the homosexual environment than in the heterosexual. There are all sorts of rules, and boundaries, and all sorts of nonsense that I think are irrelevant, in the heterosexual environment than in the homosexual environment. So, that's what I know from my reading so far.

Interviewer: Who does your view of homosexuality fit in with your tradition, culture, and values?

Kobus: In my personal point of view, to me if you are heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual, or live with two wives or two husbands, or, to me it is irrelevant. In my mind set, in my value system, to me it is irrelevant, it is about the being, the spiritual being, not about your human physical preferences. I didn't grow up in this culture of course, I grew up in a strictly heterosexual culture. Although I have a, um, my dad's brother, um, he has two daughters who are both lesbian. That was my first sort of experience, but I didn't know them well, because I mostly grew up here and they grew up in the Netherlands. So, I grew up in the normal structures, and I never had a problem with it, where that is concerned, and I don't know why.

Interviewer: How do you feel about gay people getting married and raising children?

Kobus: No problem whatsoever. My son and his boyfriend are talking about having a child together (laughs). But I am not so sure that it will be good for Riaan, but Charlie will be a doting, loving parent. Riaan has some of my traits, he likes his space, he likes his own time, um, and

he's got a short temper, you know, so, but if he wants to I will support him. I have no problem with it. It would be much better for the poor kids currently in foster homes.

Interviewer: How do you feel about two men being intimate in public?

Kobus: Because I am not used to seeing two men kissing in public, you know, to me it's a bit uncomfortable. But, that's it. It's just a little a bit of an uncomfortable feeling. If it was two heterosexual people, to me it's more of a turn on, but it's also that a little bit of discomfort, whatever the case might be. With the one it is because I am not used to it, and with the other one is just, um, it just feels to me that it is not the right place. Unless you in France it might be more acceptable (laughs). You know, we watch movies like Brokeback Mountain together, me and my wife watched it, and some of my friends were shocked and they walked out. We thought it was a fantastic movie. So, it doesn't bother us, it's just a bit of an uncomfortable feeling. I think more on my side than on my wife's side.

Interviewer: How do you understand that?

Kobus: I think, jisse, women are more loving by nature, um, in our society, than the normal heterosexual man, you know, um, I think so, you know. But also it's because I haven't seen it around me. If I grew up with that around me it would be easier to accept, you know, than I wouldn't feel at all uncomfortable, I guess.

Interviewer: After your son came out did you discuss it further with Anna or any other family members?

Kobus: I discuss it with Anna. I discussed it with Riaan as well. And of course you share it with your friends, you know, but it is a normal run of the mill thing. It's not a big issue. Some of our friends were shocked, but for us it was fine. In some sense, to me, I like it, because some people are like (makes surprised gesture), you know how society is. And, I almost like to, just rattle the cage of the conservatives a bit. You know, um, there is a different life than the normal boy structures that you in (laughs). So, um, in the beginning in some cases it was a bit slightly uncomfortable because you not used to it. For me it is not a big issue.

Interviewer: Have you ever discussed issues of sex, sexual health, safety, and relationships with your gay son?

Kobus: Not really discussed, but what I did do, I did give them like booklets. But with all my boys, you know. Especially when the AIDS marketing started to become big, and there was good literature, and I gave it to them. Because if you discuss it with them, they quite often would make quite snotty remarks, you know (laugh), so I rather give them something to read.

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected your relationship with him?

Kobus: In no way, not at all.

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected how you see yourself as a man, as a heterosexual, and as a father?

Kobus: Not really, but (laughs) it did bring up some interesting new thoughts. Although I am a total heterosexual, I think Riaan and Charlie are much better off than my other two sons, who will probably have wives one day. Um, I don't know why, but I think it's a bigger adaptation, um, you know if you look at the female world, and a man's world coming together, than two males, you know, even though there are female hormones, um, the difference might be more or less the same. I think it is easier, for a number of reasons, and one is that there is a lot less structures and hang-ups, and secondly because even though one part of the gay couple might be excessively female, and the other one might be more male, I think there is still common values in both being men. So, I think it might be even easier (laughs). That's my opinion, I don't know if it is true. I think it is tough in a heterosexual relationship, sorting out the differences, and, I think it is tougher than a heterosexual relationship. But then of course again I don't know so well (laughs).

Interviewer: What support if any did you get or needed when you were coming to terms with your sons homosexuality?

Kobus: I didn't really need support. It wasn't an issue. One point though, we were absolutely horrified when he came out the closet, and he started bring friends home. To hear the horror stories about their families, like some guys were kicked out of their house, you know, by their dads. The one guy's dad said he refused to pay his son's studies until he drops his homosexuality. Stories like that are absolutely horrific. So we made a point of letting Riaan's

friends feel very welcome. We tried to, because it's horrific. They can't socialise properly because of the parents. Agh it's ridiculous.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Kobus: I think mainly, that is something I read as well, um, the male ego is a bugger. And the male ego is much easily threatened than the female ego. That's just a general statement. I think a woman doesn't easily feel threatened when she is heterosexual and there is a lesbian girl close by. I think, men are probably subconsciously a bit scared of their own, maybe small bit of latent homosexuality. And then feel threatened. I think that would be the reason.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Kobus: Again, it's the ego, um, the ego is a huge obstacle for men, and it's much stronger in men in general. Agh, and it's such a waste. Men's ego is so strong, and make men believe they are like omnipotent, you know, they can do anything, and they can run everything, and they can master and control everything. While women don't have that hindrance, in general, not nearly as much as men.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Kobus: I have absolutely no idea. My vague opinion would be, um, it could be because the male and female hormones balance that is different. Um, it could be, maybe the upbringing could play a role. But I actually don't know, I am just guessing.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Kobus: Ok, just that I love you.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Kobus: I think, with hindsight, I have a story to tell, you know, so I would like to share with them, you know, accept them unconditionally. It is not your job to crucify anybody about anything, or judge anybody about anything, just accept them unconditionally. That's what, in any case, what most religions prophesise in any case.

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers then need to help deal with their son being gay?

Kobus: It might be a good idea to have like a support group, I don't know, where they can share. Although with many fathers their ego would stand in the way. Maybe a support line, um, like a helpline, where you can phone and the guys can't see you, um, like a helpline for heterosexual fathers of gay sons.

Interviewer: Any last comments?

Kobus: Not now but if I think of something I will get hold of you.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW 2: GIDEON (25/05/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to start?

Gideon: Yes I am.

Interviewer: Let's start broadly with the question "who are you?" How would you describe yourself?

Gideon: I am a missionary...I was a policeman, and um, my purpose is to, in one sentence, express God our Father to the world...to people who don't know Him...So that they can realise who they are, and where they are, and love him also.

Interviewer: We are going to back in time now, and I want you to describe your childhood for me?

Gideon: I grew up on a small holding...a plot...in Afrikaans...outside Kempton Park. It was good, and I enjoyed my childhood. I didn't enjoy school (laughs). I wanted to finish it as soon as possible. My father was a policeman... he had a drinking problem... he usually drank on weekends. We didn't have a very good relationship. He died when he was 54 years old in a motor accident. Then I thought he was very old, but now I realise that he was still young. Um, ja, I had good friends. We enjoyed life, basically. We did normal things boys did...like we played a lot of cricket and played rugby...those kinds of things.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your parents?

Gideon: My father was in the Second World War and that changed him a lot. My mother said when he came back he was a different person. He was a good man. People liked him a lot. He had many friends. His funeral was very big. But, um, like I said, I didn't like his drinking...it was bad...I remember once when he was drunk he wanted to throw me with a bread (laughs). Things like that. Ja, with my mother, it was more positive. Ag but I was not usually in the house. When I was 16, directly after school, I went to the Police College, and then I was out the house.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your mother?

Gideon: She was always working, and, um, she is a good woman. She is still alive. She stays far away and I visit her once a year. But when I was young, she was just there, you know, she cooked very good...and that's the main things...she cooked good food...she still cooks good food (laughs).

Interviewer: While growing up, who were your role models?

Gideon: I had two very good friends...their fathers were also friends... they were good old men...and we would listen to their stories...I identified more with them I would say than with my own father.

Interviewer: What is it about them that you identified with?

Gideon: I think their relationship with their children was very positive...very good...very friendly.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about those friendships and any other male friendships that you had while growing up?

Gideon: We were friends mostly during school. The one friend died directly after school in a motor accident, and the other one we lost contact...I visited him maybe four or five times, but eventually we lost contact. In school, we would sit together, and chat, and play games together during the breaks. And then during the holidays...on the plot...we tried to hunt water birds and those kinds of things.

Interviewer: So would you say this was a very positive experience for you?

Gideon: Yes it was.

Interviewer: Were you ever in the army?

Gideon: No I was in the police. In those days when you went into the police you didn't go to the army.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your experience with other males while training in the police force?

Gideon: Um, we were just together...suffering together...I enjoyed my training. I was fit those days. Ja, we were 36 men together, and we were a very good troop. There were never any problems in the bungalows. We just did this thing together. I enjoyed it. It was only six months. It was short and sweet. But it was very intense. We were so tired we just slept.

Interviewer: Did you have any direct or indirect same-sex experiences while growing up?

Gideon: Um, ja, once while I was still young...12 or 13...I had a nephew and he wanted to have sex with me... ja, and I just refused. I experienced that as totally negative. I think he was gay. I then lost complete contact with him.

Interviewer: You described the experience as being negative; can you recall how you felt at the time?

Gideon: Um, I am very bad with describing my emotions (laughs). It is a problem. My wife says I must work on that. All I know is it was negative. I don't know if I was angry, or disgusted. I just know it wasn't good.

Interviewer: Did you have any other experiences?

Gideon: I knew about the subject...being gay... and for me it was just negative. I met the Lord when I was 21. I was always in the Church, and then I met him personally. He changed my whole life. I resigned from the police. Um, I can just mention...I was in the police college in 1967. I then worked in a police station for four years. And then, they sent out a circular asking people with Matric, with maths, to write an aptitude test to become a computer programmer. I did it and I passed the course, and I was then transferred to the head office in Pretoria, where I became a computer programmer. It was wonderful and I enjoyed it up until 1972. In 1973/4 I was born again... or converted... and then the Lord called us to travel through Southern Africa. Back then, I was totally, totally outspoken about gays. According to me it was a sin and according to me they would go to hell. It was against the law of God. That was my message. And when Gert told me that day when he was 17...we were standing in the kitchen... and he said father, dad, I cannot love girls. He was in a relationship with a girl, but he said it didn't work out. And then I told him 'ok I know what the church says but now I need to ask Jesus what he says'...I then went to a deserted place...just me in a small house...and for three days I just

prayed and asked God what is going on...And I just heard this word the whole time...Eunuch...and I read in the Bible, in Mathew 19:12, where the disciples ask Jesus, 'if it is so difficult to be married, why must we marry?'...something like that...and Jesus then used the word eunuch five times...He said, 'a eunuch is born as a eunuch, men make him a eunuch, and he chooses to be a eunuch, and they must not marry'...now I am using my own words here. And then he said, for those he has given, they will understand it. And in Josiah 58, it says a eunuch must not be sad because they don't have children because God loves them. Then I said, 'ok...if God made a eunuch then how can I fight with God?' Um, I then realised this is something different and there is a higher power here. And I know Gert and I know he is a very special, talented young man...very gifted...and since then I have met many other gay people...and they are different. I think there are not only two sexes...male and female...but eunuch is for me a third kind of sex...a eunuch is a gay person. When I speak to a dominee or theologian, looking at a dictionary, it says a eunuch is a castrated male. In the old days kings would use eunuchs in their harems, and they castrated them to make sure while he is working with their wives he would not sleep with them...well he could sleep with them...but to make sure there are no children. And since then my attitude changed...and gay people called my wife the mother Theresa of gay people...because of her book a lot of gay people did not commit suicide. I also think because the church rejects them, they then reject the church and God. And many of them think that if they are going to hell, they can live a godless life...and that is why some become very promiscuous. I once preached at a gay church in Johannesburg and it was mostly men, and they were salt of the earth type of men...business men...not strange men...just people...some of whom were in long relationships with men. I know some gay men...eunuchs...who are very good friends with straight women.

Interviewer: Did your three day retreat give you the answers you were looking for?

Gideon: It did answer my question. I accepted it and I realised God made them like that. But I still don't like two men kissing each other in front of me. They should still do that in privacy.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your wife?

Gideon: We were married 41 years ago. She is an extrovert, a strong woman. She loves her children very much. She copes with me (laughs). She can also be very difficult and

sensitive...she had a sleeping problem and used sleeping pills, but she realised it was becoming a problem and she went for hypnotherapy. She was given tools to handle it and now doesn't drink sleeping pills anymore. She is a remarkable woman. She is a writer. She likes her privacy. We are totally different. She is an organiser, and she doesn't like chaos. I can live in chaos (laughs). She is a night owl, and I am an early bird. We are totally different...opposites attracts (laughs). She is very expressive of her emotions but I struggle with that. She is very private. She is straight forward, you know what you have with her. My life is about coming and going...always on the road...but she is a planner...must I prepare lunch, when are you leaving, are you leaving in the morning, are you leaving after lunch, when will you be back?

Interviewer: How do you understand your role as a man?

Gideon: I like to fixing things...if something is broken I will repair it. I think my purpose is that of breadwinner, although I don't get a fixed salary...I need to trust the Lord.

Interviewer: How do you understand your role as a husband?

Father: We are friends, we love one another...we like to do some things together... like going on holiday together.

Interviewer: What do you assume responsibility for as a husband?

Gideon: It is important for me that my wife is secure. When I travel there should be enough chopped fire wood for example. Um, things must be...she must not suffer. She must be secure.

Interviewer: How would you describe your role as a father?

Gideon: Um, I am now a grandfather. My daughter has a 16 year old child. For me, my children and the Bushmen children are basically the same. My love for them is the same. I shocked my wife one day...she has a very special relationship with my grandson...and I told her I love him, but my love for the Bushmen children is the same. It is not different or bigger. My son Gert, he doesn't get a salary...he works as a caretaker. He stays for free, which is a lot if you convert it into money. I still provide for him now and then if there is money. When my daughter and her husband struggled I helped them financially. Ja, I believe giving is receiving.

Interviewer: Listening to your role as a man, husband and father it sounds like the role of provider is important to you?

Gideon: Yes, it is...it is also important to my wife.

Interviewer: Is there anything in addition to providing that you would assume responsibility for?

Gideon: Not really. I learnt to leave them. If you tell them they are doing wrong then they will go for it just to prove that they are right. So I have learnt to accept that whatever they do is alright.

Interviewer: Of these roles, being a man, a husband, and father, which would you say is the most important for you?

Gideon: I think being a husband is most important...because for me, um, my relationship with my wife must be good. If things are not right...in Peter it is written very clearly that if your relationship with your wife is not right then God will not hear your prayers...something like that...so it is very important to me.

Interviewer: What would you say is the best part about being a man, a husband, and a father?

Gideon: Like I said in the beginning, my purpose is to express our Father...and I think my children can see God in their earthly father... it's important. And I think they see Him (laughs).

Interviewer: What would you say is the toughest part about being a man, a husband and a father?

Gideon: I can't think what would be the toughest.

Interviewer: How did you learn to be the man and father you are today?

Gideon: I don't know. Um, like I said my two friends' fathers were role models. And I read a lot. And then also the Holy Spirit.

Interviewer: Tell me about your feelings when your gay son was born, what was going through your mind?

Gideon: Very positive. I was still in the police in Pretoria. I had a good job. He was two when I met the Lord and started to move around. I bought a caravan when my wife was still pregnant. When he was two years old we started to live in the caravan for five years. So we stayed together in a small space for 24 hours a day. We enjoyed it. I was definitely not an absent father (laughs). And he met the Lord when he was three years old. My wife was his teacher in grade one in the caravan. Then we settled and he went to a normal school.

Interviewer: So, what can you recall thinking and feeling when you learnt you had a son?

Gideon: It was good. It was positive. We were in Pretoria, when he was born. We would walk far in those days. And I would carry him in a carry bag. We would walk to Brooklyn for example. I was very fit in those days (laughs). He was just a part of us.

Interviewer: What did having a son mean to you?

Gideon: Um, ag, it didn't make a difference if it was a son or a daughter. It was good.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with Gert as a young child.

Gideon: We were close. Um, I remember when he was nearly three...he was still wearing nappies... and we were travelling to visit my mother... and as we travelled I showed him a mountain and I told him if he left his 'doeke'...his nappies...he would be a man and we would climb that mountain together (laughs). And he left his nappies and we climbed the mountain...you know, a hill...We did things together. We canoed. It was normal. I never expected that he would be gay. He was an artist and he could draw very well. He was a good drama player. He was the Head boy in school. He didn't like rugby. But that was ok.

Interviewer: Were you involved in taking care of him?

Gideon: Yes, we were on a mission and living in tents sometimes...so when his nappy was dirty I would clean it. I didn't have a problem. Even now at home I do the dishes. My wife cooks and I do the cleaning up.

Interviewer: How was your relationship with your son when he was a teenager?

Gideon: We still did things together. We are in a unique position because our house is on the church ground. And they built the church 15 metres from the house. And I would tell him on Sunday I was going to preach about a parable and then he would train the children to play in a small drama. So we worked together. He made a video...he used the children to make a video...And I still use the video. So basically we worked together. We holidayed together...visiting game parks. Then after school...we went to Cape Town...um, and then he stayed behind. That was very difficult for me...to leave him behind in Cape Town. And that is where he finally realised he was gay...and he had his first boyfriend, or whatever, relationship...and then after a few months he came home and he told me.

Interviewer: How does your relationship with your son differ from your wife's relationship with your son?

Gideon: She is far more, um, outgoing...she would hug him...I would also hug him...but she is far more loving and caring and those kinds of things. Um, I am a bit more distant I would say.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your daughter, does it differ in any way from your relationship with your son?

