CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature will be reviewed in terms of the following topics: relevant aspects of the historical and socio-political background of South Africa; the black rural family; perspectives on adolescence; reasons for father absence, the role of the father, and the life experiences of children in the absence of the father. The cultural background of the selected population will also be addressed. In the discussion of the above-mentioned themes, reference will be made to relevant theoretical frameworks. In some instances, the information that is reported regarding cultural practices is based on the researcher's longstanding and intimate knowledge of the community where the study was done, her personal participation in various cultural practices, and interviews conducted with people in the community.

2.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The socio-political context of South Africa seems to be an important factor contributing not only to father absence in rural families, but also to the type of life experiences children go through.

2.2.1 Division of land

According to Pomeroy (1986), racism is present in the societies of all the leading western countries, where black or other non-white minorities are usually exposed to discrimination. Prior to South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 blacks, who are the majority of the population, were the victims of oppression and deprivation by the white minority. Whites occupied the largest proportion of land (87%), and the remaining 13% was provided for blacks in the form of 'homelands'. These homelands were called Transkei, Kwazulu, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Lebowa, Qwa Qwa, Venda, Gazankulu, KwaNdebele, and KaNgwane.

Blacks were supposed to stay in these homelands, but the land was not of satisfactory quality to ensure sufficient production for economic survival (Pomeroy, 1986).

2.2.2 Migrant labour

Rural black men are often migrant labourers, moving from rural areas to work in urban areas (Pomeroy, 1986). In the cities, they usually stay in hostels with bare facilities. In previous times, they were forbidden to bring their families with them and thus were forced to live separately from their wives and children for long periods of time. They either had to carry a permit to seek work, or have proof that they were employed, and had to go back home when their contracts expired, or when they were no longer strong enough to work, or if there was no work for them (Dvorin, 1952; Pomeroy, 1986). This disruption of normal family life, which resulted from the system of migrant labour, was a prime cause of destroyed family relationships and personal demoralisation.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) posits that a child's development is enhanced through the presence and participation of other parties like spouses, friends and relatives. Furthermore, there should be links between settings which allow people to move from one setting to another, for example reciprocity between the home setting and an employment setting of a father. If such parties are absent or play a disruptive role, as occurs when fathers are absent from their families, the effective functioning of the family system is disrupted and the development of the child negatively affected. It is like a three-legged chair: it is more easily upset if one leg is broken or if one leg is shorter than the others.

Pomeroy (1986), Dvorin (1952) and Giliomee and Schlemmer (1989) assert that the policies implemented by the previous white government made African workers to lose their humanity and self respect, and therefore their urge to resist exploitation and injustice was destroyed. Investors depended on cheap black migrant labour, and these labourers used to earn lower wages compared to whites, even if they were doing the same job. This contributed to financial power being concentrated primarily in the hands of the white sector of society. This exploitation dated back to the time of British colonial rule:

> "British colonial rule itself, it must be stressed, reinforced the oppression of black
> majority, treating them as cheap labour on which colonial fortunes were made. It

was black labour, in appalling conditions, which dug out gold and diamonds in the deepest pits" (Pomeroy, 1986, p.6).

Marks and Unterhalter (in Booysen & Hattingh, 1997), argue that apartheid, which in terms of Bronfenbrenner's theory formed part of the macrosystem, located male workers at the site of urban production and tied women to rural locales. However, black men are no longer forced to live and work apart from their families. With the dawn of the new democratic order in South Africa, blacks are no longer confined to work under appalling conditions where work permits are required, salaries are meagre and where they are separated from their families. Rural black men may bring their families to the cities and this could lead to a decrease of children growing up without a father due to migrant labour. However, as a result of limited work opportunities in rural areas, it is unlikely that migrant labour will completely disappear. Rural people may continue to be forced to look for an income in the urban areas and, due to economic realities, it may be impossible for them to bring their families with them. Indeed, one can observe, in the area where the study was done, that many men still have a home in a rural area, while working in urban areas.

