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**ADOLESCENTS IN REMARRIED FAMILIES
A PASTORAL-NARRATIVE APPROACH**

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To my little friends, Light and Dripping

Thank you for your participation in this research project. Through our conversations concerning our lives in a remarried family, not only did I gain new insights from you, but I also brought change into my family. From our experience in this research, I believe that other families can be helped by your telling your stories.

To Carl and Ady

Without your great insight as my reflection team, it would not have been possible for me to understand in depth what I listened to in my co-researchers' stories. Thanks again.

To my beloved family

Kate, I know how much you have done in bringing up your stepsons. Your stepmom's story becomes part of this study and my future story. I would also like to express my love to Kevin and Alex. Because of you I could overcome any hardships I faced.

To my mother

I do not know how I can express my love, respect and gratitude towards you. You are my main supervisor and supporter. I will tell your story forever.

To my teacher (mentor), Julian Müller

With all my heart, I thank you for accepting me as your student. You have not only been my academic supervisor, but also my emotional and spiritual helper. My wife, Kate, still remembers how sincerely you listened to her when she and I had some difficulties. I can just thank you again.

ABSTRACT

In general, adolescence is regarded as a period of growth between childhood and maturity. Children in this phase undergo a so-called developmental stage of the human life cycle. Consequently, family circumstances are of great importance. Adolescents in South African remarried families go through diverse and dynamic experiences with regard to forms of family or family types: biological families, single parent families, and remarried families. In social discourse, a biological family is widely believed to be the optimal set of circumstances for children, whereas a single parent family and a remarried family lack proper support for children. Is this true? Are the circumstances of adolescents in a remarried family an obstacle to their growth?

The main purpose of this research was not to gather data about adolescents in remarried families and to add such data, but to understand adolescents' stories in greater depth. With this in-depth understanding, this research attempts to bring together the outcomes of their told stories (local knowledge) and their community and the academic world.

To do this, two main characters from remarried families joined the research project and the voices of two schoolteachers were included. In order to obviate probable biases on the part of the researcher, the two teachers took on the role of a reflection team. In unstructured conversational interviews, the researcher adopted a pastoral narrative approach, in accordance with a social constructionist perspective.

SUMMARY

To introduce this inquiry into adolescents in remarried families, purposely, I begin by sharing only my stories of stigmatization even though in the process of telling my story, I could experience both the “painful process and freeing process” (Müller Pastoral care:s.p.) at the same time. In the process of the research, however, I have had to be careful not to lose my focus, and to disturb the interviewees’ (the co-researchers) world by over-storying myself. I share my story but for a limited purpose and only when it is appropriate.

The reason I purposely shared my own stories is firstly, it shows you my journey toward becoming interested in studying adolescents in a remarried family. Secondly, sharing my story enclosed by meta-narratives illustrates how ethics should be conducted in the process of this research and who the subject of this research is. Also, my stories lead me to consult mainly with my chosen paradigms and methodologies for this study, which suit me well- they are postmodernism, social constructionism, a narrative paradigm, practical theology, Minjung Theology as a doing theology and qualitative conversational research.

In this study, I had two aims, namely,

- to provide a space and time for adolescents in remarried families to tell their present, past and future stories, thereby reconstructing their past stories and amplifying their present and future stories by implementing an pastoral narrative approach; and

- to bring together the outcomes of their told stories (local knowledge) to their community and the academic world.

In order to achieve these aims, I believe, because of my own marital experience, that my chosen paradigms and methodologies are the best for this research. The reason is that new approaches need to be applied for research on issues of remarried families. A traditional paradigm is not very applicable to research on the issues of adolescents in remarried families, since the purpose of this research is neither to analyze gathered data, nor to formulate an institutional and therapeutic programme, but to understand in depth the subjective world of adolescents in remarried families and their influence on the family by listening to their stories. Stories and experiences retold show how their protagonists make sense of each individual's identity, personality, lifestyle and relationship(s), and are socially constructed. Therefore, by using a narrative social construction and an imaginative pastoral approach, true to a postmodernist paradigm and practical theology, the stories of adolescents in remarried families and their position in the family can be understood better and amplified.

In Chapter Three, mainly, two narrators are presented as the protagonists of stories (my co-researchers) running through some of the difficulties and triumphs of being in a remarried family. I will also tell my research journey, the agenda of the interviews and how I met them. With a view to preserve the voices of my co-researchers, I made transcripts thematically divided.

In Chapter Four as a background on remarried families, this chapter introduces "other's voices surrounding those of the co-researchers". In this chapter, many aspects, discourses and findings of existing research on the remarried family are summarized. Also, as an interaction phase, deconstructive aspects concerning the above views were formulated.

In Chapter Five, firstly, I re-account for the various issues of the remarried family discussed, previous chapters. To do this, the researched and the researcher tried to integrate their experiences with other perspectives, so as to present our developmental perspective. Secondly, the result of the evaluation from all the participants in this research, critical self-reflection and my own research experience were summed up.

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Adolescents in Remarried Families A Pastoral-Narrative Approach

CHAPTER ONE: STIMULI FOR THE STUDY

1.1 STIMULUS ONE: MY STORY

My sons are called my wife's "stepsons" by most people in our community, but not in my family. I call them "our sons", because I am a father in a remarried family. To introduce this inquiry into adolescents in remarried families, I would like to begin by sharing my own story, because it shows you my journey toward becoming interested in studying adolescents in a remarried family. It also reveals why I have chosen the pastoral-narrative approach and qualitative methodology for this study.

1.1.1 My story

1.1.1.1 Why me? My childhood

Let me begin with my own story, which provided the impetus for this study. Thanks to my experiences as a child, I have subliminally perceived that there is a need to care for the family and for children since my early childhood. I was raised in a family where my mother, a single parent who lost her husband very early, worked very hard. I grew up in Korea, which is characterized by a male - dominated society. I suffered not only from poverty, but also from the prejudices of people who look down on children who have no father. They believe that

fatherless children lack good home support for their education with a single parent (a mother), and that such children's behaviour is problematic, both at school and in society. That was the usual mindset constructed by people in the Korean hierarchical and patriarchal society when I grew up. In this society, as in others, people with power not only shape norms, criteria, a dominant culture and knowledge, but they also force life-styles in a certain direction to a greater or lesser degree (Dallos 1997; Foucault 1975; Freedman & Combs 2002; Lukes 1974; White & Epston 1990). In this instance, those people who had power and those who did not have power were clearly manifested.

Based on the experiences of my early childhood, I came to believe that caring for the family is not only a matter for and the responsibility of individual members of a family within that family, but also a social issue that requires all of us to fight against patriarchal structures in society that restrict the lives of marginalized families, such as remarried families and single parent families.

1.1.1.2 *"Please resign from our church!": the story of my marital failure in my ministry in Korea*

After becoming an ordained church minister and ministering for several years, I started a church in Korea. Unfortunately, I lost my wife during my ministry. For that reason, I could not serve as a pastor at the church any more --in most Korean churches, if a pastor has no spouse, he or she is not eligible to serve as a senior pastor. Therefore I was under pressure from my congregation, who

tacitly directed me to resign from the church. Even though I wanted to go back to the ministry after my resignation, I have not yet tried to find another church, since I have been afraid of being rejected as a pastor owing to my marital status as “a pastor of marital failure”, a member of a “remarried family”.

Since then, I have never once questioned myself as to what mistakes I made in the church, but rather, I wondered why I had to walk out of my ministry. What were the reasons that prompted my congregation to want me to leave them? Why am I afraid of revealing my marital failure story and my remarriage story?

1.1.1.3 *“Don’t let him remarry!”: the story of my children*

When I was about to get remarried, an interesting comment summed up the situation: “Brother! Don’t let him remarry, he is being deceived and you probably will get a cruel stepmom.” That was what my niece told my son. After I remarried, my son (then 11 years old) said: “I used to be called ‘son’ but now am being called ‘stepson’, and I don’t want to hear, so I hide.”