Gideon: Um, they are different people, with different circumstances. It differs because she is a girl. When they struggled financially I helped them. It is basically the same...But I would say more positive. I accept the gay thing...but I don't understand it...It doesn't make sense to me...I accept it but I don't understand it.

Interviewer: Tell me about the time you found out your son is gay.

Gideon: When he told me I didn't quarrel with him. He was so serious, you know, and it was just a fact. I told him OK...I know what the church says but I am going to ask Jesus what he says...Just before that he brought a girl...with us to Pretoria...and we thought she was his girlfriend. It was kind of a shock for me. I didn't understand it but I accepted it. Like I said it is important for me what the Bible says about it, not the church, there is a difference...the church is man-made...and I'm in the church, but in time I realised there is a big problem...Apartheid was a problem for the NG Kerk, but this gay issue is a real problem for the whole church.

Interviewer: Tell me a bit more about your initial reactions when you found out.

Gideon: I was in shock. At the time I was sending them to hell. I was totally negative. When I found out I went to that lonely place...and for three days I prayed and searched the Bible...and then I had the revelation...and I can't understand why my colleagues don't understand it...but for more me it is so plain...a eunuch is a gay person. And now I accept it.

Interviewer: Do you think your wife knew your son was gay before you did?

Gideon: Ag, I think so. I am not sure. I think she maybe knew it before me...but we didn't discuss it or anything.

Interviewer: Who do you think coped better when your son came out, you or your wife?

Gideon: My wife definitely coped better...she is remarkable...very loving. For me it was really difficult.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your son as an adult.

Gideon: Ag, we are friends...we are colleagues...he is a spiritual healer...living on another planet (laughs). I don't understand everything that he is busy with. But we are now colleagues. That is a big difference. He is my son, but I can learn from him. We learn from each other...we are both teachers and students...always.

Interviewer: Do you think your relationship with your son is what you expected it would be?

Gideon: In terms of my expectations, you know, you don't think so far ahead. But, for me it is alright...I don't want to change it. He is who he is (laughs). I can't do anything about that (laughs).

Interviewer: What would you say is your general feeling towards your gay son, positive and/or negative?

Gideon: Um, like I said I don't understand it...but I accept it. You know, my emotional IQ is very low (laughs). Um, sometimes I feel sad that my name stops here... there will be no child...you know, he has a good friend and she asked him to have a child with her...and I thought why don't you do it...I thought it was a very good idea (laughs)...even though they would not be married. And he decided not to...he didn't want to be in that kind of relationship

with this child...I can understand it...but I thought it was a very good idea...to have another grandson, or grandchild...I miss that...and he is struggling because of who he is...he is an artist...he doesn't like stereotyped work...to work from eight to five...he did it in the past...but he didn't like it...a few years ago he was a lecturer and everyone liked him a lot...but he was permanently in conflict with the authorities because they were very rigid...and he didn't like it and he left.

Interviewer: Any other feelings that you can tell me about in relation to your son?

Gideon: After an article was written about it in a magazine, it was not only him who came out the closet, but we also came out with a gay son. I was positive but I felt the stigma that he permanently experienced. In a way it helped and I could understand a bit of what he was going through...Some people say it is a choice, but I don't think someone will choose this...Definitely not.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Gideon: There are interesting theories about women using the pill...since women started using the pill...the percentage of gay people has increased...So they were born that way...I think there is some weight to that theory. In the second option, people made them that way because of circumstances...In the Christian world...I attended a conference recently and one of the preachers testified that after praying for gay people they changed their lifestyle. I think in the second group they can change. But in the first group they feel guilty about it because it is against the Bible, according to most Christians. Ja, this is a problem.

Interviewer: What do you associate with being gay?

Gideon: For me the word gay is now associated with the word eunuch. I understand it as eunuch. Gay people are same-sex people living together. In the past it was totally negative. It was wrong. Now it is just people. I understand it as the third sex... a lifestyle. I don't think gay is a good word. Well it is better than homosexual. I don't have a better word but it isn't a good word because of the negative connection...like moffie...and those kinds of words...they are negative...there is a stigma connected to the word...like being promiscuous...now I understand it different but in the past I thought gay people have sex with different men every day.

Interviewer: How do you think same-sex sexuality fits in with your values, tradition, culture and religion?

Gideon: No, it doesn't fit in officially...I accept it, but it is against my values, and my religion.

Interviewer: Given that same-sex sexuality doesn't fit in with your values, traditions etc., how do you reconcile the two?

Gideon: My wife wrote a book. People know about my stand. We decided we would not fight the war anymore...it is as it is...people know what we are thinking...what's our standpoint...I won't write about it in my newsletters anymore...My wife has also said she is going on with life...she is writing a second book. There is no solution here...the solution is too big for us...people are trying...But I am not positive towards officially marrying somebody...I will not marry somebody...they can live together. I can understand why some people would want to get legally married because of medical aid, and those kinds of things, but that is just on paper.

Interviewer: After your son came out did you discuss it further with your wife or any other family members?

Gideon: Ja, I spoke to my wife, and other people. I can't remember a lot. My wife wrote that book a year after he came out and we discussed it a lot. I gave her my input and understanding, and she worked it in. The book was very good for us, to try and make sense of this.

Interviewer: How did you feel when people found out that your son is gay?

Gideon: Ag, it wasn't a problem. People like Gert a lot. For example, I can remember in Gansie, it is a tough world...and he came once and he trained the High School children in an operetta...in one week...he taught the young farmer 'boytejies' to dance. And everybody was very positive about his abilities to teach and to train. Everybody knew that he was gay. I can remember one of our friends...a farmer...his daughter brought him the magazine with the article...and she told him to look at what I had said...and since then they have been negative towards me...they will not give donations to the mission for example...I am ok with this...it is as it is...God provides, not people. But he uses people. Ja, there is definitely a stigma, and I feel it too.

Interviewer: Have you ever discussed issues of sex, sexual health, safety, and relationships with your gay son?

Gideon: Ag, I can remember once, after they completed High School I told both of them...something that translates into...keep your things out of holes and your holes away from things (laughs)...something like that...that was my training at the time (laughs). Ag, but they know, they are very wise. I am sure my wife spoke more to them about it.

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected your relationship with your wife?

Gideon: Ag, not really...I think the fact that we wrote that book together was good...we did it together.

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected your relationship with your son?

Gideon: Ag, I would say...like I said I accept his sexuality...and we are now colleagues...Not negative...he is who he is...I don't want to change it.

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected how you see yourself as a man, as a heterosexual, and as a father?

Gideon: Um, I don't think it changed anything...I think it challenged my previous viewpoint...in that way I changed...my message changed...That is all it changed I think.

Interviewer: What support if any did you get or needed when you were coming to terms with your sons homosexuality?

Gideon: I just wanted to know what God says about it...and when I got my guidance...it was enough...I never went for therapy...it wasn't necessary...and then writing the book with my wife was healing for us.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Gideon: I think the stereotypical thinking is that gay men are soft and that family life will stop...for example a farmer whose son is gay he will not become a farmer....so it stops, and goes in a different way. Maybe he had some expectations for this boy and this boy will no longer

fulfill those expectations. Um, I think the stigma attached to having a gay son is negative...and that's why it is hard. People don't understand it.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Gideon: It is difficult for men to accept that they need help. Men want to help themselves.

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers then need to help deal with their son being gay?

Gideon: First thing...I think it is very important...that the church changes its message. The NG church is busy with that...we say we accept the gay person but not his lifestyle. You can't separate the two...you must accept the whole person. If the church continues to reject them, they will reject the church and God. So, fathers need this guidance. This must come from the church. I would also say that they should accept the laws that changed. But for me, the most important is to know that God doesn't reject it.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Gideon: I know how you feel. But there is light. It is difficult, it is not easy. But there is hope.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Gideon: Um, I love you...this is important.

Interviewer: Any last comments before we end?

Gideon: Ag, not really.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW 3: JOHAN (25/07/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to start?

Johan: Yes I am.

Interviewer: Let's start broadly with the question "who are you?" How would you describe yourself?

Johan: Well, I am a white male, of the age of 55, with a full time occupation...I am married too and I have three children.

Interviewer: Going to back now, how would you describe your childhood?

Johan: Happy...I grew up basically as a pseudo single child because I am the fifth of five children, and I followed 10 ½ years, almost 11 years, after the fourth child...so most of my siblings were out of home when I grew up.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your parents?

Johan: My mother was a very loving person, um, I think we had an extremely normal relationship... like any son could have with their mother. She was a non-working mother...she was a homemaker...or housewife in my days...and she was always at home and she cared very well for me. With my father, again pretty normal as a child could have with his father...going fishing and doing that sort of thing. Um, I was interested in the work that he did and I would accompany him to the office or jobs where he worked. He was a building contractor...and I would go with him to the sites when I was still much younger and later on I took an interest in what he did, hence I became an architect myself. It is probably one of the factors, of a couple, that moved me into my occupation. But I had an appreciation for what my father did. He was the father figure in the house. So, it was a very normal situation.

Interviewer: Were your parents traditional in the sense?

Johan: Yes they were. He was a bit of a dominant figure head in the household and my mother was the care-taker.

Interviewer: What was your relationship like with your older siblings?

Johan: I spent a lot of time with my oldest sister because she had children which were virtually my age. There was very little difference in ages between us. So, my cousin was more or less my friend as well. And, my brother-in-law took us along to do things, you know, like we went to sports, mainly soccer games, but we also did other things together. And I spent a lot of time there. I didn't spend a lot of time with my second sister or my oldest brother. But I did spend a lot of time with my brother just older than me later on...I have a very good relationship with him...we played squash together...because he is a quantity surveyor he shares the same profession more or less as I, so we can talk about those things...and I still spend a lot of time with him.

Interviewer: Tell me about your male friendships while growing up?

Johan: Well at school, I had the normal amount of friends...and we played a lot of snooker...went to shows...like the Pretoria show...went to contests like battle of the bands in those days...or ice-skating...movies, um, and occasionally a house party. We did a bit of dancing, that sort of thing. So those were my friends while at school. And then in varsity, I stayed in a hostel, and, um, there was always a group of guys around, and some were better friends, some were not so good, so I spent time with some of them...either at drinking parties or dance parties or whatever. And then I never really spent time with the other guys because they were not my scene. So it was pretty normal. To some extent I am not one that actually makes very big friends, so it was always a bit of superficial friendships. But, ja, I always had guys I could relate to.

Interviewer: Superficial in what sense?

Johan: It is not like we become blood brothers, you know, that sort of thing. We were friendly...there are some of the guys that I made friends with while at varsity that I still see from time to time. Maybe we have a breakfast or I visit them at home...but not many. I can't say that I really have any blood brother type of friendships with anybody really. To me my family is basically my best friends. I don't really have best friends. My family is that.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experience in the army?

Johan: Well, I went to the army after I completed my studies...and, um, and during my time at the varsity it changed from the shorter period to a two year stint that I had to do. Um, it started with the normal basics, and then a junior leader's course, and then a candidate officer's course, and then eventually after one year I became an officer. Typically, in the army set up you are thrown in with a bunch of other guys, um, some actually came from the same university, same qualification as I had. Others were from other universities. My group was mainly comprised of graduates because it was an officer's school that I attend in Kroonstad. It was a typical army set up...they throw you into army barracks. During basics we stayed two in a room. During the JL's and CO's courses we stayed in bigger barracks where there were 36 guys in one room...basically...sub-divided a bit by cupboards and beds and so on. Ja, that was basically the set up in the army. In the army obviously everything is communal...a communal dinning hall...communal ablutions...showers...just a long row of showers. During my JL course we were on an experimental army base on a farm. The showers used to be in the old cow shed. With a big pipe running across the roof, and everybody stood there, and the corporal would turn on the tap, and there were 20 outlets and you had a minute to get wet, a minute to soap, and another minute to rinse. And even the toilets were not divided...I mean it was like a hole in the ground...with the toilets next to one another in a tent. But that was for three months during the JL's course. We then got back for the CO's course...it was in an old convent...at least the toilets there were private and the showers were sub-divided. There was the odd bathroom with a bath in as well that was private.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your interaction or relationship with your peers while in the army?

Johan: Pretty much like it was at university. Some of my friends from university were in the same camp as me. I am still friends with one or two of them. But it was a normal male type of set up. In those days I think the issue of gayness wasn't really spoken about. We didn't even realise that it is out there, you know. It was a normal man thing. The army is a man thing. We had to do certain duties like washing up after supper or breakfast or lunch. And we had to sweep the floors, polish the floors, make your bed, and keep everything clean. We had to do these typical things in the army.

Interviewer: What was your general view of being in the army?

Johan: Um, I think the army had a number of issues that I didn't really agree with, which I had to accept in order to get through it. It wouldn't help to revolt against it. You would just get yourself into trouble. Afterwards one then starts to take stock of it all. Ja, the army did have a positive spin and gave me another angle on some of the viewpoints I had before I went to the army. And it taught me certain lessons and crafts as well...like washing up and making my bed and that sort of stuff...wasn't really things I did before I went to the army. So as far as that is concerned that is what I learned. What I did learn is the type of person I don't want to know or be associated with. Because we were always subjected to the whims of the officers and non-commissioned officers, and some were gentlemen and some were real bastards. I came to know a little bit of psychology as far as that is concerned...to realise that you get bad people in life that misuse their power because of their rank...and others who are attuned to actually lead by example...with integrity...and that sort of stuff. So I learnt that certain people have integrity and others didn't.

Interviewer: Can you tell me of any direct or indirect experiences with same-sex people while growing up?

Johan: Look, as I said, in the past when I grew up...um, it was a thing I think that was mostly hidden. It hardly ever came out. But obviously every now and again there was a certain person who we would guess or surmise that he is not like us. Occasionally it came out but it was very seldom. It wasn't something that is as open as it is nowadays. Same-sex partners hardly ever showed up or showed their intentions at parties and that sort of thing. It was always hidden thing. We were very aware that it existed and what it entailed but it was hardly ever a topic of discussion.

Interviewer: And personally, did you ever have contact with a gay person?

Johan: I once had an experience...I was about 24..I was actually buying clothes and the salesman tried to come onto me and I had to actually draw the line...I had to say this is not on...if you don't stop this now I will walk out and take my business somewhere else. Um, at the time I said to him I don't understand why you are that way inclined...and I don't know whether I can help you otherwise...but be that as it may I am here for business, and to buy clothes... so I set the parameters very clearly...It was only that one experience.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your wife?

Johan: Well, we have been married since 79...which brings us into our 32nd year of being married. Very normal husband and wife set up...Um, we produced three children fairly soon in our marriage. We got married fairly young...I was 23 going on 24 and she was 24 going on 25 at that stage. Our first daughter was born very quickly already, and our son two years later, and then we had a spell of eight years before our last one. But it was always a good relationship...with normal fighting...which you can imagine happens. It was more a happy then a fighting relationship. The sex is good and the companionship is good. We understand each other and we think a lot the same...financially we think the same and with bringing up our children we thought the same.

Interviewer: How do you understand your role as a man, husband and father?

Johan: Well, um, the relationship I have with my wife is one where we are both parents to the children...and I mean we both have a duty towards them...um, but I can't teach them cooking and she can't teach them shooting and hunting and that sort of thing. So in certain issues I would take the lead and I would do things around the house which she can't do...and later on which our daughters couldn't do...and I would put a plug on, or I would build a shelf, or make something, or manufacture something. I think for the children it was always clear who was the mother and who was the father. I did things that men normally would do...like I went hunting or fishing...and I manufactured things in my garage...like I would sand down a table and re-varnish it...that sort of thing. I was never really the kind of guy that was in the kitchen baking something or making food, no, no, that wasn't me. I did things that men normally do and I was regarded like that in the family.

Interviewer: So, do you see your role as a man, husband and father as being fairly traditional?

Father: Ja, it is traditional in some ways but not in others...because me and my wife shared a partnership as far that is concerned. Initially when we both earned small amounts of money we budgeted for things using an envelope system. So we put money aside for milk and bread and that sort of thing...and we used it that way. Later on both of us started to earn more. But the earnings part was always a partnership. Now I have my own bank account and she has her own bank account and I have my business things and she has her business relationships. Um, ja, and

she would be the one that bought them clothes...you know...and initially she made the food in the evenings but eventually as we grew older and had more income we had a maid doing that. She actually taught the maid to do the cooking. And she would then oversee it.

Interviewer: So, it sounds that in terms of economic provision there is an equal partnership but in other areas it is perhaps a bit more traditional?

Johan: Yes. Well, I didn't do it consciously...I am just the person that I am. I don't like cooking or baking and that sort of stuff. But when the children were small my wife used work uneven hours because she is a nurse and I had to look after the children when she did night duty and I had to feed them. I didn't bake or cook for them or that sort of stuff. But I would give them their bottles and then later on I would give them some bread and cook an egg for them or something like that...very basic...but I did feed them when I needed to. I did clean them when they were babies. I shared that sort of responsibility with my wife. I could easily clean or bath the children when she couldn't. But when she was around I wouldn't do it. Um, when the first kid was born we were very poor, I mean we were just married and we were both at the beginning of our careers. And we worked it out that after her two months maternity leave where she looked after the baby 24 hours a day...um, we worked it out that she would do night shift so that I can look after the baby at night and she would get home during the day when I was at work so she could look after the baby during the day time. And we did that for about six months before we then had to resort to leaving the child in care. And during the nights when I had to look after the baby, I mean, it entailed feeding her and sometimes bathing her. So, um, ja it was forced basically on us, but it never bothered me and I never really thought it was unfair that I had to do it. I accepted it that although I am the father I had to clean and bath and feed the baby.

Interviewer: Of your role as a man, a husband, and father, which would you say is the most important for you?