2.2.3 Education

According to Pomeroy (1986) the former racial segregation in the education system lead to gross inequalities in every aspect of education. Per capita expenditure for white school children was higher than that for black school children. White schools were well equipped, while black pupils had to attend classes in inadequate facilities; sometimes shacks or sheds were used for a school, and many of those schools did not have toilets and other facilities. The dropout rate of black pupils in the course of primary school has been enormous. Even those wanting to go to secondary school were frustrated because there was an insufficient number of secondary schools, and children often had to walk long distances to neighbouring villages to attend school.

Without proper education these children were destined to become unskilled migrant labourers when grown-up. They also could not stand for whatever they believed they were deprived of, because lack of education means lack of intellectual resources to fight for your rights. They were actually not empowered to resist exploitation.

2.2.4 Self-esteem

Although the transition to democracy has bought in its wake educational and other reforms, the legacies of apartheid have not been eradicated. Many men are still migrant labourers, and many youths still do not attend or finish their secondary education. Some blacks (especially the uneducated, rural, poor) still regard themselves as inferior to whites in terms of intelligence, physical appearance and general standard of life. This makes them to have low self-esteem.

This can be interpreted in terms of social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which postulates that people compare their own groups [ingroup(s)] with other groups [outgroup(s)], to determine the extent to which their own groups provide them with positive self-esteem. The more positive people's perceptions of their ingroup(s) are, the more positive their self-esteem is. Through the process of social comparison, a status hierarchy is established, and high status groups are perceived to be relatively superior to others, with positive characteristics attributed to them. In contrast, low status groups are perceived as inferior, and negative characteristics are attributed to them.

When people's group membership does not confer positive distinctiveness on them, they may follow various strategies to restore their self-esteem. These strategies include social and psychological mobility. The former entails leaving the ingroup physically, or dissociating oneself psychologically from it, and aspiring to attain membership of a higher status group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). If this is not possible, psychological mobility may occur; this means that members of a low status group assimilate positive characteristics of the high status group. This, according to De la Rey (1991), is commonly expressed as preference for the attitudes and behaviours associated with the high status group.

If people fail to develop positive self-esteem through identification with the outgroup (e.g., whites), which could occur when efforts to move socially upwards are blocked, they may endeavour to attain positive self-esteem within the context of their own group. In Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) this is termed social creativity. The latter entails discarding a negative image of the ingroup by either creating new dimensions of comparison with an outgroup, or re-interpreting the ingroup's ascribed negative characteristics in a positive way. Values and a way of life could, for example, be justified in positive terms. In the context of the

present study, this could mean, for example, defining a good father as someone who is supposed to be a migrant labourer, but who comes homes every month-end.

2.3 THE RURAL CONTEXT

2.3.1 Introduction

The following information is aimed at providing understanding of family life in rural areas. However, care must be taken in generalising these descriptions, since the information is specifically applicable to the area where the study was conducted. The selection of particular descriptions is based on the researcher's knowledge of the area. Each village in a rural area has its own way of life, even though some characteristics are shared across villages. There are areas which are more developed than that where the study was done, and therefore may differ from some of the information provided.

The information may also help in understanding the research results, because the children's experiences may not only depend on the absence of their fathers, but also on the more general conditions under which they live.

2.3.2 Physical characteristics of a rural village

Kotze and Van der Waal (1995) conducted research in a rural area in the Northern Province and describe the following physical characteristics of the village: There were scattered households situated on the residential stands of the village, which were often fenced to keep livestock out of maize and vegetables planted around the homesteads. Few people owned cattle and more people had goats, and some kept donkeys for ploughing and transport of purchases, firewood and building materials.