1.1.1.4 *Being an adolescent in a remarried family*

Years later, my son, now an adolescent, had to attend an anger management programme as detention, due to his misbehaviour in his school. In the meeting, his teacher, who knew my son was in a remarried family, said that he had told her that “he is still loyal to his biological mom and feels guilty toward both his biological and step-mom”. After his schooling, he and I talked about that, but he

told me that he had never said that to the teacher. I did not know who lied. Yet, some existing traditional research on issues of the remarried family report that children in remarried families tend to show their emotional loyalty to their biological parents and feel guilty (Belovitch 1987; Carter & McGoldrick 1999; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley 1987; Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman 1987; Prinsloo 1993; Schwebel et al. 1991). My child was not necessarily a case in point, but the teacher believed the above assumption. This is a story of an adolescent in a remarried family, and of facing prejudice. After failing in my first marriage, I have suffered not only from my inner family situation, but also from prejudice held by my community of fellow Christians, as well as by society.

1.1.1.5 Where are they? The story of what I experienced at the start of my research on the stories of South African remarried families

This story contains the reason why I changed the main protagonists of this study, shifting from the topic “stories of remarried families” to the subject “stories of adolescents in remarried families”.

Because of my earlier questions and my own marital experience, I initially decided to focus on issues that affect a remarried family for my Ph.D in practical theology as my action field. Before I started my empirical research, I was very confident that I could easily find interviewees (my co-researchers) who were remarried in South Africa. However, no sooner had I started to try to find them than I became frustrated. Here is the story. At first, I tried choosing Korean

South African Christian remarried families, but I soon became worried because some Korean pastors ministering in Korean churches in South Africa told me that they could not give me a list of remarried families. This was because they thought the members of their congregation did not want to be identified by name. Other pastors said that there were no such families in their congregations. Next, I approached the Korean embassy, but their answer was also negative.

I was still locked in disappointment, when, all of sudden, an offer for my empirical research came along by itself. One day, I had a casual chat with the principal of the Doxa Deo School. He volunteered his congregation as an action field to me, on condition that he could ask them first whether they would be prepared to participate or not. Unfortunately, his endeavour to find volunteers for my project was also unfruitful. He and I could not find even one family willing to participate. One day, I discussed this difficulty with my supervisor and he recommended that I consider other ways to listen to stories about the remarried family. Finally, I changed the main focus from the remarried family to adolescents in remarried families.

In short, my own questions, those that arose from my personal story, remained. Did I have to resign from the church? If I had to, what caused me to do so? Why did my niece (7 years old) have that particular concept of remarriage? Was that her own speculation about remarriage or an echo of an adult opinion (social discourse)? Why did my son want to hide his status? What reasons and circumstances make him think that he needed to? Are our stories able to be

fully told in that situation? Why was I unable to find interviewees from remarried families in either Korean and/or South African families, even though there are many, according to existing research and its statistics? These questions and my story have resonated in my heart for so many years that they have prompted me to study the issue of the remarried family and its children, focusing particularly on adolescents in this research.

1.1.2 The purpose of sharing my story for the study

Firstly, sharing my story helped me to develop my future stories. Müller (1999), who shares his story in many of his writings, says:

Sharing a story from my past is tantamount to being [now] an attempt to construct my future...The stories storied in our memories form the framework of our attempts to discover meaning in life. It also aids our approach to the future...Our stories give form to our lives. With such form we organise our lives and try to provide handholds which will help us step-by-step to cross the unstable rope-bridge towards our future.

In order to weave the stories of adolescents in remarried families and my future story towards more developmental and meaningful life, as Müller (1999) suggests, sharing a story is an attempt to work for the future and to be sustained by other stories, and it is critical not only for me, but also for my co-researchers in the process of this research. It is our own personal biographies that collectively came together to form a greater social awareness.

Secondly, telling my story facilitates telling and retelling. Telling my story is not only important for the sake of my future story, but also for that of my co-researchers. Telling and retelling are very beneficial aspects of this research. First of all, when stories are being told, at least one teller and one listener are in a certain relationship, identifying their selves and the making of meaning in “the moment of interaction” (Vay 2002:38; Wood 1991:4). Cattanach (1997:3) comments: “There is a very special quality to a relationship based on storytelling. There is the storyteller and the listener, and the story acts in the middle as a way to negotiate a shared meaning between the two.” The established relationship in storytelling reveals a tendency for the two to be concerned with and about each other and their community, and it is a communal and mutual act. Thus, a characteristic of this research is both the communal and the mutual attitude. In addition, in the developmental phase of this project, we will see how important telling, retelling and listening are in bringing up adolescents in a remarried family.

When one tells a story, one’s story, which is “full of gaps” (White & Epston 1990:13) and which is revealed in terms of its limits or margins (Brooks 1984:52), should be filled in order for the story to be meaningful in the teller’s life and to emancipate the teller from its bondage, if any. Through and in telling stories, the protagonists of these stories can link to the stories of others, finding shared themes, purposes and values (Cattanach 2002:218). With regard to the therapeutic experience, Roberts (1994:84) shares his experience as a therapist, that stating “when thoughtfully shared, therapists’ stories offer ways to link

therapists and clients in exploratory, collaborative relationships...many said that it was very supportive to hear stories from therapists' lives about issues that were similar to their dilemmas. Clients stated that ...they were connected by common concerns”.

In the process of the research, however, I have had to be careful not to lose my focus, and to disturb the interviewees' (the co-researchers) world by over-storying myself. I would like to share my story, but for a limited purpose and only when it is appropriate. As Roberts (1994) said, my story should be “thoughtfully shared” so that it can be “exploratory, collaborative and supportive”. Although two purposes of sharing my story were to show my empathy for others in a similar situation and to implement an in-depth interview, I had to control my own involvement so that it did not hurt the research (Rubin & Rubin 1995:13).

Lastly, I share my story to explain why I chose particular paradigms and methodologies for this research. As Müller (1999) says, “with our stories we take a position”. I have spontaneously shaped my stories throughout my experience of personal and communal events and incidents in a particular situation in Korea. My stories have always played a large role in my choices, moment by moment and event by event, about where I want to go and what I have to do.

One of results of my stories and the role they play is that I preferred following the paradigms and methodologies for this research: postmodernism, a narrative

approach, a social construction approach, Minjung Theology as a practical theology (including servant leadership), and imaginative pastoral work. They share communal and mutual values, ethics, worldviews and practices. I chose a narrative approach because, as Jones (2003:7) argues, narrative therapy is

especially useful for stepfamilies and members of any stigmatized group because of its focus on client narratives and their social cultural context. The central focus is on the story and telling it, because only through stories can the meaning and significance of important life events or themes be conveyed. For stepfamily members this may include not only telling their personal stories, but also deconstructing some of the larger constraining cultural stories.

Because I studied Christian education and adult ministry, including marital problems and counselling, for my master's degree, I am supposed to know what to do when conflict arises between my son and me in my family's daily life. Yet, my "knowing" does not mean that things always work. With this story, my desire to study issues regarding the remarried family and its adolescents has been growing.

Consequently, my purpose in this research is to take these opportunities for me to listen to, and learn from adolescents and their families how they cope and resolve conflict in the family (if any), how they identify their roles in the family, and how they fill these roles and how they see for their future - oriented story within the family. As a result, therefore, my family's future story will be

abundantly sustained by other stories and, as I mentioned before, I hoped to help my co-researchers to open fully to tell their heartfelt stories and regard me as a part of their own story beads, which are like miniature bundles of secrets waiting to be revealed and of possibilities to be authored and re-authored. This work intend to renovate their old house and build their new house by implementing telling and retelling.