Johan: I think being a father is most important because to me my family is rather important to me...they must be close to me. I have no notion of proving that I am a man. Um, ok, well I think my wife is the most important person for me. So being a husband is probably the most important. And then being a father because I value my family affairs. Being a man is not really an important part for me.

Interviewer: Do you think your masculinity is expressed in your role as a husband and as a father?

Johan: I never really thought about that or explicitly did it to prove my manliness. I don't really have to account to anybody really. We are financially fairly independent of the rest, between me and my wife, and I didn't have to prove anything. I didn't have friends to whom I needed to demonstrate my manliness. To me being a husband to my wife is paramount and being a father to my children is second to that. But it was never important to demonstrate my manliness.

Interviewer: What would you say is the best part about being a man, a husband and a father?

Johan: (laughs) I don't know. To me, I am so naturally male. I am fairly logical in my thinking and what I do. Not forgetting there is a softer side to life as well. But I was born a male...a heterosexual male...and I wouldn't know what it would be like to be otherwise. So I don't know what the best part is.

Interviewer: What would you say is the toughest part about being a man, a husband and a father?

Johan: Look I think to some extent your family regards you to be...or expects you to be strong in certain circumstances...you know when there is a problem they expect you to act on certain things. And that is not always so easy. You know, but one accepts those things and you carry on with it. I mean sometimes you have to come up for the others...if your children have problems at school or whatever... while growing up... and sometimes you have to stand in for them... because it was expected of you. You are the husband and the man and need to be the stronger one...it wasn't always easy...in my life I had to take the headmaster to task on certain issues...and do those sorts of things. As the man of the house... it brings along certain responsibilities which you can't get out of. Sometimes it is not convenient and sometimes it is difficult. You accept it and you do it.

Interviewer: How did you learn to be the man, husband and father you are today?

Johan: I had a couple of role models...my father obviously...and like I said I had a very close relationship with my brother-in-law...because I spent so much time at my sister's house. Um, and then there is my own brother who I admired a lot. I learnt a lot from them.

Interviewer: Tell me about your feelings when your gay son was born, what was going through your mind?

Johan: Well, first of all, you know, when he was born I was happy to have a son. Because I mean our first one was a daughter. And I thought we were very lucky to have one of both. Because on my wife's side, her brother...he has four daughters... although he really wanted a son. I could never understand why, but to me it wasn't really important what it was. If I had three daughters it would have been fine and if I had three sons it would have been fine. It wasn't an overwhelming principle that I needed a son like with some other men. To me it is much more important that a child is born properly with two arms, and two legs, and two eyes...and not four. I needed well shaped, healthy children. The sex didn't mean that much to me. But of course when my son was born obviously I was happy and I said ok now I have a son and a daughter. And I was content with that but then eight years later we had a 'glipsie'...it just happened...and it was the best 'glipsie' in our lives...she brings us a lot of pleasure and joy...but so do the other two. So, I was just happy the child was born well shaped. And I thought it was nice to have a son and a daughter. But it wasn't that important to me...if he was a daughter it would have been fine as well.

Interviewer: When your son was born did you have any ideas or expectations of what you would do together?

Johan: I didn't really have expectations...my main purpose was to have a healthy and happy family. I didn't consciously spend a lot of time with my children. I always thought I should allow them to live their own lives and to work out their own interests...basically to do their own thing. I wasn't the sort of father that tried to involve myself intimately all the time...but if they had an assignment at school and we had to build something I would work with them doing it. But I would not take my son and say now I am going spend eight hours a day or two hours a day teaching him how to kick a rugby ball because I wanted him to be a rugby player. That wasn't me. I had my own life...I did my own hobbies and things... I expected them to do their own things as well. But when they wanted something done I was always there and we did things together. Um, my son accompanied me on hunting trips which he enjoyed a lot. But I never said hey he is my 'bulletjie' and he must now shoot his own rooibok at the age of three. That wasn't really me.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your son as a young child.

Johan: Um, as a child he wasn't the best of scholars so we had a bit of battle trying to get him to school and trying to get him to learn. Sometimes it created a bit of friction. He was typical naughty boy doing naughty boy things. And on certain stages I had to discipline him about that. And then later on, past the age of 12 or 13, he was to some extent a bit difficult...temper wise. He was a bit rebellious about certain things. And obviously that needed certain reactions from time to time. Um... our relationship was fine. As I said I never involved myself intimately in his life...wanting to know everything he did. I mean, if I was fishing then he would come there and he would sit and do some fishing with me and he went on hunting trips with me. But if he played rugby, and he tried at one stage in standard six and seven, I would go to the matches. He opted out and said it wasn't really for him. Later on, he did karate and I would take him to practice and go to his contests and support him. The one thing I did try was to establish a sense of what he was to become in life. My great grandfather was an architect, my grandfather was a builder, my father was a builder, my brother-in-law is an engineer and my brother is a quantity surveyor... the building industry was basically what we did. And I tried to actually make him take technical subjects at school as well, like draughting and mathematics, and that sort of thing. Um, but I soon realised that wasn't for him, he didn't take to that or didn't have the aptitude for it, so I didn't force it any further. Initially I was a bit disappointed, you know, having put a drawing board or table in his room and teaching him how to draw, and then have him say he wasn't interested in it. I felt like oh shit, you know...but it wasn't an all overwhelming disappointment and now I can't live any further type of thing. No, I then accepted it and as that's the way it is. Let him rather do something that he does enjoy then trying to satisfy me by doing something in the building industry. And now, today, he is a qualified registered nurse. And it makes me proud that he enjoys his work and that he seems to be very good at it. That makes me more proud than it would have been if I forced him to be an architect and he didn't enjoy it.

Interviewer: tell me about your son's relationship with his siblings?

Johan: Oh, very good. They have a very close relationship. They love one another a lot. They love him and he loves them. And they spend a lot of time together. They go out together...to functions and to parties. If they can they actually organise their own get togethers. So they get along very well.

Interviewer: What is your relationship like with all your children?

Johan: Well, I wouldn't like to have it differently. You know, they all act responsibly where they should. Um, they are fairly close to me... in the sense that they share a lot with me. Um, they make me very much a part of their lives...all three of them. And um, Ja, I think my relationship with the children is something that gives me a lot of comfort. I mean, just to explain...my daughter went to England after she finished school and when she came back she didn't know what to do...and she did a bit of work here and there...and I then said you need to study something...and so we decided she should study law. Then what I did was I actually enrolled with her...and she got her degree the end of last year and I still need to do three modules to get mine. So, I did it with her. You know, I try to assist them where I can. But not in such a way that it takes over my life. I still maintain that I have a life that I selfishly need to protect...I need to do certain things that I want to do. I don't want to do everything because of my children. But I would really take a lot of trouble to assist them with certain things.

Interviewer: So for you it is a conscious decision not to be too involved?

Johan: Yes. You know, there are certain people that I have heard or read about where the father would throw his everything in his son's rugby career without him having a life for himself. I don't agree with that. The thing is I still maintain that I should have my own time...my 'me' time...And I actually like to be alone doing things that I want to do. Um, I don't like being alone... my family must be there. I must have the time to do my things. And they know me like that and they accept it like that. They would sit and watch TV programmes while I would be working in my study doing something. But they are there at least. We are not always into one another's faces and all entwined in each others lives.

Interviewer: How does your relationship with your son differ from your wife's relationship with your son?

Johan: Look, because they share the same profession, um, they have a lot to talk about. And, you know, probably his relationship with his mother is stronger than with me. But I think it is also born from the fact that they share the same profession, and because of that they know the same people and they know the same problems. So they always have something to talk about. It is like me and my brother... we can talk about work things for hours and hours. He and his

mother are like that...you know how do you really treat a common cold, or how do you treat a cut, or whatever. And the people they know...they know common people. I don't know these people because I am not in that field. But my brother and I can talk about other architects and other quantity surveyors and engineers because we know them. So, as far as that is concerned I would reckon that he is probably closer to his mother.

Interviewer: Is he closer to his mother primarily because of those reasons?

Johan: Um, I have never really given it that much thought. I also sub-consciously took it for granted that sons are normally the mother's children and daughters are normally the father's children, you know. Um, although not that I have no relationship with my son or that our daughter's have no relationship with their mother. They are best of friends actually, they fight a lot...but they are the best of friends.

Interviewer: Do you think they have similar personalities?

Johan: I don't know how to answer that. It is difficult to pinpoint personalities and say how they are similar. Ja, I think to some extent they both are a bit more removed from the logical towards the emotional. Although I don't think my wife would agree with that. But it is actually so. Sometimes she thinks emotionally about certain things rather than being logical and she also follows the heart method of deciding on something rather than the brain method. And my son is also not a very calculated logical guy. He is a guy that sometimes can feel something for a decision rather than to think for a decision. So far as that is concerned they might be fairly equal.

Interviewer: Tell me about the time you found out your son is gay.

Johan: I suspected earlier on...when he was about 17...but obviously suspecting and knowing are two different things...and when I suspected it I thought well maybe it is not so...but I thought one or two things that he did...I thought well maybe he could be gay, you know. I didn't stand still at that too long but I suspected it.

Interviewer: What caused the suspicion for you?

Johan: Well, we went fishing and he brought a friend along. And the way they reacted to one another...I thought this could be. But, it was very subtle. Um, it was subtle, not blatant or

anything. But I thought so...and then one argues, 'ag man, maybe he is not so, maybe I made a mistake or something'. And then we went on, you know. Other than that I had no reason to suspect...um, if I say to him tomorrow, 'listen, let's go hunting for the weekend, or let's go walk in the veld', he would be keen to go there, you know, he loves it. You know, he is funny as far as that is concerned... He likes doing man things as well. You know, I now have a boat on the Vaal dam as well, and we first took the family out cruising for a bit...but jis he wanted to go racing a bit with the boat, so get rid of his mother and sisters, and let's go racing a bit...go faster! So, sometimes he does these sorts of man things as well. He is not the type of guy that sits and does needlework or anything like that. As far as that is concerned, um, it is difficult to distinguish him from a heterosexual. He is crazy about motorcars. But he is very neat, you know, in his house...he keeps it very clean...maybe a heterosexual would probably not be as finicky about that. But he doesn't do knitting and needlework or something like that.

Interviewer: How did you actually find out your son is gay?

Johan: Well, my wife actually told me. Um, we had some other problems, which isn't really important here, but out of that she then said to me one day you know your son is gay...and I said I sort of expected it. Um, it wasn't a fright or a sudden explosion for me. I said well I sort of expected as much. Um, look, he tried to have a girlfriend but you could see it wasn't working out. And then I started to see he wasn't inclined to having girlfriends. But ja, my wife told me.

Interviewer: Did you then discuss his sexual orientation with him thereafter?

Johan: No. I didn't really see the need to talk to him about it. As I said I allow my children to live their lives without too much interference and if that is the way he is, then there wasn't really a need to discuss it with him.

Interviewer: Who do you think coped better when your son came out, you or your wife?

Johan: I think my wife coped better. I think she is probably the more informed one about these things. She has an interest in psychology, not that she studied it, but she has an interest in it. Um so I think she understands the psyche better than what I do. Psychology is not really my scene. It is hers. So I think she understands the situation better than I do. That is why I would say she

cope with it better. Not that I have a problem coping with it. It is not a in your face thing in our family. If it was then I probably would have had a problem coping with it. But it is not.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your son as an adult.

Johan: Better than ever. I think now that he is pretty grown up, um, I think it is the best relationship I have had with him. Really. He is now settled, and I am happy with what he is doing. I am happy with the fact that he is conscientious about his work, and that he does well with it. This is easier for me than the time he was in school and where I had to cope with him not passing tests, and where he had been caught drinking at school and I had to go and face the whole bloody school board, and act as his advocate or lawyer, almost as it were, to call the whole thing to order as it were. Nowadays it is so much easier, you know, and we have a very relaxed relationship as it were now. I am proud of what he is doing.

Interviewer: What would you say is your general feeling towards your gay son, positive and/or negative?

Johan: Well, my positive feeling is that he is taking his life and work seriously, which I always thought he should be, and he does that, so I am happy about that. Obviously I can't say I am happy that he is gay. Um, I don't think any father would really be happy with that, but I accept it. I accept it as something I will not be able to change. And because of that I won't love him any less.

Interviewer: What do you think you struggle with most with his sexual orientation?

Johan: Um, that presupposes that I am struggling, which I am not (laughs). I am not. I think it is nothing really in particular except that it is out of the ordinary. If a man is a man he shouldn't be gay. But that is about it. It is not like I get visions or funny thoughts in my mind or anything. I think basically I don't understand it. I don't really understand it. That's all. Um, to me it is not a thing I can easily understand, how can a man be gay. But I don't reject a person because of that. Because I believe every person has certain merits. You know, my son is not the only gay person that I encountered in my life. You know, I don't have many friends, but the one guy, it's been told, has had gay relationships, although he is married now. I don't really care about that. Um, to me he is a good friend and we share quality time and we discuss nice things and I don't even

think of him as possibly gay. And then obviously there are other gay people that you mingle with from time to time. They are not my friends but I take them on their merits and not on what they are.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the choice to focus on people's merits rather than who they are as it were?

Johan: For me the good things about the person overshadows the, I don't want to call it the bad part, but the part I don't understand or don't agree with necessarily. And as I say that fact doesn't bother me unless they overstep the line, and then it becomes a problem.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Johan: I don't know. It has been said that you are born that way. But I don't know.

Interviewer: What do you associate with being gay?

Johan: Look, the thing is it comes in so many different forms...like the pinky type...um, to the rugby prop or lock or whatever... that you eventually later found out...I mean, when I was at varsity we went to parties and things and there was one specific guy... jirre, man, we really caused... havoc sometimes when we got to places like parties and so on, you know. I mean you are at varsity and you drink and you are raucous and... um, to the extent that eventually you are chased by policemen for what you have done. And to later find out that very same person, I've seen him get married and have three children, declare that he is actually homosexual. I mean, I knew him intimately. He went into partnership with another friend of ours and they ran a business for many years. Even the partner said to me I never expected it. So, you can't really say. Because I have all these experiences ...whether he has a beard and plays prop for Northern Transvaal or whether he is the pinky guy with a shrill voice...I know that homosexuality comes in all sorts of forms...so I have no preconceived ideas what a homosexual actually looks like. Some have no hair, others have long hair, you know, some wear cutex, and others actually work on motor cars, you know. I have known homosexual guys that did really manly type jobs...they are technicians working on machinery and things...so they come in all forms...and I have no preconceived ideas what a gay guy is.

Interviewer: How do you think same-sex sexuality fits in with your values, tradition, culture and religion?

Johan: Well, cut religion out. Um, I think it is not the norm. You know, it does form a minority outside the norm. I doubt whether I will ever change that idea of mine. To me it is still something that is probably not by design. Nowadays it is more and more in the open. Back in my days there were almost no self-declared gays. Not that I can think of. Nowadays it is quite open. Whether homosexuality has increased as a notion...I don't know, I don't think so. I think it was always there, it was just hidden. I still would perceive it as something probably not right...it is not the norm...that wasn't meant to be...it was not by design. But I won't discard it all together because of that.

Interviewer: By not being the norm, do you mean that it is abnormal?

Johan: I was specifically steering away from the word abnormal, um, because whether that is abnormal is maybe too harsh an expression. But to me, you know, a man is supposed to look at a woman and love a woman. Um, you know, and if I state that to be the norm...you know, that a pair of tits is nice to look at... you know, I can't understand that another man might not think the same way...and I would rather than say it is out of the norm, but I wouldn't say it is abnormal...because that would mean taking possession of my own thoughts and saying that is the only right thing that there is. And I would rather leave that to doubt at this point in time. By and large I would think that homosexuality is probably out of the norm, but I wouldn't go as far as to say it is abnormal, because that would mean I am taking upon me the wisdom of all... divine wisdom which I cannot say I have.

Interviewer: Do you prefer not to talk about religion?

Johan: Well, the thing is, again I am maybe over logical about everything, and religion is not a logical thing in my life. There are a lot of things that don't gel in religion. But then you will get those who say homosexuality is against the Bible, or against God's wish, or against religion. I would never go there. Because I don't think religion is really the part that gives you the norm. Um, I do believe that a lot of good principles are born from the Christian, or whatever, religion, you know, thou shall not kill and thou shall not steal and thou shall love your neighbours and that sort of thing...those are very good principles. But to do them the way the Bible and

Christianity does, it is just too childish...um, it is just too simple and too easy to follow, you know. When something goes wrong it is God's will and if it goes right it is God's will, you know...It doesn't gel with me, I am too logical about it. The whole thing of sin, and that sort of stuff, it doesn't make sense to me that I can connive and kill my whole life through and two minutes before I die I will be saved. And compare that to somebody who has lived a fairly honest life but he has not really taken on the divine and now he is not saved. That doesn't make sense to me. So when it gets to the issue of homosexuality being outlawed in the Bible and therefore it is wrong, I don't think that way. I am not really a religious thinker.

Interviewer: How do you feel about gay men in general now?

Johan: Um, I think it has changed over a span of years. Twenty years ago I would have given you a different answer as I would give you now. To me nowadays, as you grow and you learn more and you accept more in life. I still maintain, you know, gay men should...if they are so then it is so. And I cannot change that. I am not going to go out of my way, um, trying to involve them in my life. If it comes naturally, then that's fine. My son obviously has friends, and they even spend holidays with us. And, by and large they have all been nice kids up till now, you know. And, my son and his mother and sisters would go somewhere...shopping or gambling...and then his friend would stay with me and we would watch a movie or even go fishing. I have no problem with that. But, you know, I would not go out there and say it is my purpose in life now to mix with gay people. You know, I wouldn't even test the boundaries by saying I must go to a gay club. Why should I go and do that, you know. Um, but if they cross my path in a natural way, and they behave like proper, logical, grown up people then that's fine with me.