2.3.3 Ways of survival

Poverty is common in rural areas. In the study by Kotze and Van der Waal (1995), there were differences in the life of each household and its individual members. Economically active men were mostly migrant labourers, working in Gauteng, others were working around nearby towns

as government servants. Very few people had secondary education. Women were mainly working on the white owned farms and some men did not allow their wives to work there, suspecting that they would be tempted to have lovers. Families often have many dependants, and migrants remitted only a small portion of their income home.

According to Kotze and Van der Waal (1995), the people they studied used all kinds of economic strategies to survive, like exploiting informal economic opportunities such as donkey cart transport, subsistence agriculture, building, or selling beer and vegetables. Women and girls entered into temporary sexual relationships in anticipation of gifts of money from their temporary partners.

Fuel for heating and cooking is mostly obtained from firewood collected in the veld by women. Where this is illegal, the women are at risk of getting fined by government officials and they are also at risk of getting raped (Kotze & Van der Waal, 1995; South African National Scientific Programme Report (SANSP), 1985). Some blacks also use cow-dung for heating the house and cooking.

2.3.4 The role of the extended family

Nielsen (1987), and Kotze and Van der Waal (1995) found that families in rural areas depend on their extended families for emotional and economic support. In general, the members of the extended families are interdependent on one another. However, these authors differ in some respects, since they conducted their research in different countries. Nielsen conducted his research in New York and found that migration to urban areas posed a threat to extended families, since family bonds were likely to be broken by distance. Kotze and Van der Waal (1995) conducted their research in South Africa. They found that the more men moved to urban areas for work, the more the family members remaining in the rural areas depended on each other, and members moved between households as a survival strategy.

This may be regarded as reciprocity, according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, because children get food, clothing and at times attend school while at the same time helping the members of that family by doing home chores and looking after the livestock. The environment benefits from the child while the child benefits from the environment.

2.3.5 Farming

The findings of SANSP (1985) indicate that rural people largely depend on agricultural activities and on owning livestock for their survival, even though these enterprises are not productive enough to create prosperity. In the following paragraphs, some of the factors which constitute obstacles to successful agricultural production and livestock farming among rural blacks, will be discussed.

Due to migration of rural men to urban areas, a large number of households are headed by women, and consequently agricultural activities are given less attention, as much time is spent on household chores. Collection of water and firewood involves walking long distances, and this keeps part of the labour force tied up in non-agricultural activities.

Small-scale black farmers are at a disadvantage compared to large-scale white farmers with regard to receiving government subsidies for fertilisers, drought relief, tax and rail rebates, etc. Although the present South African government has increased financial help for small-scale farmers, the people are not likely to apply for help to the extent as would be expected. The reasons for this could include that black people often lack trust in themselves with regard to production efficiency, they may lack knowledge of how to apply for assistance, and may be discouraged when applications are turned down or when there are delays in replying to applications. It might also be difficult for black farmers to change their accustomed habits of agricultural practice.

One characteristic of the agricultural practices in rural black areas, has been that of subsistence farming. Enough food is produced for each household, without surplus from which expenses for needs such as better housing, clothing, education and other requirements could be met. In instances where products such as beans, peaches etc., are sold, the profit is usually low since 'everyone is a farmer' and people provide for themselves. There is generally also a lack of resources to improve productivity with the view to make a living out of agriculture. Typically, the land is used until its natural fertility is exhausted and a transfer is made to new fields and grazing areas.

Cattle farming played, and continues to play, an important role and this is reinforced by cultural beliefs. A person's status and riches are determined not only by the quality of meat and milk from his herd, but also by the size of the herd. The possession of many cattle means wealth and provides the individual with respect and dignity from the community. It is thus less likely that a person would sell some of his cattle as a source of income. Selling cattle would often also not provide a high income because, due to a lack of farming resources, herds tend to have worms or other diseases, and consequently lose value.

The traditional value attached to owning large herds of cattle has contributed to the destruction of valuable land due to over-grazing, and this in turn also contributes to a lower level of income from farming. Waiting for the rains to relieve malnutrition among starving cattle, and failure to castrate poor quality stock or to dip stock, exacerbate the situation.