1.2 STIMULUS TWO: STATISTICAL URGENCY AS THE IMPETUS FOR THE STUDY

Although no one denies that many marriages (almost half of first marriages) end in tears today, marriage is still a central item on most people's wish lists (Marano 2000:2). Positive views about marriage steer divorced people into remarriage, despite the pain and disruption of their divorce. However, studies show that more than half of remarried couples are divorced again and that the sadness comes to them at a greater pace (Cornes 1993: 12; Martin & Martin 1992:47; Pasley, Dollahite & Ihinger-Tallman 1993:315; Stone 1990:39). As a result, many children receive a prefix to their name, so-called "step-".

1.2.1 Divorce in South Africa

In South Africa, for officially recorded marriages, the Central Statistics Services (Statistics South Africa, P O 307: [www. Statssa.gov.za](http://www.Statssa.gov.za)) indicates for 1999 that 26.4% of couples were divorced, and for 2000 that 23.8% of couples terminated

their married life. Also, among the officially recorded marriages for 1999 and 2000, 9.3% and 9.1% respectively were remarriage rates, which only referred to civil and religious remarriages and excluded marriages classified as “unspecified”.¹ Almost half of all divorced people get married again under the law in South Africa. In consequence, their children have to adjust their life structures completely, and have to enter into a new life which can be totally strange to them.

1.2.2 Divorce in other countries

In America, 75% of divorced individuals remarry. Unfortunately, of these, about 60% eventually terminate their remarriage, according to a 1989 survey in America, and many of them do so within two years. Studies predict that remarried families will be the most prevalent form of family in the United States by 2010 (Marano 2000:2). This phenomenon is very similar to what is found in the European Community (Cornes 1993:9-12).

1.2.3 Discussing the statistics

What these figures show is that many issues surrounding remarriage and remarried families should be discussed in society and in the church today.

Personally, before failing in my first marriage, I thought there were “some”

¹ Civil marriages refer to all marriages solemnized in courts or churches, either by a magistrate or by a designated marriage officer. Religious marriages refer to marriages that were solemnized under Christian or Jewish and Hebrew rites. It excludes customary, traditional marriages, and certain religious rites, notably Islamic marriages. In cases where the religious denomination is not known or when the church description is vague, these marriages are coded as “unspecified”.

remarriages and preached marital issues in the abstract. However, now remarriage is part of my life; it has become a lens of how I see myself and the world, and a catalyst for this research.

1.3 STIMULUS THREE: PROBLEMS WITH EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE ISSUE OF REMARRIED FAMILIES AS A REQUIRED ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

1.3.1 The problem of categorizing remarried families and their children

Thus far, a research problem has occurred in that most family research has focused on categorizing remarried families even though they are so dynamic, and are all so unique, especially in their subjective experience, that categorization is difficult. One result of categorizing is the situation in family studies today that we are “writing about ‘the families [remarried families] with no name’ or to be more accurate, the families with no widely agreed on name” (Ganong & Coleman 1994:1), which is a dilemma in a study of issues related to remarried families and their children.

In categorizing, researchers and theorists try to use some form of measurement, criteria, regulations or categories which result from fixed features of information, shallowly observed by people who cannot be objective. It is highly problematic in research on dynamic and diverse human lives to attempt to categorize their flexibility and the unpredictable events in their daily lives.

Moreover, once people or groups are categorized, they are classified as different, and the rest of their identities get lost or blurred, “out of focus” (Smith & Nylund 1997:259). Furthermore, traditional researchers usually allege that their research is relatively objective, but that is not possible. When researchers categorize families, they already have some rules and norms for what they prefer for the purposes of their research. Their notions of categorizing are caught up in meta-narratives and are manipulated by their cultural boundaries. Accordingly, it can be said that categorizing is merely a process which makes social stereotypes and is in some degree a producer of prejudice (Jones *et al.* 1984). In this regard, Müller (s.a. Families:100) warns that “we should stop applying special names to such post-divorce families”, including remarried families.

1.3.2 The problem of the point of departure

It has been argued that the “first married” family was viewed as a customary criterion in empirical research (Pasley 1987:23), and much of the research on remarried families has analysed problems in terms of that criterion, and is often based on a clinical population in treatment for problems (Kelley 1995:1). Several researchers, for example, Booth and Edwards (1992), Cherlin (1978), Duberman (1975), Furstenberg and Spanier (1984), Vemer *et al.* (1989), have simply compared remarried families and their children with first married family members using clinical words such as “satisfaction”, “stability”, “healthy or unhealthy” and “function or dysfunction”. The main paradigm they have used

was a “deficit-comparison paradigm”: the idea they held was that a remarried family and its children are somehow deficient, compared with members in a first-marriage family (Ganong & Coleman 1994:xii).

Few changes have taken place theoretically or clinically in studies on remarried families, and most have an individualistic problem-focused orientation. This approach is based on a personality theory which attributes personal problems to human behaviour which is influenced by the distant past. Müller (2004b:s.p.) points out the following theoretical problem:

The point of departure is that there are things somewhere in the past, which need to be ‘treated’, and then the individual is supposed to function optimally. Other theories, including theories of family therapy, are more inclined to emphasize the immediate and functionality. The future and the unity between future, present and past, still do not receive adequate emphasis.

According to this view, remarried families and their children and the way they function are compared to biological families, their children and functioning, and the differences are treated negatively (Kelley 1996:536). In doing so, researchers have tried to formulate or find similarities in the name of universality. Their description and mindset focuses on using words such as “healthy” or “pathological”, “functional” or “dysfunctional”, but they are not interested in detailed and dynamic stories of remarried families and their children.

1.3.3 The exclusion of children from research

Children were excluded not only by researchers in their analyses but also by therapists in the processes of their therapeutic actions in general (Smith & Nylund 1997:258, 377; Freedman, Epston & Lobovits 1997:72). Literature and research on the child issues in remarried life delete and exclude children's voices. Researchers' empirical findings include such dangerous assumptions as that the most problematic members in a remarried family are children (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley 1987:63; Prinsloo 1993:41). They appear to think that children need to be supported in their emotional needs, directions and discipline during their transition stage (Campbell 1992; Wallerstein 1991). Children are just objects to be taught. Simons and Freedman (2002:140) point out the problem of the phenomenon that children's daily activities and events are overlooked "in an adult-centered society". However, some therapists, especially narrative therapists, poignantly undermine that view and practice, and instead, try to listen to the children's point of view (Com-Graham 1991; Dowling 1993; Freeman et al. 1997; Smith & Nylund 1997).

1.3.4 Failure to integrate therapy and research

It is predictable that traditional researchers and therapists may fail to integrate their approaches due to their different sets of methodology, goals and points of departure. According to Ganong and Coleman (1986:315), Ihinger-Tallman and Pasley (1987:138) and Pasley (1987:95-107), there has traditionally been a lack of integration between family researchers and therapists, and they have been

segregated. Researchers have usually relied on gathering data by means of questionnaires as a method. These traditional researchers (such as systematic and psychological researchers) were merely concerned about the numbers of samples, the times of doing research and the methods of observation and analysis used. The goal of these researchers was to establish generalizations and to make predictions (Lalljee 1996:93). On the other hand, for therapists, the most frequently used method was impressionistic, and the purpose of a clinical publication was typically the description of an educational or counselling programme (Ganong & Coleman 1986:316). Because of the different goals and methods they used, researchers and therapists have often failed to integrate the purposes of research and therapy cogently.

Another reason for their failure to integrate their findings derives from the tendency for researchers to overlook the live events in their context. Ganong and Coleman (1994:20) clearly note the tendency that researchers also “generally ignored the influences of events that occurred prior to remarriage”. Their approaches lack attention to meaning and place little emphasis on social context (Kelley 1996:538-539). Instead, they try to pin down, as White and Epston (1990:69) put it, “the documentation of lives” via a “normalizing gaze”. As a result, I argue, they have produced “commercialized families”. In turn, these commercialized families exclude any family which does not fit their norms and criteria.