Interviewer: How do you feel about gay people getting married and raising children?

Johan: The married part is, um, it is an issue of law, anyway, whether it is allowed by law...to me that is not a big problem. But the raising of children, whereas I do believe they probably could be doing a good job, I always have the fear that the children would be raised one-sided. Because of that I wouldn't really be advocating that point. Um, and again two gay people as a couple could do a completely different job than two others as a couple in raising a child. And, having said that, heterosexual couples haven't done such a bloody good job of raising children

altogether either. You know, um, so I wouldn't say heterosexual couples would give you the norm that they always do a good job because sometimes they just fuck it up completely themselves. Um, but there is a greater potential in a heterosexual relationship that the child can actually experience both angles whereas maybe in a homosexual relationship that might be a bit lost. But I am not saying that they can't care for them or won't be good parents for them it is just the matter that the potential of the choices offered to their child might be a bit different or maybe more limited than in a heterosexual relationship.

Interviewer: How do you feel about seeing two gay men being intimate in public?

Johan: I don't like seeing men being intimate in public. Well, having said that, I am not all too crazy about heterosexual people being that intimate in public either. I think that is something that you keep out of the eye of others. I think that is a pretty private thing. Although, having said that, one needs to qualify that also by saying, you know, if a husband sort of hugs his wife or gives her a kiss or something, then that to me is fairly normal. But where gay people would do that, I do feel uncomfortable. I personally don't think that gay people have to advertise the fact that they are gay. If they are gay and happen to be gay then that is one thing but I don't think they need to advertise it. So I would have a problem with my son or any other person trying his level best to make me realise they are gay. Then I have a problem with that. I don't like that. In my mind although I accept it I still regard it somewhat as outside the norm. Not abnormal, outside the norm. And, ja, I haven't grown to such an extent that I can say that it makes me feel comfortable. It still makes me feel uncomfortable. I think my discomfort is that it is not familiar to me and maybe at this stage I don't want to be too familiar with it.

Interviewer: How do you feel when other people find out that your son is gay?

Johan: I don't really know, um, because nobody has ever discussed it with me. Hang on, some years ago when it wasn't all too clear whether he was gay, it was just before it was confirmed, we were at a party and somebody actually made a reference to the fact and I actually took exception to that. I don't easily get cross or physical but I told this guy that if he did that again he would probably find the bad side of me...you know, I was about to really 'donner' the 'oke'. I think it all depends on how they would actually approach me on the issue. But I haven't been approached so I don't really know. I think if somebody is genuine in their approach then would

probably briefly discuss it with them, but not for long. But if it is done in a bad way then I might react in a bad way. It would be in defense of my son, not in defense of gayness as well, but in defense of my son.

Interviewer: Have you ever discussed issues of sex, sexual health, safer sex, and relationships with your gay son?

Johan: I don't think so, you know, being in the nursing he probably knows more about the subject than myself, so I mean it would be the blind trying to teach the seeing (laughs). He has years of experience in nursing and he has a lot of book knowledge, and I don't think I can tell him much about that (laughs).

Interviewer: In what way has your son being gay affected your relationship with your son, if at all?

Johan: I don't think it has affected our relationship. I think we still love one another for what we are. He is not going to try to make me gay and I am not going to try to make him heterosexual. That is something that comes from within. If he chooses differently later on then that is something for him to choose. The fact that he has chosen a certain route now, I know I can't change it. So, one puts that on one side and I still love him as my son. He is a good son to me.

Interviewer: What do you think you needed when you were coming to terms with your sons homosexuality?

Johan: I don't know how to answer that one. Look, it came as a suspicion at first and then a confirmed fact and it then meant coping with it. I think it was more a sub-conscious process rather than a specific conscious process, you know. I didn't go for counselling or read up about it. It sort of dawned on me that, you know, there is more to a son than only his sexual orientation. He is a lot of other things as well to you. And this overshadows the other part. He has grown as a person in terms of responsibility taking, thinking, planning for the future, and he has a good job. For me that is what is important.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Johan: I think, um, I think the fact that if they reject them they probably think it will place them in better stead with other male colleagues. It is almost like a modern thing that you must reject it, it is bad not to reject it, and I must be visibly seen to reject it. It is probably because of that male's position to other males, he needed to be part of them, physically and visibly part of them, and therefore I have to reject this. Otherwise I can't think why. You know, one could maybe argue that women have a softer more understanding type of nature therefore they can more easily understand this, um, than males who are supposed to be hard, and with rough beards, and reckless in their thoughts. But that is the wrong perception about men as well. A man is not a man because he has a rough beard, and is rough in his thoughts, and swears a lot. That does not really make you a man. I think it is an inner self. I personally cannot understand being physically or sexually attracted to another man and I wouldn't understand why it could be like that. I just cannot understand it. To me it is almost unthinkable. But from a gay person's side they might feel differently.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Johan: I think they have this thought that they are strong and that a strong man doesn't look for help. And to some extent I might even be guilty of that as well. Um, not that I can think of what I would need assistance with now. But, um, I would reckon it is probably because they are supposed to be strong and know all, and that is why they say men don't ask directions if they go anywhere. Um, it is thought to be a weakness because they should know it. They should know how to handle it, it is a weakness not to know it, so therefore it is a weakness to look for assistance. I reckon that would be the reason. As far as medical is concerned, you know, if I get a problem, um, I consult with a medical expert on the issue. Um, psychologically, at one stage I thought I had a bit of depressing thoughts and I went to see our physician and he gave me a little 'pilletjie' that I take every morning. I don't feel that way anymore, maybe if I stopped taking the 'pilletjie' I would still feel the same, I don't (laughs). I am just taking it for the sake of taking it. You need to ask for direction and you need to ask for assistance I think, but men might generally not do so because they think it might show up as a weakness. That is why they might not do it.

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers might need to help deal with their son being gay?

Johan: I don't know. Um, what they need is probably almost a clinical, logical way of thinking. I don't think you can teach a person this altogether. So I don't know. I don't know what they need, whether it is information they need. I don't know. I think certain men, with all the information in the world, would still reject. It all depends on what angle they come from. Some men have this thing that they must have an heir. So I don't know. And whether you give them all the information or training I don't know. I think you should formulate that in your doctorate (laughs). I think it touches on the soul and on the heart and not on the brain. As I say they can have all the information but if their inner being still says it is not the right thing to do, I can't accept it, then information is not going to make a difference. So I don't know.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Johan: Love your sons. Love in the end will cure a lot of things. I almost sound religious...the thing I don't always subscribe to always. I think if you can really love your son. But then also it depends on the son must be in such a way that he can be loved. I mean here that given the fact he is gay that he is not going to come and push it down my throat all the time, and be in my face about it all the time. If he is sensitive and understanding about it then it is rather easy to love him for the fact that he is my son. For other fathers their children need to keep their sexuality issues to themselves and be a good child to the father, and then I would say to the fathers that they must accept and love them.

Interviewer: Are you promoting conditional acceptance as opposed to unconditional acceptance?

Johan: I do think conditional yes, I think because if the father's of the opinion that the son is moving out of the norm, as far as his frame of mind is concerned, then I think the son should at least conditionally do his part as well to make the whole acceptance easier, and to actually facilitate that there can be a relationship. I don't think it should only come from one side. I don't think the son should be able to do what he wants and that the father just has to accept it. So, therefore I would say it is conditional.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Johan: I love you. And I have told him that before.

Interviewer: Any final comments before we end?

Johan: Ag, not really, but I wish you luck with this.

Interviewer: Thank you, and thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW 4: NICO (30/09/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to begin?

Nico: Yes I am.

Interviewer: To start broadly, if I asked you “who are you?”, how would you describe yourself?

Nico: Well, as you can see I am a male person, and I am an ordinary man, working for a living, with an ordinary household, wife and kids. And, um, that’s it.

Interviewer: Going back now, how would you describe your childhood?

Nico: Um, ja, I was the only son in the house. My father died when I was only 16 years old. He was ill, and had heart disease. So, since I was 10 years old, you know, he was ill at various stages and in hospital, so I would have to take over the responsibility. Not a tough childhood, but a very responsible one. And then when he died I actually had to take responsibility for my mother. Although there were sisters, I took most of the responsibility for her. Um, normal childhood but with more responsibilities.

Interviewer: In general would you say it was a happy childhood?

Nico: Yes, I think so. Now, looking back it was an advantage, not by not having a father, but in that at an early stage I was ready to go do my own thing. I was ready to go and study, and then qualify at an earlier age.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your father?

Nico: He was well known in the community, and a very respected man. So, I thought highly of him. We had a good relationship, but sometimes I thought he should have done more, like, you know, play games with us, and that sort of thing. But he was a philosopher and he told us many stories in history and so on. He was really a good person.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your mother?

Nico: She died two years ago at 83. We had a very good relationship. Up to the end there was a very close relationship. She never formally worked outside the house. After my father died she

was a housewife, and that she remained until she died. She was also a very good grandmother to her grandchildren, which we were very pleased about.

Interviewer: Tell me about your siblings?

Nico: I have two older sisters. We had a very good relationship. My oldest sister is about eight years older than me. We stayed on a farm, so she was in a boarding school. My sister just older than me, three years older than me, we did a couple of things together. But, ja, there was not really, as far as that is concerned, um, any problems in the relationship. I was doing the son thing and they were doing the girls' thing. I still have weekly contact with both of them.

Interviewer: Tell me about your role models while you were growing up?

Nico: Um, that is a difficult one, I don't really know. I just had ambition to become something, and, um, so there weren't really role models. But before my father died, it was his dream, um, that he could live long enough to provide for each of us to go through university. And, um, after his death my mother was very anxious that it should be done. And we also respected him because he was a Christian, and he said that he prayed to God that he would live another 15 years, and then he didn't. And we were a bit cross with the Lord because of that. And, but in any event, that is the role he modelled at any early stage that I just carried with me.

Interviewer: Tell me about your male friendships while growing up?

Nico: Funny enough, you know, as a boy, my playing mates were the black boys on the farm, and, um, white boys in the vicinity. The farms were about two to three kilometres apart. And, so, I would play with the black boys, you know, all of them in that area could speak Afrikaans. And there was not really apartheid, they would come into the house and that sort of thing. So that was the mates that I had. And then at High School there were one or two people I was comfortable with. I was never a group person. We would talk about mutual interests such as sport, and politics, and so on. I was never a group person. I never had a bosom friend who I was with each and every moment.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experience in the army?

Nico: It was actually very good. I studied first at university and then I was the first group that had to do two years of training in the army. After the initial three months of courses they made me a law officer in the army. So I was used in a professional capacity in the army and I gained a lot of experience. I would say that it was a man's thing. I had respect for the guys that were really doing the fighting and they had respect for me and what I was doing. So there was a very good interaction.

Interviewer: So did you have a generally positive experience in the army?

Nico: Ja, very positive. As far as I am concerned the worst thing that happened in South Africa was the removal of national service. In terms of discipline, and to just get away from a protected environment and become independent, and become a man.

Interviewer: Can you tell me of any direct or indirect experiences with same-sex people while growing up?

Nico: No, not really. Well, in the army there were many gay guys. And to tell you the honest truth they had a tough time in the army. Sometimes you could clearly see that they were gay. The few that I knew of were not very capable of doing physical activities. Some of them were afraid, not afraid but they were negative about fighting and being hard, you know, and then we would call them, or I experienced most of them as sissies. The guys would laugh at them and tease them. Now, I realise they had a tough time. But at that time it was not really accepted.

Interviewer: And personally, did you ever have contact with a gay person?

Nico: Well, while I was growing up, one of my older nephews has a son who is gay. It was a shock to the family when we heard he was gay. And, I thought something went wrong there and I immediately blamed them for the fact that their son is gay. Only to later find out that I am in the same situation. I never really spoke to the family about it but the family took it hard. But I speak often with the gay son though. Although I heard he was gay when I first met him I couldn't tell that he was gay...from his body language. But then afterwards every time I saw him he acted more and more like a refined person. So I think he was sort of hiding who he is.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with your wife?

Nico: We have a very good relationship. We have been married for 30 years. And like any marriage, you know, it goes up and down. And so there were the bad times and the good times. But now we are a bit older and it is more good than bad. We had an agreement that she would be at home until the last kid went to school and then she opened up her own business which she still runs today.

Interviewer: How do you understand your role as a man, husband and father?

Nico: That is difficult to describe. But actually, the traditional thing, being the head of the family, I would provide security for my wife and kids. And this is very important to me...to provide security to my family and to do everything in my power so that they are safe and financially well looked after. And, um, now as far as the household is concerned that is a woman's thing... but, I have changed my mind a bit. Now I am working from home and now I see that a man can also be involved in the household. Also, I think when you are a bit older, and with a change in times, that there are more rights for everyone. In the past, men traditionally had all the rights, and then it changed... women would not necessarily only become a teacher or a typist, but they could become a professional person, with more rights. And racially other people obtained more rights. And it became a very open society. So it definitely also changed my perception and my outlook on life. But the traditional thing is still there, you know, that I still see that there is a specific role for a man and a woman to play. At this stage, I think that men in South Africa are sort of an endangered species, and especially white men. And, um, I am also starting to see it among black men. There is so much women power and a cry out for women power at this stage that I feel men are not taking responsibility and are hiding away. They are just accepting that their role has become inferior. So I think, you know, there must be a balance. There is no balance at this stage. The mere fact that since 1994 we have affirmative action, and, um, the young people who almost 20 years later are still...well I can understand that from my generation there had to be affirmative action...but the young people are now suffering because of it, and especially among the white males. And the women thing is causing problems in households... where a woman feels she doesn't need anyone, she can make her own rules, and she wants to be independent. And, um, so the traditional thing, you know, of having a structure in the family has broken down, and as far as I am concerned, this has made our society very sick.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about how the structure is arranged in your family.

Nico: I think that, um, for instance, my wife is a very good business woman...she is a very strong person. But she is an emotional person. And we were just lucky that I was initially the provider, and I was initially, or still, very concerned about security, and want absolute security, so that you don't have to fear the future. And I think it suits her at this stage. So, I think in a certain way it is more or less as it should be. So the one acknowledges the other one as far as roles is concerned. But I think she is clever enough to know that still, as far as our children is concerned, that I am the father of the house and that I must make a ruling. I think only women who are in her kind of environment, the experience of being a boss to males, for instance...she experiences that it is very difficult to discipline males, and sometimes she would feel that they are not listening to her, and she would use me with my male power to assist her in her business. So, that is what I actually believe it should be from the beginning, in that we must assist each other, but there can't be two people that make...or the one must accept at one stage where there is a line where we can say we are united in what we do.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about this male power?

Nico: Ja, um, male power in my mind would be that one must not hesitate to do something... not be stupid but think before doing something...but be decisive about what should be done, and be protective. Men have the power to protect. At the end of the day what do you want to protect...your family.

Interviewer: Of your role as a man, a husband, and father, which would you say is the most important for you?

Nico: I can't say which is most important. But sometimes, you know, when I think about it, it is the aspect of father that I most neglected. And I can tell you why. You know, when you are young, you have an urge to go somewhere in your career and earn enough and become rich, then you work bloody hard. So, my role as a father, now I can see it was wrong. If I could have it over, I would do it differently. I would be more available to my children. Because I was always at work and would get home late at night and then they were already asleep. And, so it happened that after our initial agreement that my wife stay at home until they were in school, my wife also became very busy and children were very much on their own. On weekends we tried to spend time with the family. We got a very good servant that looked after them. They then went to a

nursery school. We were involved in their schools as far as we could and we went to parent evenings and we would make sure that they did their homework. But there wasn't enough time to just talk to them and listen to them, and like my father who told many stories about being in the war. I can still remember that and if I think back I can't remember what I told them when they were small.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Nico: No, I felt responsible for my son becoming gay. I thought it was my fault that it happened. So that was my first reaction. And, my second reaction was that it was never too late to try and reverse it. But now I realise that I was wrong in that approach because I didn't have enough knowledge on why it happened. And I think it is more open today, and there is more information, and you can talk openly about it. Um, all of this helps in the process, but to be honest I am still worried whether I was the reason that he became gay. Because my oldest son is completely straight, and he likes rugby, and when he was still young, you know, I actually pressurised him to play rugby, and I went and watched his games. But with my second son, the gay son, I was just working so bloody hard I was just so relieved when he said he didn't like rugby...then I didn't have to go and watch him. And that is the problem that I have... wasn't I the reason for him becoming gay? No, ja, when he turned out to be gay it was a big shock for me because on outside appearances I didn't realise it...even his mother didn't realise it and she has a very close relationship with him. And, um, but he became aggressive and he was depressed, and, um, we were worried about it and we sent him to a psychologist, which didn't really help...and eventually his sister came to us and said that he told her that he was gay. It was a big shock to us. His mother, today, and I think that is because of her relationship with gay people that she works with, she obtained knowledge of how it works and she informed me of how it works. But of course we blamed each other. Although I accepted that it was my fault. Then I started doing research, and in the way that I was brought up it is a religious thing, and you know in the Bible it says it is a sin, and I read many articles, you know, and then I decided to discuss it with him. I said to him it can't be, what did I do wrong? He said maybe I didn't do anything wrong. And I then said to him if he was gay, what did he do...what do gay people do? At that stage he was 18 or 19. He then said I can't ask him personal questions like that. And I said well that is an answer, and it is not acceptable to me. Um, so that was the first reaction, and, um, for a few months

afterwards I preferred rather not to talk about it... not to talk to anyone about it... but in those few months my wife started to talk to him, and get into his mind, and talk to others about it. Now, after a few years, we see but that is how he was born. We believe that is how he was born. But for me it is still a very difficult thing of how to deal with it. He is a wonderful person actually...he is very sensitive...and, um, he will do things for us that the other children don't necessarily have time for. But for instance, it is almost his birthday, and his mother has told him he must have his birthday party at our house. And there is a certain guy that is a friend of my son...and to use an Afrikaans phrase...'as ek hom sien dan gril ek'... because he has earrings and pink hair, and he looks ugly to me, and to be honest I don't want a guy like that in my house. And then if I allow him here then please don't let the neighbours see this guy. So this is still a difficult part for me, and I don't know whether it is acceptable, but I will say, while we have an open relationship at this stage, I will just say I don't like that guy, please don't bring him to the house. And then his mother will say no, no, no, no, no, please don't go there, he is just a friend. Um, and he is actually not a bad person but he looks like a bloody... different... and it makes me very uncomfortable. That is just the way it is. I am battling to change my attitude. I can't tell you I will ever be able to accept it...but I accept him... and I want him to be happy. That is one of my big concerns... how can a gay person ever be happy? Because one wants a family, one wants children... in the natural way. And as far as I am concerned this is one of the bad things of nature... that nature caused it... like a person that has a disability... so that is the conflicting thing in my mind. On the one side I feel sorry for him because it is for me a kind of disability.