There are some religious beliefs that play a role in cattle farming. This includes that a particular cow, called *kgomo ya badimo*, is believed to belong to the ancestors and it is not supposed to be slaughtered or sold. It is believed that the absence of that cow may cause poor reproduction or death in the herd.

A subsistence level of existence leaves little scope for accumulating sufficient wealth to live optimally in the complex environment created by modern society. Thus, farming practices such as those described above, are likely to contribute to people being preoccupied with satisfying the lower levels of needs described by Maslow (1970), namely physiological and security needs. This may inhibit developing towards satisfying esteem and self-actualisation needs.

A lack of transport and marketing facilities also contributes to low prosperity. Even today some people in the rural areas do not know how to market their products commercially, which may be a result of lack of education or a lack of farming skills.

To the extent that the above factors contribute to inefficient farming, and thus to lowered income, they also contribute to the poverty prevalent in rural areas. It is important to bear in mind that the poverty experienced by children whose fathers have become estranged from their families may thus not only be due to the father not helping to maintain them. Broader social, cultural and economic factors also play a role.

2.3.6 Gender categorisation

Kotze and Van der Waal (1995) contend that rural black men constitute the dominant gender category, demanding submission from their wives and children. Their social standing is enhanced by their control of household income and spending, their freedom of engaging in plural sexual relationships, and the primary access they have to household resources such as food and labour. Women seldom have the economic opportunity to earn as much as their husbands and thus often remain dependent on them. Their way of life is greatly determined by their husbands.

The economic and social dependence of women makes them vulnerable to material hardship in different ways. Men could refuse them shelter or money, the right to work or the right to education. In a non-physical way some men may degrade women by threats of physical violence, their absence from home when they are in a position to be home, and verbal abuse. Some women are not allowed to use contraceptives because their husbands fear it might encourage them to have extramarital affairs (Kotze & Van der Waal, 1995).

According to Kotze and Van der Waal (1995) husbands who work away from home often have affairs and this leads to neglect of their dependants. Other men in a village may also use the opportunity to have affairs with the neglected wives. A wife questioning the extramarital affairs of her husband is easily beaten, and she is also beaten if she engages in an affair herself, because this infringes on the husband's exclusive right to his wife's sexuality.

In the midst of rural poverty, women are often the most disadvantaged, because they depend on their husbands and their personal needs and well-being take a secondary role. This may have a negative impact on children since they are close to their mothers while their fathers are in urban areas for work. If a mother is not happy, she may fail to show her children affection and this may lead the children to develop a negative outlook on life in general.

The struggle for political freedom in South Africa has brought to the fore the emancipation of women. There are increased efforts to protect women and children against abuse and violence. The government also appears to be committed to empower women to take their

rightful positions in the family and the society. Today more and more women are given the opportunity to generate income for their families. Such women gain respect from their husbands and the community, but this usually happens if the woman enters some profession. According to Nielsen (1987) employed mothers generally have higher self-esteem and are more satisfied with their lives than housewives. Nielsen also states that employed mothers are able to create more satisfying relationships with their children than full-time housewives who feel personally frustrated with their lives.

2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON ADOLESCENCE

2.4.1 Introduction

Since this study deals with adolescent boys and girls, it is necessary to review relevant literature on this developmental stage. Adolescence is the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood. From a legal point of view, adolescence ends when the individual becomes eligible to vote (age 18) or does military service (from age 16), when he no longer needs parental permission (age 21), or when he can be held liable for contractual obligations (age 21) (Louw, 1991).

From a psychological point of view, adolescence ends when the individual is reasonably certain of his identity, is emotionally independent of his parents, has developed his own value system and is capable of establishing adult love relationships and adult friendships. The individual has to comply with certain cultural prescribed norms before he may be considered as having left adolescence and as having entered adulthood (Louw, 1991). These norms differ from community to community and could include, for example, passing through a traditional initiation school, and physical maturation such as the occurrence of menstruation in girls.