In the case of traditional therapists, by the very nature of their pathology -

focused perspective on remarried families, and of their “deficient-comparison model”, they stick to “immedia[cy] and functionality” (Müller 2004b:s.p.). Hence, they are unable to see remarried families and the dynamic and diverse aspects of their lives as a whole. They have “produced” problematic families who need professional treatment. In consequence, they fail to capture the issues that remarried families deal with in their daily lives, instead, they theorize them as a whole.

With this awareness, this research endeavoured to listen to the stories of some remarried families and their adolescents. This listening is an integral part of this study, which aims to explore alternatives. In Kelley’s (1996:541) opinion, “exploring alternatives with the family [the remarried family] usually works better than offering specific advice”. Through listening, as I mentioned earlier in Section 1.1.2, “The purpose of sharing my story for the study”, a researcher can gain theoretical knowledge in depth and the persons being researched can receive therapeutic outcomes by telling their own stories. Thus, this endeavour enabled me and the adolescents from remarried families who entered into the research process with me to attempt to integrate theoretical and therapeutic outcomes on the issue of remarried family members.

1.3.5 Indifference of pastoral care

Remarried families are not biblically, historically, socially or demographically strange. Although remarriage is one of the great controversial issues in biblical discourse, as understood by the Bible, remarriage is a union of God’s children,

an option and a matter of choice for a family life, and the members of the church involved in a particular situation (Cornes 1993; Keener 1991). Ellisen (1977: 71) argues that Genesis 2:18 (“It is not good for the man to be alone”) cannot imply a rule that is not applicable to divorced people or excludes them. The Bible allows remarriage for the purpose of fulfilling personal and family needs of a physical, psychological and social nature.

Remarriage itself is not a sin and was even required at times under the Mosaic Law which was not declared by Jesus (Mt. 5:32). Also, throughout the Old Testament, whenever divorce occurred, the right of remarriage was presupposed, Bontrager (1978:33) interprets Deuteronomy 24 as affirming that, when a couple’s marriage ceases, they are free to remarry, but that does not mean that divorce is encouraged by Mosaic Law. It gives a form of permission rather than prescription (Atkinson 1981:102). The motive for consent to remarriage under the Mosaic Law is to preserve God’s grace and forgiveness, and to secure protection for divorced women, who were socially and economically defenseless (Atkinson 1981:107).

In spite of the affirmation of the biblical concept of remarriage, many believers still hold negative views about remarried families. Also, a theological framework of pastoral care for remarried families and their childrearing is hard to find. I assume, due to my personal and ministry experience, that, just like other types of family, Christian remarried families not only need the emotional and welcoming support of the community of the Christian faith, but are also eager to

hear biblical messages sustaining their family life and their children.

1.4 THE PIVOTAL TERMS IN THE RESEARCH: ADOLESCENCE, REMARRIED FAMILY

The terms “the remarried family” and “adolescence” are defined by various theories and therapists in their writings. I introduce their terms here, but my interviewees (my co-researchers) and I reserved the freedom to rework these terms in our own language if necessary.

1.4.1 Remarried families

Most family theorists and practitioners refer to a remarried family as a two-parent unit that arises from the legal marriage of divorced or widowed people. In this study, following the formulation by Visher and Visher (1988:2), I delimit a remarried family as “a household in which there is an adult couple, at least one of whom has a child from a previous relationship”. This definition is therefore not restricted to the notion of a legal marriage.

1.4.2 Adolescence

In terms of one dictionary definition, “adolescence” is the process or period of growth between childhood and maturity (*Webster’s New Explorer Dictionary*). “Adolescent” is used to describe young people who are no longer children but who have not yet become adults. It also refers to their behaviour (*Collins*

Cobuild).

In the academic field, Carter and McGoldrick (1999:42), psychologists and systemic family therapists, regard adolescence as that stage of the human life cycle that ranges from about the age of 13 to 21. The characteristic of adolescence is that

during this phase, young people go through major bodily, emotional, sexual, and spiritual changes: evolve their sexual and gender identities; learn to relate to intimate partners; and develop the ability to function increasingly independently. They renegotiate their identity with their parents as they mature; refine their physical, social, and moral identity; and begin to define who they want to become as adults.

By contrast, a social constructionist, Madigan (1996:50), views adolescence as a social construction as opposed to a developmental truth. Using a postmodern lens, he sees adolescents' identity and the stage of adolescence as culturally manufactured.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Although within my family, we have built an intimate and supportive relationship with one another, and have lived in love, I have purposely shared only my stories of stigmatization in this chapter. The reason is, firstly, that sharing my story enclosed by meta-narratives illustrates how ethics should be conducted in

the process of this research and who the subject of this research is. Second, my stories led me to consult mainly with my chosen paradigms and methodologies for this study, which suit me well. Bearing this in mind, I expound my paradigms and mythologies in the next chapter. In the process of telling my story, I could experience both the “painful process and freeing process” at the same time. When Müller (2004b:s.p.) shares his story in his article, he tells of his experience in the process that I experienced: “...my own progress from ‘storytelling’ to ‘story making’. By telling the story...I was enabled to tell a new story ... towards a better future.”

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The following outline explains how this research is set out.

Chapter Two deals with the research paradigm and methodology. I believe, because of my own marital experience, that the paradigms and methodologies I have chosen are the best for this research. The reason is that new approaches need to be applied to research on issues regarding remarried families. The approaches I chose are postmodernism, social constructionism, a narrative paradigm, practical theology as a doing theology, Minjung Theology and qualitative conversational research.

In **Chapter Three**, two narrators are presented as the protagonists of stories (my co-researchers), running through some of the difficulties and triumphs of being in a remarried family. I also tell of my research journey, the agenda of the

interviews and how I met the co - researchers. With a view to preserving the voices of my co-researchers, I made transcripts, thematically divided.

In **Chapter Four** a background on remarried families is presented. This chapter introduces “other’s voices surrounding those of the co-researchers”. In this chapter, many aspects, discourses and findings of existing research on remarried families are summarized. Also, as an interaction phase, deconstructive aspects concerning the above views were formulated.

In **Chapter Five**, firstly, I re-account for the various issues of the remarried families discussed in, previous chapters. To do this, the researched and the researcher tried to integrate their experiences with other perspectives, so as to present our developmental perspective. Secondly, the result of the evaluation from all the participants in this research, critical self-reflection and my own research experience are summed up.

CHAPTER TWO: PARADIGM / METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

After looking at various social (human) sciences that could assist me in gaining a better understanding of the stories of adolescents in remarried families, I adopted a narrative social construction paradigm, which is in harmony with an imaginative pastoral approach. This falls under the umbrella of postmodernism. In terms of postmodernism, this approach is like a string of beads that include deconstruction, post-linguistics, qualitative research and practical pastoral theology.

As I mentioned earlier, in Chapter 1.3 “Stimulus Three: Problems of existing research on the issues of the remarried family”, a traditional paradigm is not very helpful in research on the issues of adolescents in remarried families, since the purpose of this research is neither to analyse the gathered data, nor to formulate an institutional and therapeutic programme, but to understand in depth the subjective world of adolescents in remarried families and their influence on the family, by listening to their stories. Stories and experiences retold show how their protagonists make sense of each individual’s identity, personality, lifestyle and relationship(s), and are socially constructed. Therefore, by using a narrative social construction and an imaginative pastoral approach, true to a postmodernist paradigm and practical theology, the stories of adolescents in remarried families and their position in the family can be understood better and amplified.

2.1.1 Paradigm shift

One cannot deny that today we live in a postmodern era, at least in the sense of a transition from the modern to the postmodern period. It does not matter whether people agree to its thinking in their lives or not. Theologians and researchers undergo paradigm shifts in every era; today we are confronted with the shift from modernism to postmodernism. This shift invites us to a new understanding of the world, the self, and its structures. This shift is not a chronological or sequential change of modern discourses, as a successor of modernism, but is an attempt to change the whole. A metaphorical explanation by Müller (s.a.:22) helps us to understand this shift: it is like a person who has played golf and done well, but suddenly she or he tries to learn polo and play; then the person has to throw aside the rules and norms of golf, and has to undertake a total shift in terms of game rules and patterns and learn the whole system of polo.