Interviewer: How do you manage the conflict between accepting him as your son and not accepting that he is gay?

Nico: Um, that is a difficult one. Look, the fact that he is my son, being who I am, I feel responsible for him and I want him to have the best... I want him to have security in his life, so that he won't have a problem surviving... But him as a gay person, I only accept it because of the fact that he is firstly my son, and that I feel responsible for him... So I will always protect him. It is his choice, and I will let him live it, but I will always caution him and say I want him to be happy. Now in his relationships with other gay people, it is very different because I find that gay sons or people are very emotional people. In certain cases it is good because they will feel deeply for others. But in other cases it is not good because they hurt each other and can hurt

other people around them. My son had...I don't know if we can call him a boyfriend... but he had a friend that was studying law. He is a brilliant student. But they had a stormy relationship between them. We were away and we just got a message that my son was gone and no one knew where he was. We spent the night phoning the police station to find out whether he was in an accident. And then found out that they actually assaulted one another...so that the blood flowed. At that stage we eventually located him and fortunately he wasn't in an accident. I then overreacted because my son was already 25, and I then phoned his friend... at the time he was staying in the property we had bought... and told him that when we got back that he should be gone. And, um, he listened and he asked lots of questions, and I said to him I wasn't there to answer his questions... I said I couldn't accept that they assaulted each other. So, when we came back my son accepted that I just protected him but he felt I was a bit hard on him. This is the thing... he is my son... but those things that are unacceptable to me... is caused by the gay personality.

Interviewer: Tell me about your feelings when your gay son was born, what was going through your mind?

Nico: You know, at that stage, my wife wanted two children. With the first one we didn't want to know the sex and it turned out to be a boy and we were out of this world. And then with our second child, we had a sonar done and we saw it was another son, and we were a bit disappointed. But once he was born he was a marvellous, adorable kid...you know, he was very, very special to us. And then 15 months later his sister was born and the two of them made such a beautiful team and he was protective of her. Soon he became the centre of attention, especially with both his grandmothers. He was a lovely little boy to us. At that stage, while they were still very young, I was still in the civil service, so there was time for me to interact with them, and that was quite a pleasant experience. But when he was about six years old I started to work so bloody hard and then my relationship with them was not as intense as it was before.

Interviewer: How involved were you when your son was born?

Nico: I was very involved in the sense of their activities, like their concerts... and things like that... not really ball games... except for rugby... but he said from the beginning that he wasn't going to play rugby... I was a bit disappointed in that.

Interviewer: Disappointed?

Nico: You know, rugby is a man's thing... it is a game, and, um, it involves being active and kicking the ball. He was never fond of kicking balls. He didn't want to do what little boys did.

Interviewer: What in your life prepared you for your role as a father?

Nico: Um, I think it is instinct. I think what also helped a bit is that I had to take responsibility at an early stage in my life. It was not something that I felt threatened by, I was used to it from an early age.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with all your children. Does it differ in any way?

Nico: Ja, it does differ a bit. They are all very close to us. The oldest one, he has been on his own for several years now. But the gay son and his sister were living with us until the end of last year, when they completed their studies. And then they moved out and are now doing their own thing. But we have a standing thing that on a Sunday at 5pm... we do not force them but they come on their own free will, and say we haven't heard from you but do we have a family meeting on Sunday, and we will say yes, of course... and if one of them is not there than it is wrong. The relationship, as far as they are concerned, is the same. It is a very strong relationship, but of course on a Saturday if there is a rugby game, my daughter and gay son is not interested, but my oldest son would bring his friend and would watch the game and braai and that sort of thing... I would say because of that my bond with my oldest son is naturally stronger and my bond with him (gay son) is... it would be wrong to say it is forced... but I feel it is in his interest and in my interest that we must work at maintaining a relationship. And then, you know, he is so sensitive and vulnerable at this stage after his previous relationship ended, we are afraid he will commit suicide. And, um, and we need to keep motivating him, and say, you know, you must talk to me, and now at least we do the talking thing. But his mother, because she understands it better, she tries get deep down into his heart and extract information. Now he is a freelancer, and there are some months where he will battle to get through, and I will do the thing of asking him what he is doing to promote his business, what he is busy doing, and help him with his financial planning. So, in a certain sense, his needs cause us to have a different kind of relationship. His older brother, on the other hand, is such an easy person, you know, and he does the man thing.

Interviewer: Tell me about the time you found out your son is gay.

Nico: Sjoe, it was after Matric, so I think he was about 19 or 20. Like I said my daughter told us. I was shocked when I found out... and then angry... to a certain extent I was angry with myself, angry with my wife, and angry with him...because why would he want to be like that... I was prepared to do anything to change it... Um, when I found out I also blamed the psychologist and said he should have told us and prepared us... because we are now in a situation where we are not in a position to deal with it... My son was going through a process and that was the reason for his depression at the time... he was afraid to come out of the closet. Um, and like I said, my wife and I blamed each other for neglecting him. But then I accepted responsibility because he is a boy and I should have done more boy things with him. And then I started to look for a cure. In that process my wife then got information from gay people she worked with and she passed it on to me. Funny enough gay men and women can be very good friends. But, at the end of the day, we believe it is not a religious thing but rather a physical thing. Because nature shows it in many ways... and that is why for me it is like a disability and I feel sorry for him. But still it doesn't mean that if you are gay you can look like a punk. If I can make a difference I would tell gay people that if you find it difficult to be accepted as a gay community then don't make yourself look like punks or like aliens, and try and stick out. You are only attracting attention and animosity. That is the thing I can't deal with... that they stick out and look abnormal... and don't fit in.

Interviewer: Who do you think coped better when your son came out, you or your wife?

Nico: My wife definitely coped better. She is very sensitive and she can tell immediately if something is wrong. I don't know if it is sort of a mother thing, maybe it is, because my mother was also like that... she is more sensitive, and can tell if something was wrong, especially with her children... my mother was like that... I think one of the biggest losses anyone can have in their life is their mother.

Interviewer: Has your relationship changed in any way since finding out he is gay?

Nico: Ja, I think our relationship has changed... and I would say it has changed for the positive... because I became aware of the fact that he is sensitive and that I must treat him otherwise. I cannot treat him the same as his older brother.

Interviewer: What would you say is your general feeling towards your gay son, positive and/or negative?

Nico: Um, I know he is a very good person, you know, with a very good heart... and I know that he cares. I think that is the most positive. The negative, is the fact that... not him as a person... but I feel sorry for him... it is kind of a disability. I am not disappointed in him, but I feel disappointed that he will never have the privilege of having his own biological child... maybe he can but it is the thing he desires the most.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Nico: I think it is a nature thing. You know I just opened up my eyes, and I began to see it in nature. Being a Christian, when you are very young and you are told that you don't ask questions and that is the way of the Lord and you must just accept it. And the Lord just wants the best things for you. Now, incidentally, my daughter, she is not fanatic but she is a very deep Christian and she said that is not what the Lord wanted for him. Then I said to her, listen do you think the Lord wants children to be born blind or without arms. No. Now, that is nature, a flaw in nature, and unfortunately it is so, and fortunately he is not blind, so it is something we can deal with. That is why I say it is a kind of disability, and we are dealing with it. He has the mind power to be more acceptable. And I want him to be acceptable. That is one of the ways that he can be happy... to be acceptable. That is why I say don't look like a punk, don't put gel and highlights into your hair... you are sticking out like a sore thumb. To be accepted he shouldn't do it, or associate with friends that do that, or tell them I am not going to take you like this to my father's house.

Interviewer: How do you think same-sex sexuality fits in with your values, tradition, culture and religion?

Nico: Um, well homosexuality certainly doesn't fit in with my values because that is the way we were brought up. But we have had to accept change. And then with religion, there are many things that we were taught that were wrong that are simply not so. And people are reading things in the Bible that are not really there. So as far as religion is concerned, people wrote the Bible, and you mustn't believe everything that you read there. People should only extract the good values. To come back to homosexuality I see it as a flaw of nature. What the Lord's intention

was, to have flaws in nature, I can't answer that. I battled to accept it but it is a fact that I can't change.

Interviewer: How does your view of homosexuality fit in with your view of men in general?

Nico: That is really difficult. A homosexual person, in my mind, can't be a man or a woman... they are nowhere. And if he looks like a man, I want him to be a man, and if she looks like a woman, I want her to be a woman... but that's the problem, in my mind they are nowhere... Again, it brings me back to the thing that it is a kind of disability... if I could cure it I would do everything in my power to do it, but I can't.

Interviewer: How do you feel about seeing two gay men being intimate in public?

Nico: I would hate it. No, I don't like seeing two men together in public. 'Ek gril'... it makes me very uncomfortable. To tell you, not just in public, but when we have the family around the table, for dinner or whatever, my daughter would bring her boyfriend and they would hold hands, and my son would bring his boyfriend and they would hold hands, and I would feel very uncomfortable...only in terms of my son holding hands...and that is my honest feeling. At the time I didn't say anything about it. One time they actually kissed and fortunately I didn't react. But I then said to my wife afterwards how do we deal with it, we must decide how to deal with it, and then she knows how to bring the message across, and tell him in a very nice way, be careful, don't do that, we want you to be acceptable.

Interviewer: If you were just to react, what do you think you would do?

Nico: If I were just to react I would be unjust towards him, you know, I would hurt him and belittle him... I don't want to belittle him. I would rather wait and just let him know how I feel about it... other people might feel otherwise about it... but I know he loves his family and we love him... and I know he wants to have a close relationship with us... so we will have to accommodate each other... and that is how I see it.

Interviewer: What do you think you needed when you found out your son is gay?

Nico: Like I said, with the psychologist, I was paying for the sessions, because we thought it was merely depression. And I think at that stage, you know, it would have been good for him to ask

to see me and say listen, this is what I think is going on, and I want to talk about it, and he should have known it was going to have an effect on me. I think in most traditional homes it can be a major shock for the father. So, I think he would have helped the situation if he broke the news to us, and reached out to us, and say listen, are you prepared to come and talk to me about the situation. And that I think, a psychologist working in the field, should also assist the family to deal with it or to make it easier for the gay person trying to come out the closet and deal with it. I would say it would have helped me a lot and it would have assisted him a lot if that discussion took place, but it never did.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Nico: Um, I think, you know, a man wants a man to be a man... to be competitive...and be physical...doing physical activities...that is one of the factors why there is a distance between men and gay men. And that I saw in the army. Those 'okes' would do anything not to take a rifle and shoot. They would go and work in the kitchens and with the medic and so on. If I think about a gay male that I know, apart from my son, they are not really men, you know... the one's that I know or have the most contact with do things that women normally do... baking cakes and making dresses and love to cook. That is my perception of gay men. You wouldn't get many of them that will do a male kind of activity.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Nico: I think that is maybe the thing that they want to be seen as the strong one. If you seek support it might show that you are actually weak and you don't want to seem weak to the outside world.

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers might need to help deal with their son being gay?

Nico: Maybe a bit of counselling and information sessions. For instance, if somebody told me we have a seminar for fathers of gay people, then that would be useful... sharing information and sharing experiences.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Nico: You are going to lose your son. From what I know your son has always been like that, you just didn't know it. You are going to lose him if you don't attempt to come to terms with it.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Nico: I hope that he will become straight. Because I want him to have a happy life because I don't believe he is really happy.

Interviewer: Any final comments before we end?

Nico: Not really. I actually think you are doing a really good thing, doing research about it. You know, it was always there, and only now there is a bit of openness about it. If gay people also know how straight people think about their appearance then it will help. So sharing information and experiences is important.

Interviewer: Thank you, and thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW 5: PIETER (16/12/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to begin?

Pieter: Yes I am.

Interviewer: To start broadly, if I asked you “who are you?” how would you describe yourself?

Pieter: Middle aged, Afrikaans male...I think I am stable...um, very average, maybe a bit off the beaten track...ja.

Interviewer: Going back now, how would you describe your childhood?

Pieter: I think I am one of a few people who grew up in a house with a very happy marriage...um, my father was a social worker. He chose to follow that career because he wanted to help people in need. And, whilst he had the potential to follow a career with a higher income...he was different from other people in that respect. He was highly intelligent but chose to follow this type of career. And I think that made quite an impression on me at a young age. And I think I have tried to follow in his footsteps. In that respect I think I was a bit naïve because I grew up in a happy marriage and thought that all people lived like that and they did not.

Interviewer: In general would you say it was a happy childhood?

Pieter: Yes, I think so. I had a very strong bond with my father...my mother as well, but especially with my father. I could talk to him about anything. And he would talk to me...he knew how to encourage me to use him. So in that sense, as an adult...he died four years ago...even now I am ok, I am standing on my own, but I miss that...even up to the day he passed away he was someone I could lean on.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your mother?

Pieter: She raised us...she wasn't a career woman...she was a housewife. She was emotionally not very stable...my father may have been boring in some respects and she was more exciting (laughs). She spent a lot of time with us...she spent a lot of time with me and my brother...helping us with our homework, and encouraging us with our sport...you know the typical things that housewives did in those days that they are not doing today...I suppose today's

mothers are not full-time housewives. She was very caring, but she could also be very strict. She had a fiery personality. My mother and father had their differences...but they had a happy marriage.

Interviewer: Tell me about your role models while you were growing up? Who did you look up to?

Pieter: Like I said I looked up to my father...also, I think while growing up I was very interested in history, politicians, and historical figures...so politicians were my role models... I admired them being in power and being able to manage power. And there was a game ranger...I can't remember his name now...but they wrote a lot of articles about him...he was very newsy...and I really admired him (laughs). I think I admired him because he was living in nature, living in the bush, and conserving nature...I love nature...and I go camping on holidays. I really love doing that. I also admired tennis players. I played tennis because my father forbade us from playing rugby. I admired the likes of Phil McMillian, Bob Hewitt and Rob Laver...With Rob Laver...he was a brilliant tennis player...he was the world's first biggest Wimbledon champion.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your relationship with your brother while growing up?

Pieter: My brother is two years younger than me and I would bully him (laughs). When we were kids we didn't spend much time together. He would be fixing things and I would spend time with my friends. He is very different from me. I am a writer and I failed and dropped out of maths class when I was 15 years old I think. He is an engineer. He became an engineer in the police force. He is a policeman first before an engineer, and I think he also got that from my dad...you know, being committed to serving others. He is a very talkative guy and he can bore you to death with his talking, and I am one of few people who will just sit and listen to him. I don't see him a lot these days...our relationship has deteriorated a bit...but when we grew up and became adults we became the best of friends. Now, we don't spend so much time together, but we still call each other every now and again.

Interviewer: Tell me about your male friendships while growing up?

Pieter: As I said my father was a social worker and he worked for the State...in 12 years I was in seven different schools...so we moved around a lot. They would say: civil students with their

stupid kids and broken furniture...because they travelled from one school to the other and their furniture would break because they moved a lot (laughs). But, ja, I only had a few friends then... we had bicycles and we were extremely fit and we would ride all over town...and we formed gangs and had adventures...you know, that sort of thing. Um, and I played tennis. I think I became a loner in that sense because everybody played rugby and I was a bit of a 'sissie' because I didn't play rugby. I blamed my dad because of that. I think this made me a bit of an outsider. Even the guys I was friends with, they played rugby and wanted me to play rugby, but my dad just said no, it is not a game for decent human beings (laughs). Um, but now I don't really have male friends...that I can call friends. There are occasional people who want to be friends. I will go along with it to a point but I prefer to stay at home...so I don't really go out with the boys (laughs). When I was younger...after school I would do that, but as I got older I got more involved in my family. My dad was also like that. Um, and I think that what males my age and peer group are interested in does not interest me...I am an outsider in that respect. I am occasionally invited to watch rugby games in a suite and I never used to go. Since being involved with my present wife, she wants to go to these games. So, I would be sitting in the back talking to people while she is in the front all excited and fired up (laughs). And I don't have a clue of what is happening on the field...well, I have a clue but that is not my thing. That is what males my age are interested in...they watch rugby and drink beer and like fast cars...and I don't...it is not my thing...I am a bit of an outsider in that respect. Now I meet nice guys who want me to go to rugby and I go to please them, but it bores the shit out of me (laughs). So I am a bit of a loner when it comes to having contact with my male peers. I have a theory...I think males sticking together in modern society are up to no good (laughs)...they should be interested in their houses, their families, their wives, their kids, and their jobs. There is a guy that works here that is younger than me and admires my work and wants to learn from me and wants to be friends...and I will be friends with him. But, you know, it is not like people I know who have been friends since high school or even earlier and do things together...I don't have that...maybe because I moved around a lot or maybe because of rugby or I don't know...I don't really care actually because I am happy with where I am.