2.4.2 Theoretical perspectives on adolescence

Hall (in Lloyd, 1985) refers to adolescence as a time of "storm and stress". He suggests that adolescence is necessarily a period of emotional upheaval and turmoil because of the conflicts between the biologically determined, physical changes of puberty on the one hand, and society's demands on the adolescent to attain social and emotional maturity on the other hand.

Freud (in Lloyd, 1985) termed adolescence the genital stage, where the libido is invested in the genitals, and sexual gratification serves to reproduce the species. According to him, this stage is also characterised by the reawakening of the Oedipal/Electra conflict. This conflict concerns the usually unconscious sexual attraction of the child to the opposite sex parent (Oedipal attraction of a boy to his mother and Electra attraction of a girl to her father). When this conflict reappears, the adolescent becomes rebellious against his or her parents and other authority figures. The successful resolution of this conflict results in identification of the child with the parent of the same sex, thus ensuring the appropriate sex role identification (Lloyd, 1985).

Sullivan (1953) identified three stages of adolescence. The first stage is preadolescence, which is characterised by an intense close relationship with a peer of the same sex, during which intimacies are shared and this facilitates a movement from self-centredness to more mature feelings of love. The second stage is early adolescence, which is characterised by conflicting needs for personal security, interpersonal intimacy and lustful satisfaction. The third stage is late adolescence, which is characterised by a variety of sophisticated interpersonal relationships and the establishment of an emotionally and sexually intimate relationship with a special person.

Bandura (in Lloyd, 1985) describes an adolescent as a child-adult who observes other people as models for his actions. As the children grow up, their parents serve as models, as do siblings, teachers and other persons who are important to them. The process of learning is continuous, and current behaviour is a product of both past social experiences and present social environmental conditions (Lloyd, 1985).

According to Marcia (in Lloyd, 1985), the sense of identity which develops during adolescence means that an adolescent has made commitments to a vocational goal, and to a political and personal ideology. She describes four statuses that the adolescent may encounter in achieving identity:

(a) Identity foreclosure

The adolescent in the foreclosure status has unquestioningly accepted and adopted the expectations of significant others, rather than going through the process of questioning and evolving his or her own beliefs and vocational choices.

(b) Identity moratorium

In this status, the adolescent engages in a variety of identity experiments, trying on different roles, beliefs and behaviour as part of the process of evolving a personally satisfying identity. Most adolescents move on to the identity achievement status, but some drift into the status of identity diffusion.

(c) Identity diffusion

This is characterised by a failure to achieve a stable and integrated sense of self. Youth in this status experience considerable self doubts, but don't appear to be concerned about doing anything to change their circumstances.

(d) Identity achievement

In this status the adolescent has successfully resolved the identity crisis and is able to make a commitment to a vocation, and to a political and personal ideology.

Marcia (in Lloyd, 1985) states that both identity achievement and identity foreclosure constitute a resolution of the identity crisis, while identity diffusion does not lead to a solution of the identity crisis. Identity moratorium is a trial and error status, from where the child may move to achievement or drift into identity diffusion.

A negative identity according to Marcia (in Lloyd, 1985), refers to a self-concept that is opposite to dominant parental and societal values. A negative identity evolves because there has been too little support from the parents or society for a child to enable him or her to achieve a healthy sense of identity.

In Erickson's (in Louw, 1991) view, development takes place through eight stages, which are characterised by developmental tasks and crises. Each of the stages has two opposing poles. The solution of each stage does not lie simply in choosing the positive pole but rather in a synthesis of the two opposing poles. When the crisis of one stage has been successfully resolved, this facilitates the solution of the next crisis (Louw, 1991). Relevant to this study, is the stage of identity versus role confusion, and this is discussed next:

According to Erikson (in Louw, 1991), an adolescent needs to solve the crisis of this stage by developing a sense of identity, otherwise role confusion will be experienced. The sense of identity consists of three elements, namely the individual's certainty about his own ability, certainty about his own values and ideas, and certainty about his social and personal identity (Louw, 1991). In order to solve this identity crisis, the adolescent is likely to experiment with various possibilities, which could include smoking and drinking, sexual intercourse, stealing, conformity, etc. The peer group and the extent to which the child has parental support influence these experimentations.