In this sense, views on remarried families and their adolescents have also been subjected to a complete paradigm shift. In the postmodern era, remarried families are no longer seen demographically and socially as strangers; rather, they are, in Ganong and Coleman's (1994:152) view, "one of the protagonists of postmodern families". Thus far, family life was expected to conform to the traditional view of a first marriage, but this model no longer fits the phenomena of this era (Belovitch 1987:3). In other words, only in postmodern thinking is the structure of a remarried family approved as such. Another point, in favour of this

paradigm is that members of remarried families can have ownership of their stories as protagonists. Thus, a modernist epistemology on remarried families has to be changed. Also, traditional approaches based on modernism have had to be rejected in this study. The main characteristics of postmodernism are articulated as below.

2.1.2 The birth of modernism

In the Renaissance, the belief emerged that humankind was the centre of reality and was able to control nature in various ways, as humankind discovered the patterns and structures of nature. These patterns and structures were from “out there”. Renaissance thinkers have been called humanists, due to the fact that they pursued human values, emphasizing the necessity for a return to the ancient classical writings (Burgess 2001:50). The term “Renaissance” was derived from French, and it means “rebirth” or “revival”. Grenz (1996:58) expounds its characteristics saying that “it involved a rebirth of the classical spirit exemplified in the ancient Greek and Roman civilization, and it brought a revival in learning after the so-called ‘dark ages’...[It] rekindled an interest in the workings of the world around them, thereby establishing the foundation for the modern scientific enterprise”. The Renaissance humanists did not yet have the concept of the individual ego and the self-determination (Grenz 1996:60), which was only later developed by the existentialists. Renaissance humanists thought that knowledge was power, able to bring with it an understanding of the world and to change the world.

Building on the Renaissance, the Pre-Enlightenment or the “Age of the Reason” (Grenz 1996:61) developed the thoughts of Renaissance in relative intellectual independence from the authority of the church. One essential aspect was “the rise of an awareness of individuals as autonomous personalities”, and speculation on the human condition became more free and sophisticated than before.

To enhance their enterprise, Enlightenment thinkers strongly emphasized the notions of reason, the use of science and natural rights that were crucial and would be applied to solve the human condition and its problems (Burgess 2001:58). These thinkers believed that humankind was capable of exploring, via reason as well as science, the purpose of God and His values for creation, which was teleologically and lawfully governed. The notions of reason and science focused on analytical and mathematical techniques and on quantifiable results. These ideas were applied to various disciplines, such as the natural sciences and the human sciences in this era (Grenz 1996: 66).

In short, according to Erickson (2001:15), the “pre-modern understanding of reality was teleological. There was believed to be a purpose or purposes in the universe, within which humans fit and were to be understood. This purpose was worked out within the world. ...There had to be reasons for things, and these were not limited to efficient or ‘because of’ causes, but also included final or ‘in order that’ causes.” The mindset of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment paved the way for modernism.

2.1.3 Modernism

Modernism or post-Enlightenment, the successor of pre-modernism, is a worldview concerned with the ways in which people deal with particular principles of understanding their realities, truths, identities and the like. Briefly, the main characteristic of a modernist's mindset is a tendency to vehemently objectify knowledge, as a result universalizing the experiences of people in the name of science and thereby generalizing an inalienable fixed "truth" which the modernists believed in. This belief is a fictional proposition that the dynamic and diverse lives of people take place in a certain fixed form and pattern and according to criteria that are observable and give directions to human awareness. The key terms which emerged from these propositions were "objective", "universal", "validity", "criterion", "reliability", "rule", "scientific", "empirical", "expertise", "stable and control", "quantitative" and "datum". The main peculiarities of this movement are discussed in detail below.

2.1.3.1 *Knowledge*

In all modernist propositions, the main assumption is the relation between knowledge and truth, and reality that all knowledge is derived from verifiable facts or certain basic truths (Graham 1996:15). In other words, knowledge as such mirrors an objective, external, recognizable world which human beings are able to comprehend (Staver 1998; Watzlawick 1984). Therefore, knowledge is obtainable by means of empirical research and observation that can be verified universally. The process of the application of knowledge, according to modernist

presuppositions, takes the form of the schema in Figure 2.1. This pattern is hierarchical.

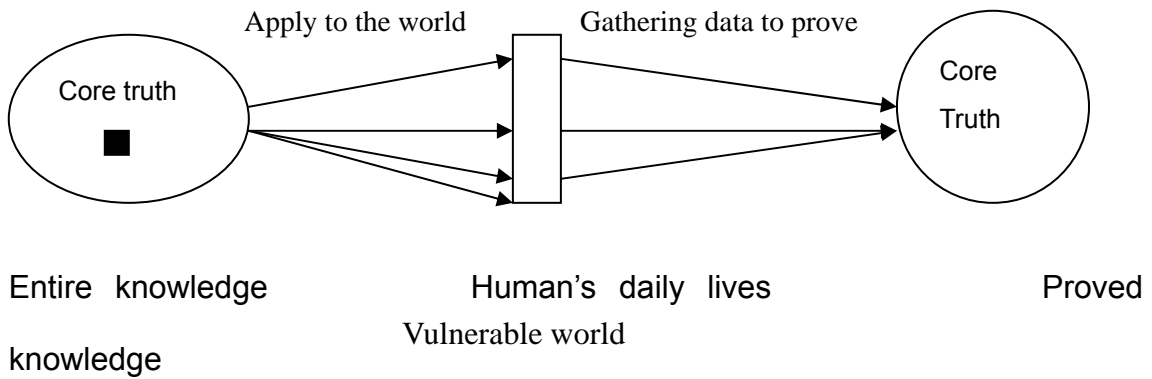


Figure 2.1: The feature of universal knowledge (modernist perspective)

2.1.3.2 Reality and truth

The epistemology used by modernists is that ultimate truth and reality exist independently of human beings. Modernists believe that the ultimate truth is ready to be found, on account of the fact that it represents entirely the reality, apart from the knower. Truth can be proven by completely rational objectivity, without emotion (Grenz 1996:5). This truth and reality are fixed, certain, stable, objective and inherently good.

Because of that assumption (and regrettably so), modernists operate under the illusion that, as Gergen and Kaye (1992:167), who reject this view, put it, “a good society can be erected on the foundations of empirical knowledge”. This assumption is often applied even for a dynamic life experience (Müller s.a.:23) and to drive human relationships, and it has provided a basic ideology to society

and those of its members with power. As a result of this ideology, powerful members of society can successfully establish a hierarchical society, separate some individuals from others, and stress that individuals are responsible for themselves (Foucault 1982:212). Linstead (2004:24) quotes Knights' who says that this is "at the heart of 'free'-market economics".

The beliefs of modernism are invasive and affect all matters regarding human beings. They are dominant over other beliefs, systems, cultures, methods and the like. In that sense, I assume that almost all the issues of adolescents in remarried families are caught up in modernist discourses. Most modernist discourses concerning remarried families disregard the idea that the stories of adolescents in remarried families relating to their roles in the family can only be articulated case by case. In this context, their lives are widely propagated as those or modernist of commercialized families (Kearney 1988:32).

2.1.4 Postmodernism

The mood and thinking today has shifted to postmodernism, which is inclusive of all matters regarding human life. This shift is highly influential for family structures and studies on them. Thanks to this radical shift, the structural genre of remarried families is embraced for what it is.