Interviewer: Were you in the army?

Pieter: I did my national service in the police force for three years.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that?

Pieter: I was in (inaudible) police. It is not something you shout from the roof tops these days. We did things sometimes that I am not proud of. But we were professional. We did what was necessary...we did our jobs. I have a different perspective on it today...but I know that most of the people that talk the loudest about these things today would have done just as bad or worse if they were in the same position. We were not extremists, we were thinking about these things, we knew...I shared an office with an very old sergeant...who had years of experience who was three or four years away from retirement...and he told me and I agreed with him that it would all change...and that was in the 70s. Um, you know, I won't debate these things with people today because you can't have a reasonable debate about it. You will be able to judge these things maybe when I am gone because people are emotional about it. But it was a war and we were soldiers. Things on both sides were bad. War is bad...there are only victims and no winners.

Interviewer: Did your time in the police force affect you in any way?

Pieter: I think I lost some things...some sensitivities...I think I became desensitised...about things that I would have love to have maintained...in terms of people...I don't know how to explain it. There was a stage when I got divorced that I stopped going to church...but I am religious. I decided I am not going to give money to the church anymore...which was not an easy thing for my parents to accept. I decided to rather give money to a beggar I came across on the street. So there was a time when I thought stuff you all. Um, so it was a conscious decision on my part.

Interviewer: Tell me a bit about your peer relationships while in the police force.

Pieter: Um, I also think I was an outsider then, just as I am today...I was not one of the guys. I didn't identify with most of the other guys. I had a few friends but it wasn't around the work...it was about the relationship.

Interviewer: Can you tell me of any direct or indirect experiences with same-sex people while growing up?

Pieter: Um, when I was about 12 years old we had a teacher...and he took the school choir to Cape Town...and when he came back he was suspended because he molested some of the kids.

And this teacher would also come to our house and sort of helped me with English lessons. He stayed in the same street as us. Um, and he touched me. Um, and my father had a long talk with me after this teacher was suspended, and told me what homosexuality is. Um, you know, as far as I can remember, I never told him that this teacher had touched me. But, the impression I got from it, that stuck with me for years, was that homosexuals are child molesters. It is only after I started working, after I studied...look there were gays at varsity but I didn't take much notice of them...But I think it was the first time that I became aware of gay people who were openly gay. Then when I started working there were people that were openly gay...and they were decent people...and I would get along with them. My present wife had a friend that was gay and he was one of the first people in South Africa that died of AIDS. And it is only after he died that I became more conscious of the lives of gay people. My wife also had other gay friends and I became friends with them. But they have since immigrated. So I initially had a negative perception but this changed later on because of these friends and other gay people I worked with. I realised at work that I could work with them, and they were competent, professional and gifted. There were a few gay guys who were younger than me that I had to train, and I came to respect them.

Interviewer: You have mentioned being married twice. Which wife is the mother of your gay son?

Pieter: My first wife is the mother of both my sons.

Interviewer: How long have you been remarried for?

Pieter: We have been together for 10 years and married for eight.

Interviewer: And how long were you married for with your first wife?

Pieter: We were married for six years.

Interviewer: Did your sons remain primarily with your first wife

Pieter: Yes for the most part.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your relationship with your first wife?

Pieter: Look, I had a girlfriend while I was studying and I broke up with her...I thought she was the love of my life. Shortly after that I met my first wife at work and we started a relationship. She was very keen to get married and have children. And I thought why not. It wasn't a fantastic marriage. We had our first son and he was gorgeous. I don't know about other fathers but I didn't dream about having kids...I was sort of indifferent about having kids. And then this guy arrived and when he was three weeks old he couldn't keep his food in and eventually after a lot of stress he almost died. They identified his condition as pyloric stenosis and he had to undergo an operation at three or four weeks. It was very traumatic. And it hit me like a hammer between the eyes that this guy could die. Um, he didn't die of course. But I never suspected that I...I remember he was in hospital and my wife was sitting there day and night and he couldn't eat and he was fading away. And one day I had to go home and get some clean clothes for him...and on the way I was thinking about this...while I was driving...and I had to pull over...because I started to cry...and I cried like a baby...because this guy was going to die. And this was the first time I cried since I was in high school (laughs). So, ja, it hit me hard in an unexpected way. We planned to have the second child soon after the first but she then had two miscarriages. And about three months after the second miscarriage she became very depressed. I woke up one morning and she had drank a lot of pills...she tried to commit suicide. It then happened a second time. And then she fell pregnant again...and the second one was born. But she remained in and out of clinic. She then lost her job. We went for therapy around that time and the therapist called me one day at work and said he wanted to see me. But it was marriage therapy...she wasn't happy. Um, and he called me and said he wanted to see me. I worked until seven or eight o'clock in the evenings at that time. So I went to see him at eight o'clock. He then told me we had long sessions together but he had come to the conclusion that he needed to work with my wife only. There was no use coming together. She had problems and there was not much I could do about it. But he was positive that he would be able to help her and that I shouldn't worry. Then about a month later I arrived home, on a Wednesday night I remember, and her brother and his new wife was there...their first son was born around the same time as our son...and I could see that they were not comfortable. And shortly after I got home they then said they were leaving. And when they left she said she wanted to talk to me and she said she decided we should get divorced. We argued about it all night. I remember that was a Wednesday because on the Thursday I was off from work as I was going to another African country to cover a story on their

first election. Our youngest was four months old at that stage. The next morning I packed a box of loose stuff and a suitcase with my clothes and I went to my parent's place. We had to see the therapist and he was upset and said it wasn't right and wasn't what he had in mind at all...and it was a mistake...but he eventually agreed to an interim separation. Um, then on the Friday I left to cover the election. On my return on the Monday...there were delays with the plane and then the plane crashed on take-off. The whole crew died. Some of the passengers were injured... I wasn't. Everyone was in shock and hysterical but I stayed calm. I organised with the authorities to be taken to a telex room and I sent a telex to South African foreign affairs and they then sent a plane of doctors to help us. I also helped with the passengers...so I was like a hero. Everyone was hysterical but I was helping. They then arranged a SAFAIR plane that was en route somewhere else. On the plane the doctors wanted to give me something to calm me down. I told them I was fine. Later a doctor came to me and said he thought I had a problem and that I may have posttraumatic stress and that I needed to see someone about it. Um, and I did that. I went to see a child psychologist to talk about my kids and how the separation would affect them. But it ended up being the first time I saw a psychologist for myself (laughs). I explained the accident to her and told her what the doctor said to me. She said it was one of two things: either I had posttraumatic stress where I had suppressed the shock...look, a plane crash is quite a scary experience...and I might get posttraumatic stress symptoms in six months...or that I was depressed when I left home and I was actually glad that the plane had crashed. I never got posttraumatic stress symptoms and I decided am not going back to my wife. So I divorced her a year later. My parents were very supportive...I had amazing parents. Um, you know, we grew up with kids from broken homes who were in need of places of safety but could not be placed anywhere... so they would stay with us for like six weeks...so divorce was not foreign to me but it was not something that we did (laughs). Um, despite that they stood by me. You know, the divorce was quite traumatic, and it turned ugly...her father was going to nail me...and till today my relationship with my first wife is still not good. But the kids stayed with her...she tried to commit suicide one or two times after that. The kids would then go and stay with her parents. Um, ja, it wasn't nice. Then two years later I had a relationship with a woman but she couldn't stand my kids and I broke up with her after two years. It was a good relationship but she couldn't stand my kids...she wanted me to walk away from them and I couldn't do it. Because my wife was unstable I took the advice from my dad that I divorce her but I remain close to her

and the kids...For instance when we got divorced her attorney wanted me to agree in the settlement that I would sign a monthly debit order for maintenance...and I said no...I will give her a cheque...for one reason...I will get to her house to see what is happening there. It was a lot easier to sign a debit order but I didn't want to do that. So I have kept a very close relationship...close ties with the kids...all these years...which wasn't always easy...you know, I was alone for many years. My youngest one, which is the gay one, was just a baby when we got divorced. I would have to take care of him on weekends...I would see them every two weeks. But I would call them almost every day. In those days I would use a phone at work...and then later on it became easier with cell phones. My attorney at the time said I could call them but I shouldn't mention it in the settlement because the judge would never agree to me calling them every day...if she objected I would have a problem...they could restrict my contact with them. A dad in a divorce is in a very weak position. The divorce settlement stipulated that I should pay the school fees to her...but then at some stage I realised when the school sent me bills that she wasn't paying them...so I said she can go to hell, I will pay the school myself...you know, it was things like that. Um, ja, and then the youngest one was a very lively chap when he was in pre-school. When he got into school we saw there was something wrong. He turned into a complete introvert. When he was eight his mother took him to a psychologist because he wasn't doing well in school...he struggled a lot...and she did comprehensive tests on him, with very negative results saying that he was behind his peers and wasn't developing as he should and that he needed intensive attention. She started working with him but she was strict and tough on him and his mother didn't like it and she stopped him from going. I blamed her for this because I thought it was a big mistake. He continued to struggle in school. In his final year I heard through a colleague of someone who did something like brain gymnastics with kids. I then met with her and I eventually convinced my ex-wife to agree to it...he would then come to me during the week and I would take him for the therapy...I had to change my job description so that I could leave at five and take him for the appointments. We then did the exercises that she prescribed, and then every two weeks or every month she would test him, and then prescribe new exercises. We did that for a couple of months and I think it helped. But then his mother got fed up with me and she stopped it. You know, that was not too long ago...he must have realised he was gay at that time. Because he realised that he was gay when he was 11. And I have often wondered if I should maybe go back to her and tell her that the problem was not that there was something

wrong with him...he just realised he was gay and he was different and he was just worried about it. As I said, my ex-wife stopped it...that was in standard five...in high school he got better. He was not really a happy child but he made some friends...and some girl friends...and he became a little more confident. Then his older brother came to live with me...he went to varsity...and I built a cottage for him...and he came to live there. About the same year, my youngest son...one evening...came and said he also wanted to live with us. He was about 14 at the time. So we said ok, but first he needed to talk to his mother first. I realised at the time that his relationship with his mother wasn't good. I said it was fine but his mother had to agree first. He spoke to his mother and she was fine with him staying with me. We then converted a store room for him and we made it nice for him. It took about six weeks for him to move in. Then a week before he was going to move in with us...he was by me for the weekend...it was a Sunday night...just before he left to go home to his mother...I was sitting in my favourite chair and I was half asleep...and he came up to me and said he wanted to talk to me. I said fine he could talk and sort of lay back in my chair. He then told me to sit up straight because it was serious (laughs). I sat up straight and he then told me he is gay and asked would I mind that he is gay because he was moving in and he wanted me to be aware of that. It became quite clear that he was nightmarishly worried about what I was going to say. But I was fine with it and I even expected it for years...my wife and I even spoke about the possibility. Last week my wife reminded me that I still said back then that I didn't know whether I would be able to accept it and she said I would. My wife was very supportive. We had a long talk that evening about it. He told me that when he was 11 years old...when we went camping in Limpopo...there was a swimming pool...and there were three or four other boys who were a little older than him...and they were playing in the swimming pool, bumping each other in, and jumping, and diving in, and running around...and they worried him...they woke things in him that confused him a lot. At the end of that year, during the December holiday, he was with his nephew at their grandparents' house...and they were up late watching TV...and there was this presenter on a talent programme...and they were watching this guy...and the next morning when he woke up he realised he was completely in love with this presenter...and he finally realised he is gay. But he told no one. At the time I had a colleague who had become separated from his wife...he came to live with me...his oldest son is a year younger than my gay son...and they became very good friends. They were both there on weekends and we were both single dads who took care of these kids over the weekend...and they

became very good friends. The only person he told was this friend...who is not gay. They are still friends today. We talked a lot about these things and I realised that although he is gay he has never talked to another gay person. There had never been a relationship or sexual contact or whatever...he just knew that he fell in love with men...and I realised that he had a very important need to talk to someone. So I said look, I know several people at work...one young guy in particular who worked here that I trusted...that I could introduce him to so that he could talk to him about these things. My son was very excited about the possibility and told his mother but she was highly upset. So we stopped that. The reason why I wanted him to come to us is the year or two before that he and his brother went on a school trip to South America...and while they were away his mother missed him a lot and she went in his room and scratched in his things. She then found his journal and saw that he was gay and found it completely unacceptable. And she was trying her best to change this. She took him to a therapist. I myself went to see the therapist with her and I told them they were crazy. So she didn't want him to meet with this guy. So I thought let's wait until he stays with us. And then my present wife knew about a gay pastor...um, who had written a book...and she tried to locate him so that we could introduce our son to him. We then discovered that he stayed close to us. My wife and I first went to see him and then we introduced our son to him. Since then we have socialised with him and attended his congregation several times. Um, and then at the same time...he wasn't happy in his high school. (inaudible) He wanted to take drama as a major subject. I then suggested that he attend a school for the arts. He thought they would not allow him at that stage but we went and saw them. They considered him and eventually accepted him and he did his last two years at the school for the arts where he followed drama as a major. He was like a fish in the water. His academic problems disappeared completely. He did very well in Matric. He took a gap year this year. But he will be going to university next year to study journalism and drama. He never misses church...he goes every Sunday...and I often go with him. I asked the gay pastor whether he could mentor him. He agreed. So every Friday after school my son met with the gay pastor and they discussed various things like theology from a gay perspective, and life lessons relating to gay people...all things which I couldn't help him with. I think my son turned out to be a very balanced young man. I am a bit worried...not really worried...because you wouldn't say he is gay...he doesn't look gay and he doesn't act like a gay person...he is not camp at all...and it irritates the hell out of him when people act camp...although he can fake it perfectly (laughs). My relationship with him wasn't

always easy. He was very much an introvert...and when he was young he displayed animosity towards me...I thought it was uncalled for...but there was this instinctive animosity towards me. Um, and then a couple of years later when he was about 13...I had leave...and his brother was somewhere...and I took him on holiday with me to the South Coast. He didn't want to go. But I forced him...and that was the turning point in our relationship. From my perspective, he got sick and he wasn't sleeping well, but he actually enjoyed it. It was a turning point for us and our relationship got better. Before that...because of the relationship between me and his mother...I think he didn't like me much. But then it completely changed at that point.

Interviewer: What led you to suspect he was gay at such a relatively young age?

Pieter: Um, he wasn't that interested in sport...although he can be very sporty...nowadays he is very fit and well built...he gyms. He was sporty but he wasn't competitive. He wouldn't compete with other boys. He didn't have many friends. He didn't have a happy childhood. And his only friends were really girls. The first time I really thought he might be gay was when he was about 13. He was friends with a girl who was two years older than him...he was quite tall among his peers...and this girl was a singer...we saw her in concerts at school...and she is extremely attractive...the kind of girl the whole rugby team was after...and she was just interested in my son...but my son had absolutely no clue why she was interested in him. And that was the first time I thought he was possibly not interested in girls (laughs).

Interviewer: Looking more broadly now, how do you understand your role as a man, husband and father?

Pieter: Um, I don't quite know how to answer that. Um, I have a job, and I have responsibilities towards my family. Um, I think the main component of that is to be dependable. It is important for me to provide my family with safety and security. To be someone they can turn to...especially since I got divorced. It was extremely important for me to be there and to be available. I think I had some success with that...not as much as I would have liked. But I think I played a major role in my kids' life.

Interviewer: Which of these roles do you think is most important to you?

Pieter: You know, I have thought a lot about that...A teacher once said you can rather be unhappy in your marriage than in your job because you spend much more time in your job than with your wife and kids...And I took that quite seriously...I love my job...I am in love with my job...I don't get a lot of money, but hell it's a nice job...But at my age I think that has changed. I have proven myself in my job...I don't have a lot more that I want to achieve. I want to do my job for another 10 years or so and I want to retire...and then maybe continue on a part time basis...but it is playing a lesser important role...it is definitely playing a lesser important role in my life than it has over the last 30 years. Um, and my wife, and my kids are very important. Um, my kids have always been important to me but they are at a stage where they have to find their own way. And so, I think my wife is becoming more important to me...more so than the last 10 years. I have heard about people my age passing away...someone said the other day if there are still things you want to do then you better start doing it...don't postpone it anymore...and there are still things I want to do...and that is not my job...it is things other than work...and I need to give attention to that now...I am approaching that stage.

Interviewer: What is the best thing about being a father for you?

Pieter: The best part about being a father is seeing someone who is completely dependent on you, developing, and reaching an age where they become self-sufficient. It is very satisfying to see that happen and to be involved in it.

Interviewer: What is the toughest part about being a father for you?

Pieter: The oldest one is still at home...he is studying from home...which is not always a happy scenario. But the youngest one is leaving for varsity in January. I think that is going to be the toughest part of being a father. I am not looking forward to that at all...not having him in the house.

Interviewer: What do you think in your life had prepared you to be a man, a husband, and a father?

Pieter: I think my father taught me how to be a man...although being a husband...the content of being a husband has changed...and I don't think my father was a good example for me in that sense...you know, they were different then...my father didn't do the dishes. When my mother

went a way for some reason he was lost. He couldn't cook. She had to prepare everything beforehand and freeze it. He couldn't even cook himself an egg. I am a brilliant cook (laughs). I had to teach myself...in those years when I was alone and the kids would come visit me...I had to cook and put something on the table that they enjoyed. Actually, it was quite a pleasure. And today, being a husband, I can cook and I can prepare a meal for the family.

Interviewer: How does your relationship with your older son compare with your relationship with your younger son?