2.4.3 Needs related to self-esteem during adolescence

Jones (1985) points out that if one wants to understand adolescents' behaviour, it is important to realise that their needs are in many ways similar to those experienced by adults, but that adolescents respond more intensely to certain issues and are subjected to a somewhat different set of social expectations and variables. Cooperman (in Jones, 1985) identifies the following needs as important factors in developing self-esteem:

(a) Need to experience a sense of significance

Maslow posits that there are several needs that must be met before an individual can function effectively in the environment. He asserts that until these needs are met, an individual will not be able to move in the direction of growth and learning. Two of the needs identified by Maslow relate directly to adolescents' need to experience a sense of significance, namely to experience feelings of love and belonging, and the need to receive respect from significant others.

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(b) Need to experience a sense of competence

Erickson postulates that the major developmental issue just prior to adolescence (industry versus inferiority) is centred around establishing a feeling of success or competence related to tasks that the society defines as valuable. He suggests that failure to successfully resolve this developmental issue creates a sense of inferiority that could have a lasting impact upon the child and this could thus carry over into adolescence.

(c) Need to experience a sense of control

The adolescent's experience of a sense of control (or power) is related to his or her cognitive development. Piaget noted that adolescence is characterised by a major change in cognitive functioning, through the development of formal operational thinking. While major differences exist in the rate at which individuals develop formal operational thinking, most adolescents develop the ability to understand and manipulate abstract conceptual issues. This new skill significantly enhances adolescents' potential for understanding and gaining control over their environment.

2.4.4 Social factors which influence adolescents' behaviour

Parents, the peer group and the school influence adolescents' behaviour. This is discussed in the following paragraphs.

One of the developmental tasks of adolescents is to establish emotional and financial independence from their parents. To gain an independent identity and values of their own, it is likely that conflicts would arise between them and their parents. These conflicts may occur about issues such as sexual behaviour, drinking, drug use, family responsibilities, study habits, choice of friends and dating partners. The conflicts may indicate that the parents are concerned about their children, and the manner in which they are resolved may help the adolescent to reach autonomy with confidence. It is, however, also possible that deviant behaviour may develop if the conflicts are not adequately dealt with (Lloyd, 1985).

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The peer group provides a social context, in which adolescents learn attitudes and skills relevant to adult functioning, which cannot necessarily be taught in the family. It also helps adolescents to cope with their marginal status, that is, the peer group provides a sense of belonging during a phase in which youths have left the childhood culture behind, but have not yet assumed the values, interests and standards of the adult world. However, it is also possible that peers may influence an adolescent do things that are not acceptable to the community, such as taking drugs and alcohol or getting involved in gangs. Both parents need to be there to help the child deal with such situations (Lloyd, 1985).

In addition to providing formal education, schools also provide a physical environment in which adolescents spend a lot of their time, and which is the centre of the peer culture. The parents also play a role in the education of their children, by helping them with homework, paying school fees and motivating their children to engage in educational activities (Lloyd, 1985).

2.5   THE ROLE OF THE FATHER IN THE FAMILY

One of the most important roles of the father in a family is to establish the family's socio-economic status. Socio-economic status, in turn, has been documented to have a decisive impact on a range of critical events in child development, including children's intellectual development, the occurrence of emotional and behavioural problems, formation of friendships, gender role development and the provision of educational opportunities (Berman & Pederson, 1987).

The extent to which a father is solely responsible for establishing a family's socio-economic status has been affected by the increasing numbers of women who are now working, some of whom are highly educated and earn a good income. However, the extent to which this occurs depends on various factors, including cultural perceptions of gender roles and the access women have to educational opportunities. In the area where the present study was conducted, the families are predominantly dependent on the income generated by the fathers and few women are engaged in economically gainful activity.