The shift from modernism to postmodernism is not simply part of a chronological sequence: it is a "total paradigm shift" in a new era (Müller s.a.:23). It moves from the objective to the subjective, from the universal to the particular, from

validity to subjective integrity, from the individual to the communal, from control to participation, from the quantitative to the qualitative, from datum to subjective experience. It does not agree with the notion of the existence of any unity and universality or look for a unifying worldview in the universe, because in postmodernism all is diversity and difference with its own value. Although postmodern thinkers have tried hard to define the term “postmodernism” (Gottschalk 2000:19), at best some key characteristics of the concept of “postmodernism” can be summarized as openness, indeterminateness, multi-interdependency and a concern with and for the marginalized. Grenz (1996:49) calls this phenomenon “the beginning of a revolution in knowledge”. Postmodernist thinking about the nature of knowledge, reality and truth is set out below.

2.1.4.1 *Knowledge*

Unlike modernists, who objectify and universalize knowledge, postmodern thinkers argue that no knowledge, including scientific knowledge, can be objective and universal, because all knowledge is socially or consensually constructed, as people obtain it in a process of continual reflexivity. That is why it is provisional and transitory (Freedman & Combs 1996:20-22; Lowe 1991:43; Smith & Nylund 1997:3). Thus, universal, objective and totalizing knowledge no longer exists, but rather, we acknowledge that there are socio-cultural and local and situated knowledges (Freedman & Combs 1996:332) that are worthwhile in the postmodern enterprise. Polkinghorne (1992:149) insists that "knowledge

should be concerned with these local and specific occurrences, not with the search for context-free general laws". Postmodernism recognizes that humankind has a limited ability to explain the universe, and that it is difficult to find universally applicable knowledge in any way (Freedman & Combs 1996:21; Gerkin 1997: 228). It recognizes that a person or group cannot achieve an objective universal truth via knowledge which is to be suitable and applicable to others. Also, there is an increasing awareness that there are many different worldviews, so that one group or person's worldview and method should not be regarded as better than that of others.

The feature of local knowledge is that this pattern is circular, as depicted in Figure 2.2.

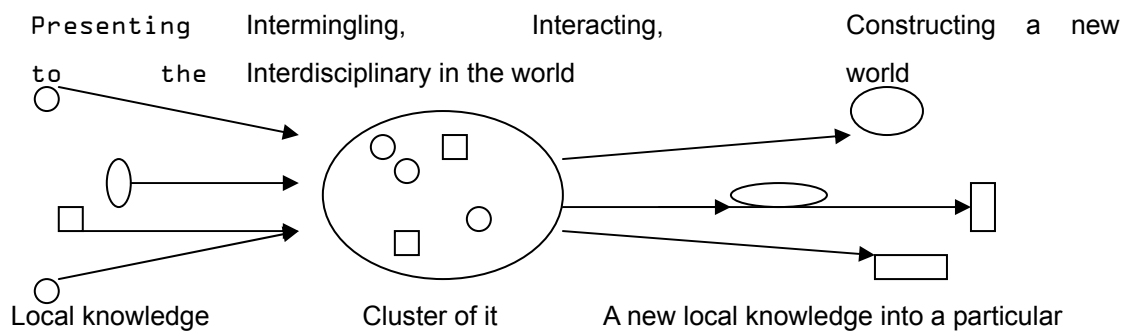


Figure 2.2: The features of local knowledge (postmodernist perspective)

Postmodern thinkers argue that local knowledge can only be applicable to a particular context in a particular time and space. When this knowledge is presented to the world, it interacts, intermingles and works together with other knowledge. Then they create new avenues for specific contexts. Accordingly, in

postmodern thought, knowledge of remarried families and their children as a local knowledge is welcomed and respected as worthy in its own right. With a view to reinforcing their local knowledge, this study's interest rests upon the subjective experience and meanings of adolescents in such families, instead of on general and disembodied propositions.

2.1.4.2 *Reality and truth*

The interest of postmodern thinkers is neither to establish an expert knowledge realm, nor to find an absolute truth or reality, but to pursue approximative truths or realities along with a local knowledge in a particular time. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:5) agree with Guba, saying, "reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated". In other words, it is not referable to the view that humankind can fully reach "the real", because people do not have perfect perceptions to access reality, but only that which they produce as their own constructed reality. Postmodernists argue that truth is not fixed, universal and certain, but personal, relational, historical, cultural, conditional and incomplete (Grenz 1996:43; Linstead 2004:68). Truth is a truth for a specific community that is relative to the background of that community.

According to modernist thought, there might be a perfect knowledge fully revealing the fixed reality, which might be governed by certain rules and criteria. However, this mindset is no longer approved in postmodern thinking. Postmodern practitioners agree that all is diverse and that difference has its

own value. As far as its practice is concerned, knowledge is applicable only case by case. Indeed, they respect the specific values of an individual(s) and group(s), and support them to enlarge these value systems.

2.1.4.3 *Questioning*

Instead of applying expert knowledge to a “reality” and establishing and finding certain rules and criteria, postmodern thinkers interminably question all declared “truths” and “realities” supported by socially constructed rules, criteria and empirical results (Glanville 1993:39). Questioning is one of the key characteristics of the postmodern stance, and is a critical method also used in a pastoral narrative approach. Morgan (1999:203) states: “Questions are informed by particular ways of thinking.” Postmodernists’ questioning is based on a healthy suspicion of the meta-narratives of modernity (Lyotard 1984:xxiv) and skepticism regarding modernists’ nostrums (Lundin 1993:4). The Latin prefix “meta -” connotes the meaning behind or underneath. In this sense, the narratives of modernity are a basic layer of people’s cognitive ability or people’s daily activities. The meta-narratives are the meanings behind them and underlying them.

Accordingly, postmodern questioning digs out meanings behind narratives and from underneath stories which have constructed human value systems and their cognitions, constraining people in their daily lives. These thinkers question the limitations of theory, and consider the consequences of transgression (Linstead

2004:5). Then again, these practitioners inquire which points of view are useful individuals and groups in a particular time and space (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:18).

In the same manner, postmodern research does not go along with the notion of predominant and inextricable “truths” and “realities” surrounding remarried family members, but questions first where the “realities” that are taken for granted come from, and then speculates on which are more useful views and alternative truths for the individuals concerned. In this research, this activity of questioning enables the researchers (my co-researchers and me) to catch exceptions from their stories in the process of telling them. The exception sometimes plays a great role in individuals’ telling stories ability to rescue themselves from their bondage, if any.

2.1.5 Social constructionism

In order to interpret the stories of remarried families and their adolescents, I consulted with the co-researchers with the notion of social constructionism in mind. Social constructionism (Bruner 1990; Gergen 1985, 1994, 2001; Shotter 1993), which accords with a postmodern view, was most useful for this research. The perspectives of social constructionism can readily be linked to a postmodern view. This approach goes noticeably well with a narrative approach. Social constructionists argue that realities are socially constructed via societal processes (Freedman & Combs 1996:16), maintained through narrative

(Freedman & Combs 1996:22), and perceptions of the result that people interpret their own world when they encounter the world (Gergen 1985:266; Watzlawick 1984:17). Through social processes, knowledge is also produced by the relation between one person and others, the persons and their social context. What is created in the social process is a series of ideas and shared beliefs, a social context where the boundary of what one is cannot be easily separated from what others are (Stevens 1996:222).

Whereas constructivists argue that an individual family is a sort of self-contained system that is affected to create private meanings about the world, social constructionists believe that meanings are socially constructed, which in turn force and maintain the widespread beliefs, ideologies or discourses shared in any given culture (Dallos 1997:31). Dallos (1997:142) says:

This sensitivity to how families are immersed in the reality of their culture highlights how constructivism, in contrast, tends to isolate families from society. Instead of simply exploring new narratives, for instance, a social constructionist approach to therapy tries to consider how an individual family's creativity is shared by dominant narratives, what is co-constructed in therapy must engage with this wider societal systems of beliefs.

In terms of this assumption, social constructionists focus on what is emergent, contextually discursive, multiple, relational and mutual.