Pieter: I have a much more confrontational and robust relationship with my oldest son. My relationship with my youngest son is much more...I won't say tender because I love both of them...but it is a lot more sophisticated...I think...we are a lot more civilised when we talk. My older son is a difficult character...he is a musician...and musicians are more difficult (laughs)...and we fight a lot. We have a good relationship but it is a robust relationship...it is intense. While with the youngest one, we can sit around the table and he will tell me things... I would have to drag it out of the oldest one (laughs). Look we do have confrontations but it is a lot more mature than my relationship with the older one. I am more worried about the oldest one than the youngest one...I am more worried whether the oldest one will be able to take care of himself one day...he won't cook...he is not that self-sufficient. Not that he is spoilt...he is just up there and doesn't have his feet on the ground. It gets frustrating...he is 23 years old dammit (laughs).

Interviewer: How do your sons get along with one another?

Pieter: They don't get along very well. Um, I think the oldest irritates the younger one...with the same things that irritates me. But my son has less patience with him than me. You know, I think they are close...they went through a lot together...but they don't necessarily agree with one another.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your level of involvement when your kids would visit you?

Pieter: I had a friend at the time...well I was more friends with his wife...he was an advocate...and he had a very busy career...and he actually said to me that I had a better opportunity than him because when he got home his kids were asleep, and on weekends he was

too tired to give attention to them...while I had to actually plan for the weekends they visited...and I had to talk to them...as I hadn't seen them...and you don't really know what is going on in their minds...what is bothering them and what makes them happy. I had to make provision for that and I had to consciously do that...while someone in a married family does not necessarily do that. I don't think a divorced family is an unnatural or abnormal family these days...and single dads in my position have to consciously do these things...it is not automatic. You have to put in a lot of effort. The bad thing about it is there is no flow in the relationship. They are there on the weekend, and when they go back on a Sunday night, you are almost fed up with them and glad they are leaving (laughs)...and then you don't see them for two weeks again. You speak to them on the phone...but the phone is not the same thing...and you don't know what they are thinking and what their problems are...often you don't hear about it at all...something important happened and they forget to tell you...because they are kids, you know, they live from moment to moment...um, and they forgot what happened and you don't know about it...then you feel you are missing out and are not part of their lives. Of course this changed when they moved in with me, but they were older already...not that it was too late, because it is never too late, but I think that at times when that contact was crucial I was not there. I just feel like I missed out on certain things...I think I could have contributed more if it was different. And I hate the system that automatically accepts that a mother is a better parent than a father. This is not true. I am a better parent than she was. I was not given the opportunity...and I loathe that...I really do.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your reaction when you found out your son is gay.

Pieter: I think I was initially confused...but at the same time I realised why he wanted to live with me...because his mother had rejected him. He was very worried and concerned that I might reject him too. And I felt really sorry for him. Here is a kid...that at his age...at 11 years old...is walking around with this secret...and people are saying negative things about gays...and the things they do...and he is listening to them and knows that they are talking about him...and he walks with that in his head and his heart for years...and he is worried that his mother will reject him...well his mother had already rejected him...and that his father will do the same...it must have been hell. I was really determined to give him a place where he can feel safe and where he is accepted and where he can talk about it.

Interviewer: Do you think your current relationship with your son is what you expected years ago?

Pieter: No, look, I think I would have loved to become a grandfather and I don't think it is going to happen with him (laughs). But that is not the end of the world. Um, since he was a child I was very worried that he would not be able to do well at school...that he would not be able to have relationships with people...you know, I took him on holiday when he was seven years old...it was with me and my brother...we went camping at the coast...and he hardly said a word the entire trip...unless he was spoken to...he never said a word...and he was seven years old...and that really concerned me. I was worried about that...how is he going to grow up? And now...he has exceeded my expectations. Now he is very intelligent, talented and very attractive. He was a late bloomer in the academic sense...he took a gap year because he didn't know what to study...so we went to see a school psychologist...and he immediately said why didn't he study journalism and drama...and when he said it, it was the right thing for him. Now, we just need to find the money. I am looking forward to seeing how he will turn out academically...I have a really good feeling about it. He is so different from his brother...his room is perfectly clean...but he also has his weaknesses...he can be 'deur die kak' (laughs)...he can be difficult and moody sometimes...um, but he is so conscientious. He worked at two guest houses this year...he hated it but he learnt a lot. He doesn't like it, it is not his thing. But at least he is now more self-sufficient and knows how a business works. People like him...he is a likable chap. So to answer your question I think he has far exceeded my expectations.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Pieter: Um, my dad said in our first talks about it...that some people are born that way...while others are just simply promiscuous...or have a lack of self confidence...and things like that. And I have experienced it firsthand...in my family...that people are born gay...they can't do anything about that. And if anyone doubts that...I could say this is an example with strong proof.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your son being in a relationship with another guy?

Pieter: My son has been in two relationships. The first one was when he was in Matric. I was very concerned about it and I realised I couldn't do anything about it...but that I should stay close. The boyfriend was five years old older...he was a law student... a very likable guy. They

were in a relationship for about nine months or so...and my son ended the relationship...because this guy was friends with two other guys who were in a relationship...and they were extremely wealthy...they used him as a paralegal...and they sort of had a sexual relationship with him...and my son realised that and ended it. This year he met someone in his congregation...and this guy offered him a job at his guest house...they then had a short relationship...um, then my son ended it. Their relationship ended but he continued to work there...they are still friends. I am actually proud that he had the confidence to end a relationship with someone he works for. I am very confident that he will not compromise himself in a relationship. He can stand up for himself...and he knows what he wants and what he doesn't want, and what is acceptable and what is not.

Interviewer: How do you think same-sex sexuality fits in with your values, tradition, culture and religion?

Pieter: I think, you know, I never really had gay friends back then. I know people who do...straight men who have gay friends...but it was a lack in my being. And I think this is changing that. Being friends with the gay pastor...and attending his congregation...it enriches my life. My mother, for instance...I think it is difficult for her...but I can see the change in her...she has learnt some things...at her age...at 80. My wife...as I told you...she had gay friends for years...and it has also changed my view of what gay people are like...they are just people. I think, you know, I always had a tolerance for people who are different...I had initial negative experiences with some people...but it has broadened my horizons.

Interviewer: How do you feel about gay people getting married and raising children?

Pieter: Um, you know, raising children...to raise a kid you must be of sound mind and values...and as long as people have that...now, I hope this is not a stereotype...but I often get the impression that gay people are promiscuous and often very...um, because it is a suppressed and an oppressed community...they tend to indulge in unacceptable kinds of behaviour. I think it is a trend and not a rule...you know, of course there are exceptions. And I think that as society becomes more open that will probably improve. You know, my neighbours are two guys who have been living there for 15 years in a very stable relationship. I think my biggest concern is that my son might develop the idea that all gay people are promiscuous, and they abuse drugs,

and they have short term relationships, where they break up in uncivilised ways, and shout at each other, and become violent. My worry is not that he doesn't know that but rather that he knows it too well...because of what the gay pastor has told him. My worry is that he becomes too extreme and that he feels he is unable to connect with gay people and have relationships...because he had these preconceived ideas about them...and he doesn't realise there are nice people. It is quite possible that the majority of gay people are well balanced people...we don't know because we just don't know enough about them...we don't even know how many gay people there are.

Interviewer: How do you feel about seeing two gay men being intimate in public?

Pieter: If a man and a woman sit in public and suck each other's tongues (laughs) I wouldn't like it...the same with gay men. They can hold hands and kiss each other on the cheek and I wouldn't even notice it.

Interviewer: Have you discussed your son being gay with any of your family?

Pieter: I discussed it with my mother...with my other son...with my present wife...we often talk about it...and with my brother. Let me tell you, my son forced us to talk about it. I think, for my son it is important that people know he is gay...but on the other hand I have also warned him against throwing it in people's faces...don't shout it from the roof tops...but also don't be ashamed of it. I think I have helped him to find the right balance. The gay pastor has also been a positive influence on him in this regard.

Interviewer: Have you ever discussed issues of sex, sexuality, relationships and safer sex with your gay son?

Pieter: You know, for some reason, my ex-wife gave them a sex talk at a very early age. You know, I tried to do that then I realised they already knew about it. And when he was in his first relationship, I tried to talk to him about it, and he said listen, don't worry about it, I know what I am doing (laughs).

Interviewer: Do you think your son being gay has affected your relationship with him in any way?

Pieter: Um, you know, as I said, like with any parent, I had certain expectations...and projecting those expectations on your kids can become a sticking point and a problem...and the fact that he has told me he is gay and I know he is gay and we can talk about it...forced me to adapt my expectations. So I think, maybe previously I had these expectations of him...which were more like concerns of whether he was going to live up to where I wanted him to be. The fact that I had to adapt my expectations...my expectations of him are actually higher after he came out then it was before. I think it was a very positive thing in my case...it definitely improved our relationship. We can talk about these things whereas before that we couldn't talk about anything.

Interviewer: What do you think you needed when you found out your son is gay?

Pieter: I think the most important thing I needed was someone like the gay pastor...who was gay and an adult...and could give him guidance on things that I knew nothing about. When I realised he was walking around with this and he never spoke to someone who is gay...I was worried you know...eventually he would have found someone...and it most likely would not have been someone who would have given him good advice. The fact that he told me at such a young age it was an opportunity to find a positive influence for him.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Pieter: I think it is because of ignorance. It is just another human being. I wouldn't say it is because they are different...we are all different. So, I think men are just ignorant about it.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Pieter: I think men are expected to be strong...they are not supposed to lean on other people...they are not supposed to ask for help, or to show weakness.

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers might need to help deal with their son being gay?

Pieter: Um, I think they need to talk to their gay sons and they need to talk to other gay people. I think the perception that society has of gay people needs to be changed...and the way to change perceptions is through experience rather than just information....so you need to experience other gay people...to realise they are just normal people. So you need contact with them.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Pieter: It is your blood...it is your son. How can you reject him? He is from you...there is nothing wrong with him.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Pieter: You are great. I am proud of you. Carry on.

Interviewer: Any final comments before we end?

Pieter: Not at this stage.

Interviewer: Thank you, and thank you for your time.

INTERVIEW 6: THINUS (23/12/2011)

Interviewer: Are you ready to begin?

Thinus: Yes I am.

Interviewer: To start broadly, if I asked you “who are you?” how would you describe yourself?

Thinus: Um...well I would say I am a South African male...I used to work for a financial institution.

Interviewer: Going back now, how would you describe your childhood?

Thinus: Ag...we grew up in a different environment than today... we grew up in a kind of rural environment...which was nice in terms of our childhood. It was a very protected environment...um, it was more simplistic. So I would say I had a happy childhood. We were children... so we would play...and use our imaginations in the games we played. I had a few friends...my sister was a year and a half younger than me...and we would play together...me with my friends and her with her friends. We would play things like cowboys and crooks. So, ja...I have good memories of those days. Now at my age...I often sit and think about those days...you know, whatever happened to that girlfriend I had...did she ever get married...how did her life turn out...you know...and then get onto facebook and trace this guy down and talk to him again.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your mother and father while you were growing up?

Thinus: Um...I grew up in a house that was very strict. My father was terribly strict. For example, if you got home late for dinner then you were not allowed to join them for dinner. You had to excuse yourself and you would be dealt with afterwards and then you would be given your dinner. Um...I think I never really knew him, to be honest...he was retired already when I finished school...so he was old then already...and then he died of a heart attack when I was about 19. My oldest brother is about seven years older than me...there was quite a big gap between us...and I think he had more time to share with my father. If I think about it today I think I wished I had more time with him. I can only remember a few things about him...but, ja, I wish I had known him better. I mostly remember him being strict. Um, and then...although my father

wasn't a sportsman...I remember we would go watch boxing and rugby. Um, and my father loved good music. They went to dinner and dancing in those days...you know, we grew up in a mining environment...and my sister would win her tennis tournaments and they would then attend a trophy dinner and dance...and they would dress up really smart. Um and then when I started working...we decided back then that I would go into banking, once I had been in the army. In those days old people believed you started a job and you stayed there. There weren't many jobs back then. If you worked for the bank it was stable and secure, like working in a state department. And then when I started working...he would drive me to work and back, and it is then that we started developing a father-son relationship. I was then a working man and he could relate to me as an adult. But my brother and he already had a better relationship because they worked in similar fields. Um, ja, and then in terms of my mother...I had a good relationship with my mother. She is also not alive anymore. She was very strict. When my father wasn't there she would then discipline us herself. Um, but she was good to us...we lived in boarding school in those days because we stayed far from the schools...and she catered for our needs...she would make sure we were well clothed and looked after...I have a very soft spot for her...but we didn't have the type of relationship my son and wife have today. Um, she grew up with her brothers but she never really spoke about her family much. Till today we have questions about her. Her mother also died very early on. So, I think she couldn't really show her feelings. I think she found it hard to open up. But then again perhaps it is because we were children...you know, in those days children were meant to be seen and not heard.

Interviewer: Tell me about the relationship between your mother and father.

Thinus: I think they had a very good relationship. If I look at their photos when I was younger I could see they had a good relationship. You know, they had their squabbles, but they got on very well. They also did things together. My dad would not go and sit in a pub on his own. In those days you didn't do that. These days you can but in those days you were considered a drunkard. In those days you would go to a lounge and have a drink with your wife. At a later stage when my dad died she took to drinking a bit. I think it affected me a bit. But eventually she outgrew it and eventually died in peace. She was nearly 80. I think she became very lonely after he died.

Interviewer: Tell me about your role models while growing up?

Thinus: Um, I think my father was a role model...but then my mother was also a role model in a way too. He was a good man...he provided for the family. I was born in 1950, after World War II ended, and the Afrikaners, or South Africans, were very busy building up again. I am very interested in that type of thing. He had good qualities, like I said he was very strict, and he taught me to be very disciplined. He was a hard man and you couldn't bargain with him. But he was always fair. Like I said we were poor but we had enough to eat and we had clothes and we went to school and he wouldn't stand back for other people if you know what I mean. And he actually trained me in terms of working with finances. Still today I use that. Although he was an old man and we couldn't relate...I would relate to him through my older brother and sister who were already adults...you know. If I look at the pictures today...he loved beautiful women...he had great respect for a woman. He treated my mom very well. They had their differences behind closed doors. And he taught me about these values. Like my sister said the other day, if ever our parents were still alive they would have been proud of us...and the values we hold. I always say to my son that people's first impressions matter. Therefore make a good impression.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with your siblings?

Thinus: I had an older brother and sister and then a younger sister. When I was still at school my brother was already working. I would come home on Fridays after boarding school... and the one time I asked where my brother was and my father said he wasn't there. My father would always say if you didn't respect his household's rules then you knew where the door was. So my brother decided to leave. You know, the same thing is coming up with my son now as well. Sorry, I am jumping around a bit here. I can see that my brother and my son are very much alike...although my son is a very soft person, he has a very short temper, and he gets angry before he thinks. His mother is also like that. I am different person in that sense. I can also give...but I tend to keep it back and keep it back until I say enough! But I would go and visit my brother at the boarding house he was staying in...and he had a car that he was working on...building up the engine...to give it that extra bit. And I would go there and just sit. I am not the mechanic type. Our family was more sports-orientated. My eldest sister was a sports champion, my brother would play badminton and rugby, but my other sister is actually retarded...she was born that way... the doctor was under the influence on the Saturday evening and he damaged her brain during her birth....She has been in a home for many years so I can't say much about her... but I think it had

an effect on my mom. And then I played my sports...I wasn't very much into rugby at that stage...perhaps because I didn't have much exposure to it...but today I am actually mad about rugby...My wife and younger son wouldn't watch it with me but my daughter would sit with me...while she was still in school...and we would watch a game together. Ja, well, I suppose different people like different things. I played tennis, I swam, and I played for the first team. So that was in the family. And we were also musically inclined...I think that came from my father's side. And we would go and watch shows. My father loved sopranos. Today, my wife is into her music, and she will buy any music that comes on the market. My son is the same. I am a bit different...I am more into classical music. Although I like some 'lekker boere musiek' too...but if you really want to treat me you will give me a CD of Pavarotti and I will play it in my car as loud as I can. My son is very musical...he just has that...he will download music from the internet...and he and his mother will share that. I am not so much into that. Not that it worries me. The same with cooking...he is a very good cook. For our anniversary one year he said we shouldn't go out and he would cook for us. So, he is a great all-rounder. He is also like his grandfather on his mother's side...he was a handy-man...and that also comes out in my son. Where I have to learn, my son is naturally handy. He will put stuff up and his mother would call him to do things...because I was a paper-pusher, an admin guy (laughs).

Interviewer: Tell me about your male friendships while growing up?

Thinus: I only had a few playing friends....it wasn't always school friends. Um, I remember this one guy. I remember his mother was like a soprano...and she wasn't well and she would go into an institution for treatment now and again...it was really sad...um, and we were great friends...we would play together, we had girlfriends together, and then we were at each others' weddings...but then it just sort of backed down a bit...because we moved around a lot in those years. With the other friends, Um, I remember a guy I knew... his sister's friend's brother was gay...at that time it was very obvious. He did ballet. In those days when a guy did ballet it wasn't on, if you know what I mean. Um, but he was a bit older than us. In those years the gay guy thing wasn't very obvious. If I think about it today...in the situation I am in now...then I would realise that is what it was...so I can identify it now. So yes, when we were in school, we would play. Then in high school I was in boarding school and so I had different friends again. Then when I was in standard nine, I started dating a girl. She was from a very up-market family. But I never met

them. I spent a lot of time writing letters to each other... and she was a wonderful girlfriend. And then we broke up for some reason that I can't recall. My best friend then started dating her (laughs). Up to today, I like having friends around... um, at this stage we have some friends at church. Um, I would really like to trace one or two of my childhood friends...like the guy that went out with my younger sister...we were naughty together...we smoked together and we went to discos together. Even my son's friends...I can relate to them...we can have a nice conversation.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your experience with other men while in the army?