Berman and Pederson (1987) state that both the mother and father play an important role in child rearing. Mothers generally interact at a higher rate with their children than fathers do, especially in providing greater amounts of verbal stimulation and care of toddlers, while fathers are more involved in physically arousing activities. Lamb and Sagi (1983) also found that fathers spend proportionally more time engaging in physical activities with their children than mothers do. However, fathers may fulfil the same role as primary caregiver for a neonate as a mother would, which includes, for example, holding, kissing, looking at the child, exploring with him or her, and vocalising to the neonate.

Birns and Hay (1988) point out that the loving care of a father enhances family life, it makes motherhood less stressful and perhaps fosters nurturance in the mother, and promotes attachment of children to their fathers.

In view of the foregoing, it is evident that the role of the father in the family goes further than only putting bread on the table, but includes providing children with emotional warmth, affection, understanding, and security. These are the elements that children interpret as love and concern. If the father pays attention to his children and becomes actively involved in their lives, it will be easier for them to internalise social control structures represented by the father, which is important in the development of the conscience.

Lamb and Sagi (1983) mention the following developmental areas of the child that are usually influenced by the father:

(a) Gender role identification

Both boys and girls have been shown to be influenced by the fathers' behaviour and attitudes. Powerful and nurturing fathers are frequently modelled or imitated by their sons who in turn develop a masculine gender role.

Fathers also differentially reinforce appropriate sex-typed behaviour in girls. A father who responds to his daughter as an interested male would respond to a female, appears to have the greater impact, by teaching his daughter the female role and female sex-type behaviour.

(b) Cognitive development

Nurturing fathers are modelled by their sons who internalise their modes of thinking and problem solving. The father's interest in his children's academic success may also exert a positive influence on the intellectual development of the child.

(c) Social competence

Children whose fathers are involved and nurturing have been found to be better adjusted and more socially competent. It has also been found that males who were assessed as having achieved successful emotional and interpersonal adjustment in adulthood, were likely to have had highly involved fathers. Generally assertive, independent behaviour in daughters is associated with firmness and demands for mature behaviour from both mothers and fathers.

2.6 REASONS FOR FATHER ABSENCE

2.6.1 Introduction

Adams, Milner and Schrepf (1984) and Mahabeer (1989) postulate that the father may be absent in the family due to death, divorce, separation, desertion, teenage pregnancy, and unwed motherhood.

2.6.2 Desertion and separation

Desertion occurs when one partner walks out from the family without notice. It may be due to conflict, financial reasons, or other obligations a spouse does not want to face. Other examples of reasons for desertion are infertility, spouses loosing interest in one another, or an unplanned pregnancy (Brisbane & Riker, 1984).

As discussed above, one characteristic of rural life in black society in South Africa, is that fathers often work as migrant labourers. This results not only in them being absent from nome for certain periods, but some of them also become estranged from their families in rural areas.

Desertion must be distinguished from separation. The latter is when one spouse moves out with notice, and it may be regarded as a cooling off period, which could make it possible for some couples to come together again later (Brisbane & Riker, 1984).

2.6.3 Divorce

Divorce refers to the process whereby a marriage is ended legally (Brisbane & Riker, 1984). There are various facets of divorce, and this is discussed next:

2.6.3.1   Facets of divorce

Potgieter (1986) mentions the following dimensions of divorce:

(a) Emotional divorce

This is a situation where a chain of events leads to divorce. Deterioration in the marriage often results from a lack of positive emotional contact between husband and wife. For example, a relationship which is over-critical and negative on the side of one partner, may induce the other partner to want to leave the family.

(b) Legal divorce

This is a process where divorce is seen as a culmination of legal procedures, including determining child custody, maintenance of the child, and visitation arrangements. It is also the legal means of making the individual parties re-marriageable.