I assume that the daily practices of adolescents in remarried families regarding their emerging issues such as emotions, intimacy, roles, upbringing and the like

are socially instructed, constructed and somewhat distorted in many areas, due to the influence of dominant stories and discourses on them. Therefore, in using a social constructionist approach, in this research on adolescents in remarried families, I used deconstructive techniques of interpretation to reformulate their stories.

2.1.5.1 *Deconstruction*

Social constructionism and postmodern theory use deconstructive techniques (Erickson 2001:18; Gergen 1994:250, 2001:30; Grenz 1996:43). Deconstruction deals with text analysis. According to Gadamer (1984:261), with a text itself, meaning is not inherent but rather emerges only as the reader converses with the text, because no one can enter into a dialogue with a text without her or his own pre-understanding(s) and perspective(s). Thus, deconstructionists try to discern any implicit and hidden meaning in a text, and how the text relates to other texts and sub-texts. In other words, they attempt to reveal the assumption(s) on which a text is based. The text, any written or oral discourse, whether political, social or philosophical, lies in the field of operation of deconstruction. One purpose of deconstructive work is to reveal the ambivalence and self-contradictions that lie latent in any text (Linstead 2004:39). Cooper and Burrell (1988:98) borrowed Derrida's idea to explain that "terms contain their own opposites and thus refuse any singular grasp of their meanings...difference is thus a unity which is at the same time divided from itself, and, since it is that which actually constitutes human discourse (Derrida

1973)".

Furthermore, deconstructive work is an endeavour to “undo” the text through a process of dissecting a text into its component parts for better understanding (Lester 1995:128). A characteristic of the process of dissecting a text is “the effect of erasure” (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:34). This process is critically helpful for practitioners to think of “what is and of what is not in whatever is stated or indicated” (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:63). This process renders possible not only reclaiming, revising and reformulating claimed truths and theories, but also undermining knowledge of onside, privileged and valued over that of the other. This does not mean that to deconstruct privileged knowledge is to destroy or reject it, but that marginalized knowledge is valued alongside of dominant knowledge. In the practical arena, a remarkable therapist, White (Epston & White 1994: 121), applies this deconstructive method, and he says:

According to my rather loose definition, deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called “truths” that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons’ lives. Many of the methods of deconstruction render strange these familiar and everyday taken-for-granted realities and practices by objectifying them.

Thanks to this recognition, pastoral caregivers and researchers who adopt a narrative social constructionist approach reject the popular view of “functional or

dysfunctional”, “healthy or problematic” and “accurate or inaccurate”. These words are associated with constructed discourses in social phenomena. As a narrative social constructionist, I assumed that there are many unheard stories to be told by adolescents in remarried families about their influence on their family within the family, which should go through a re-selective process and reinterpretation. Thus, I enthusiastically applied deconstructive techniques in this study.

2.1.5.2 *Discourse*

All individuals are either consciously or unconsciously caught up in socially constructed negative and positive discourses, which are arranged in meta-narratives within social processes. In this context, some are ineluctably marginalized, while others are dominant in society at the expense of those who are marginalized. I argue that, this being so, adolescents in remarried families are generally surrounded by socially saturated stereotypical stories and discourses. Their family structure can be also characterized as marginalized in modern meta-discourses. Consequently, my co-researchers and I have co-operated to expose as many kinds of discourses surrounding us as possible.

According to Hall and Gieben (1992:291), a discourse is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - e.g. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic.... It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed”. Scott (1990:135) conceptualizes discourse

as a “historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs”.

Discourse is, first of all, “a cultural activity”, which implies that it is not only a product, but a process (Lowe 1991:144; Talbot 1995:24-25). To put it another way: it is a meaning conveyer in a process of conversation in a concrete cultural context.

Secondly, a discourse is indirectly manifested at the centre of conversation, always in the background, and it is not directly queried (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:63-64). The reason is that there is a tendency in our mind to believe that discourse as an appropriate representation of experience, especially in therapeutic conversations.

Thirdly, discourses are susceptible to manipulation to create structural power in one way or another, via its various communal processes. Talbot (1995:26) exposes this schema, believing that it is an outcome of interpretation by specific people in specific institutional and broader social contexts. He adds:

Institutional and social structures always impinge upon discourse, bestowing specific social identities and power relations upon interactants and giving them different resources: different access to language, to representations of knowledge/beliefs. (It follows from this, incidentally, that these resources are not mutually accessible to all; these resources should not be confused with any notion of

‘mutual knowledge’.) (Talbot 1995: 26).

This phenomenon can take people away from their experience, or have them make sense of their experience passively against a standard (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996: 69).

2.1.5.3 *Power and discourse*

Structural power with its establishing discourse is, as such, oppressive and abusive, and is very influential with regard to the ways in which individuals understand their lives and their culture (Morgan 2000:9). To analyse the nature of power, Fillingham (1993:143) adopts Foucault’s notion that power is knowledge and vice versa. According to this argument, *knowledge* is always exerted in and through practices of power (Graham 1996:106). This power is also relational (Townely 1994:7). This power is “always already there and that one is never outside it” (Gordon 1980: 141). Flaskas and Humphreys (1993:35-48) describe this power as “being seen in everyday communication,...in the structuring of the relationship between people,...in the physical use of space and architecture,...in the actual discipline of bodies,...and in the creation of ways of thinking,...forms of subjectivity,...and forms of knowledge”. Thus, where there is power, there is a certain truth claimed as an objective knowledge which bestows power on those who control the knowledge.

In this sense, society with its various discourses has created a model of remarried family life and the children in such families that normally compares with or comes from ideas of the biological family. Gergen (2001:26) demands

that we pay attention to the unfavourable phenomenon that “when claims are made to truth’, ‘objectivity’ or ‘accuracy’ in reporting”, we should be aware that we are only being exposed to “one way of putting things”. Thus, one task of research on remarried families and their adolescents, using a narrative social constructionist approach, is to emancipate people from socially constructed identities, ambivalent or contradictory images of themselves, such as masculine fathering, the “superwoman” syndrome, fairy tale families or commercialized families. In this research, one way of accomplishing this task was to implement a social constructionist approach, which is in accord with a narrative approach. With this approach I also tried hard to disempower my positional authority, so as to avoid my preconceptions in various ways. In a Addition, a pastoral narrative approach, including imaginative work, helped the participating adolescents to emancipate themselves from the power of some meta-narratives.

2.1.6 Narrative

Social constructionists cannot help but emphasize people’s subjective experience by constructing their realities, which are organized and upheld by narratives (Freedman & Combs 1996). What social constructionism is to the narrative paradigm, a needle is to thread in this research.

A narrative paradigm is a worldview that tries to understand the ways in which people deal with or use particular methods of thinking their “realities”, “truths”, “identities” and the like. Bruner (1986:69) asserts that “our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense

of others in the social world around us”.

Narrative research assumes that the dynamic and diverse lives of people take place in a narrative form that gives meanings to and creates understandings of human experiences (Lester 1995:27). According to White (2000:9), narratives as people’s expressions of life are units of meaning and experience.

2.1.6.1 *Meaning*

In this research, understanding some of the meanings of stories is much more important than compiling or analysing data about remarried families and their adolescents. People’s lived experiences, as they are, cannot be changed in the moment, here and now, but they can be altered in terms of making meanings, in being told. From a narrative point of view, life cannot be meaningful unless it is narrated. Stone (1988:244) states that our “meanings are almost always inseparable from stories, in all realms of life. And, once again family stories, invisible as air, weightless as dreams, are there for us”. Narrative practitioners believe that meaning is dependent on social discourses (Graham 1996:29). Hence they are very concerned with meaning (Freedman & Combs 2002:141) in terms of social constructionism, and are aware that meaning does not result from something out there, but is a constructed part of responding to each other, as an essential interdependence.