Thinus: Man, you know when I was in the army, I was just out of school, um, and not that I was ever mucho, and say 'vir jou donner ek', but there was one guy in our cabin, and everyone would clean up nicely. Till today I am very clinical about keeping things clean because my mother taught us that. When my kids don't keep things tidy I will reprimand them. And their mother is 10 times worse than I am. And we knew if we passed an inspection we would get a pass for the weekend. But this one guy would not pull his weight. I am not a violent oke but I actually snapped the one day. And I said to him 'I will donner you if you don't perform now'. He 'skrieked his gat af' and he started cleaning. Um, I had another friend who brought us cartons of cigarettes. And then half way through my army days I just stopped smoking...because I was a sportsman...I played a lot of squash. So, I kept fit in those days...but eight years ago I had a heart by-pass...and that was terrible for me. And that is why we are so concerned about our son's health. We want him to look after himself...he stopped smoking...but he has picked up weight...and we are concerned about it. Not to put pressure on him...but we are concerned. But getting back to the army...um, I was in the admin section...we did our basics, which was not very nice... and then we were based with the para-bats and all the SA one and those guys...and these guys wanted to manipulate the other units. In terms of the admin section I was in...I would say it was a bit, um...discriminated against by the other guys. Um, we would also do some driving...I can remember driving one Colonel to treatment every week after he suffered a stroke. But on the whole it was a good experience...it is a pity people don't have to do it anymore.

Interviewer: Can you tell me of any direct or indirect experiences with same-sex people while growing up?

Thinus: Um, like I said just now I knew about the guy that did ballet. Um, and then there was a guy in our class...and he was very reserved...he wasn't very accepted by the rest of the class. If I think back, I think it is because of his own doing. He allowed it. That was his choice. Like I said we didn't know about this type of thing...back then we were kids and we just played...we just thought this guy was a bit weird and he walked like this (laughs).

Interviewer: Tell me more about your relationship with your wife?

Thinus: Look (laughs) my wife has said if she knew then what she knows today...back when we were still working... then she may have wanted her life to be a bit different. She is a good all-rounder...she is very good at needle-work, she used to bake a lot, she is a very good cook...which I think my son got that side from her...and, um, she is a musical coach, she is very musical, and she used to play at championships but she stopped...she is not sporty in any way. But when we met, we actually had a blind date. She didn't fancy me at first. At a later stage she came to town again. I then went over to where she was staying and I then invited her to dinner. We went to dinner a few times after that and the relationship developed from there. We then got engaged and I then got my first transfer. We then got married. We've had very good times. But I think my wife would have wanted it differently. I think she wanted to become a career woman, although in those days it wasn't so important because my mother didn't work and my father made enough money to look after his family. Um, ja, this thing with my son became an issue at some stage...she actually blamed me and said I wasn't at home enough. I was always busy and worked late. Today we ask many questions...him and his sister both know...where did we go wrong in terms of the discipline...you don't throw clothing on the floor, you put it in the washing basket...you know, small things like that...that irritate you. This is not how we thought the kids would turn out. The one day he caused his mom's car to be stolen. I told him he could use his mom's car but he must look after it. He then parked it in front of the place where he worked at the time and they stole the car. She then blamed me and said I should have been more strict on him. You know, that discipline thing. And yet in his work he is perfect. He is actually very intelligent.

Interviewer: Would you say that your relationship with your wife is more traditional or not?

Thinus: Um, no not really. When the kids were still small she would go to town and my daughter was still in nappies and I would clean her nappy. I will do the dishes. If there is washing to be done then I will do it. And I will cook...my cooking is braaing or making a potjie. So there isn't a thing of I am a woman and I am a man and this is my job and that is yours...Um, perhaps we are traditional in a way but not very traditional. I think that is why I get on so well with my son. Like if he cooks I won't make an issue about it. Sometimes I want him to help me in the garden, something we could do together. Many times I thought, I wish my son and I would share certain things... like actual things like history. But he isn't interested in that. He will rather talk about technology and I will think how boring. My son and his mother have a great relationship and they have a lot in common...I don't interfere with that. I accept that. I can sit with her and joke about things...but she is more serious...and my son is also like that...also serious like his mother. You and I can sit and joke about something, but he won't find it funny at all.

Interviewer: Looking more broadly now, how do you understand your role as a man, husband and father?

Thinus: Um, well if I see some men then I wonder is that how some men behave...if that is how men drink...I am like my father that way...I know if I go to party I know when I have reached my limit...As a man I know I should stand up and be respectful in terms of that. My children have never put me to bed. So, as a man, I don't really have to do the man thing...I am different to that...although when I speak to my male friends we would speak about actual things...like politics...um, but I would never speak about a woman...and lick my lips and say I would take that girl to bed...I wasn't raised like that. So, I don't do all of the man things. I would say my son probably does more than I would do...I am just not a practical guy...although I do some things in the garden and I have done some renovations to my house. As a husband, ja, many times I have thought that if I could turn the clock back, I would have done things differently. I would have been there for my family a bit more. But I will never allow that to disqualify myself as a father and a husband. Because we all make mistakes in life...and um, ja, many people say I will bring up my children a certain way and look how they turn out anyway. And I always say to my wife we are just human, we all make mistakes. And then I would have disciplined the kids a bit more...you know, put my foot down a bit more. Like when the car was stolen.

Interviewer: Which of these roles do you think is most important to you?

Thinus: Um, I think it is very close. But I would say probably being a husband would come first. My wife would complain when I worked a lot when we were younger and I would say to her that if my work didn't come first then she couldn't come second. She would get mad with me but if I didn't work then she wouldn't stay with me...she would have left me. And then today if something were to happen to her I think I would feel very lonely... I would get over it...but I would miss her terribly...except for the squabbles and our differences we are mates... we can go to movies...I would rather take her than a good friend of mine to the movies...she is my companion, she is a friend...we are like a business type of thing.

Interviewer: What is the toughest part about being a father for you?

Thinus: Um, I think the toughest part is pleasing everyone, no matter what...whether it is financial...or just giving of yourself...or when my son and wife squabble...it is not a thing about taking sides...it is about keeping the peace...I manage it but it is not nice.

Interviewer: What is the best part about being a father for you?

Thinus: The best part is being able to give something of myself and my experience...there were many a time where I wanted to share something with my son...like father to son...but he will be on a different wave. But I want to share my experiences with my kids. I have a very good relationship with my daughter. She is very much for her father, although she and her mother are also close...they can chat like friends...I don't want it all on me as the father...but I am there...on the edge of the family...I don't see myself as the boss of the family...the boss of the house...I don't see myself like that. Sometimes my son and I will have a squabble and I will take a hard stand. But otherwise I would have wanted a soul mate kind of relationship.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how you felt when your son was born?

Thinus: Um, to be honest, I wanted a son first. I think it is just natural that a father wants a son. But when I had my daughter first I thought it was the best thing ever. And then my son was born and I was happy that I had a son too. He was great. I can remember we got him a big crane for Christmas and a few days later it was in pieces. And I told my wife we can't shout at him for that because he didn't break it...it shows me he is interested in how things work...I am also like that.

Um, as a child, if we went out she would help our daughter get ready and I would help him dress. You know, I cared for him a lot. We would kick the ball around when he was small. But he was usually on his own...in his own world...my wife and I would speak about it...and we would wonder why he was like that. At a later stage, I remember he played rugby but he didn't like it. I didn't push him. I bought him and his sister a tennis racket each and tried to get them into that. But my son wasn't into sports that much. My daughter played some sports. But my son wasn't really into it. And I would watch golf on TV and he would say it was a stupid game. I can remember when he was still small and in kindergarten, his teacher would tell us that he would take off all his clothes and get into the duck pond with the ducks (laughs). He was a different kettle of fish altogether. Then in high school, there were these bullies, these macho men...rugby players... and they bullied him terribly. We went and saw the principal and they called the guy's father in and the bully had to apologise and he got a hiding. It was then that I realised he was different. My wife could probably tell you more...she is more observant...you know, I was the father and I was working a lot. And then he had a friend visiting all the time, and we didn't like this boy very much...and eventually we put one and one together and we realised he was gay. It was sad in a way...I think for me it was tough...it was a thing of where is that son to go fishing with...even today I am like that...if there is something on TV I want call me wife to come look...it is the thing about sharing whatever...and doing things together like father and son...you know, I would want to do things and he wouldn't want to do it. He would never say he would start a fire for us so that we can braai. So it is a lonely life in terms of the relationship...although he would come and dine with us. It is nice having him there and we can dine and we can talk about certain things but he is a working man now, it is different, he is not a boy anymore. His mother would say don't reprimand him anymore because he is a grown man now. And even if I am 100 and he is 70 he will still be my child. But you have to do it differently. We should be like friends...as adults...not quite like father and son...more like soul mates. But it is not like that. Although we accept his goings and doings and his way, he would share more with his mother. Not that he is scared to tell me stuff. We could be driving and he will comment on a guy he sees along the way and will agree that he is attractive and that he would be perfect for my daughter. But since high school, our motto was that the kids should come home...if they want to party or braai then they can do it at home...we didn't want them away from home...not because we are a selfish family, but we wanted them to be safe.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about when you found out your son is gay.

Thinus: You know, the mind is a wonderful thing...it forgets... you tell it to forget it forgets...it was a healing process...um, we didn't know about it...um, we never grew up with it...except for that funny guy that was strange to us...he was in a different school and he only came on holiday with us...so you didn't have much interaction with that situation. You didn't know what it was. But when we found out it was a shock...even for my wife...and she had previous exposure to it in her school days because two of her friends were gay...I think it is that father and son thing...of doing things together. You start realising that this is going to be the ultimate. You know what I am saying? You always want the best for your children. Doing things together...I have just realised that that dream is just scattered. In time, you know, you read up on stuff and learn about it. My one sister is very religious and she is like a soul mate...I would probably tell her something I wouldn't tell my wife because it would upset her...and she is my family and between us we can relate to the problem...and when it came out she actually said, 'What is the sense in denying the truth?' With my son you can't really tell. When he was younger it was obvious because he was different. My sister said it was fine, we accept him. He has one cousin though that doesn't accept it. It causes a bit of friction. But, so what, so what...you know what I am saying. I think what helped a lot is in my work environment I was involved in disciplinary hearings...and I think it taught me how to handle things. But it wasn't easy...not because of him as a person...but because of that relationship being scattered. My son will never be my boy...never doing certain things together. But ja, you adjust. He is an entertainer in many other ways. He will bring his friends over and we can relate to them. It doesn't mean you are a bad person...because you gay or lesbian...I mean it is your life...I can't talk for another person...we make choices in our lives and we must stick to those choices and you can't blame anyone else for the choices you make. I make my decisions and I must stick to my decisions.

Interviewer: Who do you think coped better with your son being gay and why?

Thinus: Um, it depends on the type of situation, but I think my wife coped better. They relate easier to one another and they would go to the kitchen and share and interest in cooking. But I don't have any hang-ups...I can talk to any of his friends...and it doesn't worry me...as long as it is a fruitful discussion...and not a one-way conversation that can make it difficult.

Interviewer: What is your general feeling towards your son at the moment?

Thinus: We are opening a can of worms here. In terms of the gay thing...it catches me sometimes...especially in terms of the sexual relationships. I accept it but I don't agree with it. It makes me feel uncomfortable. I come from a narrow-minded Christian environment. And I have many times said to my son...we try from our side...we care about him and we are interested in his life...Um, and many times I have said to him I can accept the man-man things...that's fine...it is strange...I didn't grow up with it...but we won't throw him out...but the sexual relationships...that I feel that is not him. One day I said he should be celibate and he said he was fine with that, but then he asked why he couldn't have sex if everybody else was allowed to have sex. And I said, well that is the choice you made. I accept it but I don't approve of it. In terms of the sexual stuff it is wrong for me but I wouldn't chase him out the house because of it. Many people do that...many fathers don't even speak to their sons because of that. He is human being. God made him like that...I didn't make him like that I am sure...it isn't me or my wife's doing...he was created like that. I wouldn't disregard him because of that. With other things, we will bump heads sometimes but that is because of other things, because of personalities, because of his way of doing things...that has nothing to do with him being gay.

Interviewer: Do you think your son ever struggled with being gay?

Thinus: Um, I think so, yes...um, he mentioned one day that being gay had a more negative connotation... people always look down on gay people? And I think this made him feel unhappy. And I said to him don't bang it on the big bell...you don't have to run around and tell everyone you are gay...you must still know your place...and accept your decision...some things will never come to you because you are gay. But don't advertise it to the world...Ah, hallelujah, I am gay! If I am stinking rich I am not going to tell the world...know your place and get on with it. Live your life and be happy.

Interviewer: What do you think causes homosexuality?

Thinus: When we started asking questions, we spoke a lot about that. I think it is carried...from my wife's side...it is in her family there. We once saw an article about a guy who was gay and then he turned straight and then he got married to a woman. My son then asked how this is possible. I mean, how many guys come out of the closet at age 40...like that presenter Riaan on

the 'Kyknet' channel...no one thought he was gay and then he came out...and he is a wonderful presenter. So, I think it is a genetic thing. And there are many guys who will live like that and you wouldn't even know...like that At Koster on Binnelanders. But if you think about it you would have realised it. They are not banging it on a big bell. It is his life, so what.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your son being in a relationship with another guy?

Thinus: Look, I think I have gotten used to it. It doesn't worry me anymore. It is like when I have a friend and he comes over and we drink a pint together and watch rugby. He comes home with a friend and they chat in the lappa or watch TV...ja, that's how I see it...I don't want a negative connotation to it. But it sometimes catches up with me...the same would happen if I saw my daughter kissing her boyfriend...you don't do that type of thing in public...that is a private affair. If you want to do that then go in another room. It is just about respect. I wouldn't sit and 'vry' their mother in front of them. You have respect for one another. But if it happens then it happens. We accept it and it is fine with us.

Interviewer: What do you associate with being gay?

Thinus: Um, I think it is a man liking another man...two men connecting. Um, ja...we will joke about it many times...like at dinner, the three of us, would joke and say 'oooh look at that meisie coming around the corner now'. My son had a school friend and we would call him 'teepot' (gestures and laughs). So many times we will joke about it....guys with their fine fingers (gestures). Ja, we just joke about it...but we don't mean anything bad...we accept it. He has another friend...and he has said a few times to my wife 'ag jy weet ons moffies doen sulke dinge'. And then we would probably say 'ja, you guys are different...a different cup of tea'. And joke about it.

Interviewer: How do you think homosexuality fits in with your values, tradition, culture and religion?

Thinus: Well, like I have said before it is different. To be honest, I think I try to be religious, and I think many times that has been my salvation. That has helped me and I know where my strengths come from. And it takes time. But if I think back to what my father would have thought about it...I think my father would have understood it. It was new to us and we had to deal with it.

We prayed about it many times. And like I said the father-son relationship is not as I thought it would be. But ja, you make peace with it eventually and you accept it as much as you can.

Interviewer: How do you feel about gay people getting married and raising children?

Thinus: I think marriage in general is serious stuff. My dad would say 'trou is nie perde koop nie'. It is serious stuff. If you get married you need to stick with that person for the rest of your life. Raising children is hard work...it is a lot of responsibility. I don't have a problem with gay men having children...as long as they do it properly. I don't believe gay men are molesters or anything like that. If they could raise a child the same or better than I could then why not. Gay people are not aliens...they are humans...so why not.

Interviewer: Have you ever discussed issues of sex, sexuality, relationships and safer sex with your gay son?

Thinus: I have yes. I felt it was my responsibility to do that. If my son came home with HIV then I will never forgive myself for not talking to him about it. Even if he was straight I would have spoken to him about it. If you want to sleep around then use a condom. So I have joked with him many times and asked him whether he got his six-pack with him. Um, but I need to be careful at times. I have a great sense of humour but sometimes he doesn't see it like that. So, sometimes you have to be careful how you say things to him. He is a lot like his mother. So our relationship can be a bit stiff sometimes. Um, I think I would have preferred a more relaxed relationship. When I had my heart operation and I was very sick he was very concerned about me. At other times he is very much on his own.

Interviewer: What do you think you needed when you found out your son is gay?

Thinus: I think I would have needed some support from somebody who had been in that situation or who knows about it and had studied about it. I think some counselling could have helped. I think more people should go that route because you don't solve it over night.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general have a hard time accepting gay people?

Thinus: I think, not so much the English-speaking guys, but more Afrikaner men...you know, Boere (emphasis)... you know, macho men...the type of men who abuse their wives...They are

not a father's back-side...he is more like a bloody boss or a dictator type of thing...those type of guys call someone a sissy if he cooks. I think it is a mindset. I know of many fathers that don't even speak to their sons.

Interviewer: Why do you think men in general are reluctant to seek out support?

Thinus: Um, It is probably about pride...you know that man thing...I don't want to be associated with it because I will be labelled as a gay accepter. Most men don't want to expose their baggage. We all have skeletons in our closet (laughs).

Interviewer: What do you think these fathers might need to help deal with their son being gay?

Thinus: Um, I would say fathers need some counselling. The counselling would help them a lot. They need to put it on the table and deal with it...you know, being gay is your life, but I can relate to you as a person.

Interviewer: What would you like to say to other fathers experiencing difficulty with their son being gay?

Thinus: I would say they must deal with it...go for counselling...get some help...and keep talking about it. If they stop talking and communication breaks down then there will be trouble. As long as they talk then they will keep the channels open. We are human beings and it doesn't help to bury it inside. Pride is a terrible thing. It can really break you. I would say this is the situation...it is not going away...so deal with it...make peace with it...and carry on with your life. But communication is important.

Interviewer: What is the one thing you would like to say to your son?

Thinus: I care a lot about him (tears up).

Interviewer: Any final comments before we end?

Thinus: I may have missed out one or two things so if I remember anything I will get in touch with you.

Interviewer: Thank you, and thank you for your time.