(c) Economic divorce

This arises because the married couple forms a property owning unit in society, and divorce or separation forces a division of this property, depending on the pre-marital contractual agreement.

(d) Co-parental divorce

In this kind of divorce the parents need to make certain decisions regarding their children when getting divorced. The parents' views regarding the best interests of the children may not be in harmony with one another and this may lead to conflict.

(e) Community divorce

This implies giving up the community to which the spouses have been accustomed to, which could include, for example, friends, acquaintances and family members. Breaking links with these people could lead to feelings of loneliness.

(f) Psychic divorce

This implies that the individual has to learn to become self-supporting and be able to take charge of his or her own life.

2.6.3.2   Reasons for divorce

Price and Mckenry (1988) mention the following reasons for divorce: a couple that is not mutually supportive, excessive drinking, excessive gambling, authoritarianism and infertility.

Ambrose, Harper and Pemberton (1983) state the following reasons for a marriage break-up: extramarital affairs, an impossible and incompatibility relationship, serious sexual problems, poor communication, lack of understanding, the wife or husband meets or wishes to marry someone else, problems over money, a wife's affinity to her mother, unreasonable jealousy,

unresolved complaints, a wife wishing to work, very different backgrounds, violence by a husband, children or wife, and expectations not fulfilled.

Adams, Milner and Schrepf (1984) and Brisbane and Riker (1984) give the following reasons of divorce:

Pregnancy: premarital pregnancy often leads to early marriage and the earlier the marriage, the higher the rate of marital instability.

Labour force participation by women: working mothers may believe that they can handle the family alone, so instead of solving marital problems, they prefer divorce.

Low socio-economic status: couples with low incomes are more likely to see their marriages fail. However, this may differ from community to community and it is possible that in certain communities, divorce occurs more frequently amongst educated people, celebrities and successful business people, than amongst people from low income groups.

Louw (1991) states the following reasons for divorce:

Age of marriage: Marriage between adolescents is seen as a high-risk marriage because so many of them end up in divorce. The major reason for this is that one or both of the partners have not yet achieved the psychological maturity necessary for successful marriage. Young people's marriages are also often plagued by financial difficulties, which could put strain on their relationship.

Parental example: If the parents' marriage is successful, it provides a positive model for children regarding mutual support, acceptance and solving problems. However, it is still possible that some people do not just do what their parents do, because human life is not lawful and a child can perceive the world differently from his/her parents.

Difference in tempo and nature of development: Differences between marriage partners in psychological development may be so great, that their lives become incompatible.

2.6.3.3   The effects of divorce on adolescents

According to Nielsen (1987), divorce does not affect all adolescents in a similar fashion, but certain factors appear to be fairly common. After a divorce, adolescents are usually confronted with new economic issues. Because the family's income is most likely to decline after a divorce, many adolescents resent their parents for depriving them of the material possessions they could otherwise have afforded. Vacations, clothes, records, and other gifts may become luxuries that parents can no longer provide.

The poverty which could result when the parents are divorced or when the father is absent for other reasons, may have various effects on adolescents. Adolescents living in poverty-stricken families are less likely to succeed in school, and to fully develop their mental abilities. They are likely to get married earlier and less likely to limit the size of their future families (Nielsen, 1987).

Other areas of a child's development may also be affected by divorce. The absence of a father might deprive children of a male role model. Supervision and discipline of the children may become problematic if the mother has to work to provide for the family. The mother may also become involved with another man, and the child's relationship with the newcomer may create problems.

2.6.4 Unwed mothers

The absence of a father from a family, may also be the result of a woman deciding not to marry the father of her child (or children). Prater (1995) reports that one of the reasons to remain single, include whether it is regarded as socially acceptable to remain unmarried; this depends on the values of a particular community. Other reasons for remaining single according to Prater (1995) include a boyfriends' unwillingness to marry, and the girl's own belief that she is too young to get married.