Characteristics of meaning are a personal, relational, and cultural achievement, for it is constructed through processes of negotiating with communities of

people and within the various terms and institutions of culture. Meaning is not radically invented or created independently from people's mindsets as a mere production of their speculation (Morgan 2000:9). Meaning is derived from experiences, and is ascribed to them. In turn, people make sense of their experiences in terms of such meaning (Wetherell & Maybin 1996:276).

In terms of such a perception of meaning, the questions of who the adolescent is and what the structure of the remarried family is are not critical to a narrative approach; instead, the question of what meanings are given to their life and stories in the family is of great significance. Thus, this research searched for the meaning(s) of experiences in the stories of adolescents in remarried families rather than gathered data from or about them.

2.1.6.2 *Experience*

Narrative theory is very serious about people's subjective experience, whereas traditional paradigms and methodologies concerning the self and family issues have relied mainly on naturalistic or systematic concepts such as focusing on biological elements, the mind, behaviour, or systemic features. In addition, traditional paradigms allege that their studies are a natural science which is objective and precise by nature. However, narrative practitioners emphasize that their studies should be a moral science (Shotter 1996:22).

People's subjective experience is essential to making sense of being. Stevens

(1996:149) questions precisely that idea: “Imagine yourself as a person without subjective experience or consciousness. In what ways would you be different? What would you be unable to do that you can do now? To what extent do you think that such an individual could be regarded as being a person?” He adds that, without subjective experience, we would have no awareness of emotional elements, nor could we read, learn or connect with the subjectivity of others (Stevens 1996:149). Without it there are no conscious memories of the past or expectations of the future within people and subjective experience is then excluded in research.

In terms of practice, therefore, White and Epston (1990:10) state that “experience [or subjective experience] must be storied and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience”. No story can be meaningful unless it is narrated. In particular, to create a better future story, one must undertake the process of telling and retelling of the past experiences. In the light of that recognition, this research has had to listen for the experienced stories of remarried families and their adolescents, rather than observe or analyse their information. Therefore, their stories were an essential part of this research.

2.1.6.3 *Story*

Stories and experiences have a special relationship, for “experience only becomes useful if we can succeed to turn it into a story form” (Müller 1999). Plummer (1995:173) validates the merits of stories by saying that they are

“maps for action, they look into the future, tell us how we are motivated, guide us gently into who we will be. They make certain worlds more plausible. They signpost directions to be taken”. A story, conveying values and themes, helps us understand and talk sensibly about the continuity of life (Epston 1998:12).

2.1.6.4 *Tense of story*

The foundation of a story consists of three elements in terms of tense. Story lies in the present, the past, and the future. These three are the storyteller’s abiding truth and personal reality, present existence and future (Müller 1999). The past is the invisible foundation of the story that underlies personal beliefs, values, and norms in accordance with social and cultural discourses. The past story operates through the present story, which offers the audience the characteristic and the healthy condition of the story as the metaphor of the tree (See Figure 2.1). The present storytelling is a transforming act. The impetus of the past and the present story lie in the future story, which is the hope of the storyteller (Müller 1999). In hopelessness, the present storytelling has no impetus to bear its fruit.

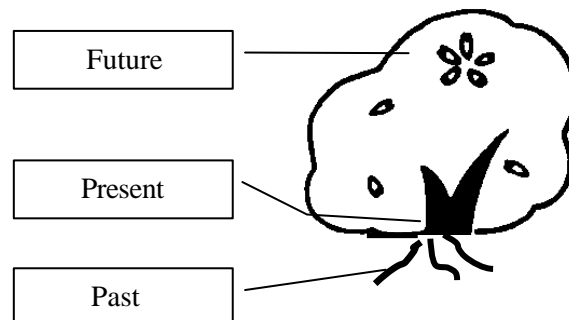


Figure 2.3: The tree as a metaphor for the tenses of a story.

From a narrative point of view, with regard to the story tense, the story always begins here and now, and moves to the past and to the future. To make sense of past experience and to develop future-oriented stories, the story begins with the present. Müller (1999) articulates it as follows: “Stories are not about what happened, but about what is developing on the basis of what happened.”

He adds:

In the stories we tell, the future becomes the already-present and the past becomes the still-present. The past and the future combine to form a suspenseful and powerful NOW. The stories that are remembered and the stories that are expected inform the present reality... Within each story there is a tension between what is experienced in the present on the one hand, and the past and the future on the other (Müller 2004c),

One’s story is a rich life resource informing the self, which was constructed in the past and is in being now, constructing ideas about one’s family, and helps one to see different ways of interpretation. In mining remarried families’ rich life resources, researchers have to recognize that there is no need for ultimate fixed norms and roles in the family to apply them.

2.1.6.5 Three forms of story

The forms of the story were significant for this research, because they characterized the methods of this research. A narrative therapist, Roberts (1994:81-122), categorized story forms in three groups: spoken, written and enacted. They can overlap. Spoken stories are real as “one of a kind” when they are told.

- *Telling one's story*

- Story-go-rounds: One person starts the story, then each person in turn picks up from where the previous teller leaves off and adds to it.
- Giving back stories: Another person tells what they hear of someone else's story.
- Sharing mirror stories: Stories that mirror issues in one's life or someone else's life we shared.
- Structured storytelling: The tellers speak as if writing a letter, creating unfinished fables, listening and telling from behind the one-way mirror.

- *Written story*

Written stories are powerful ways to disseminate or pass on “this is the way things are”, and they become fixed. They tend to lose some of the potency of spontaneous words when spoken. They can take the following forms:

- Mini stories: affirmations, appreciations, thank you notes.
- Reading others' stories.
- Writing a letter.
- Writing one's own story.
- Co-writing care reports and documents.

- *Enacted story*

The last category is enacted stories. This means that they are acted out in the therapy room, with clients either playing the parts of themselves or others. They help people tell the story and are in the story at the same time:

- Acting out the story.
- Sculpting.
- Using puppets and other props.

These three story forms were earnestly employed in this research. In an attempt to access the full stories of adolescents in remarried families as fully possible, we used conversational interviews (spoken stories), written reports handed in (written stories), and imaginative work by my co-researchers (enacted stories). In this process, language plays a key role (Müller 1999). It is not a “mere messenger from the kingdom of reality” (Gergen 2001:11), but through it people also engage in a social process of constructing particular realities.

2.1.6.6 *Language*

Whenever language is used in a conversation, it contains meaning, understanding, imagery and information in itself, conveying one to the other. It is used to develop meaning and to interpret experience (O’Connor 1998:55). Events, experiences and surroundings as such may be physically the same at any one moment in time and space, and yet how they are selected to be acted

upon, to be made sense of by people, depends upon people's use of language (Shotter 1996:2). That does not mean that people can fully express their meaning through language and they use it merely as a representation of the tellers' thoughts, feelings and lives. Instead, language takes up the interactive ways in which the words people use influence the ways in which they think and feel about the world. In turn, the ways in which they think and feel influence what they speak about (Winslade & Drewery 1997:33). In other words, language is relational and generative, because it influences how people conceptualize what they see and how they position themselves in relationships with others. It does not reflect just on nature, but creates the natures people know (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:378).

Language is cultural, social, historical and relational. It is also constitutive of reality when it takes place in conversation. In conversation the words and phrases people use connect them to their immediate and historical legacy of ideas and meanings (Dallos 1997:142).

Gordon (1980:141) agrees with Foucault that language is an instrument of power. Those who manipulate and control the language used in various social discourses have power. By holding that language, they can maintain their power in society. One example is the language of scientists, which represents their knowledge and practice, not only in their academic world, but also in their society. Their language also reflects social structures of power (Graham 1996:29). On the other hand, "by breaking the silence, by using this most

powerful instrument, language, we can participate in empowering people to be survivors instead of victims” (Müller 2004c).

2.1.6.7 *Exploratory language*

Who uses what kind of language is a matter of who represents what and for whom. As mentioned above, language relates to social discourses, which connect directly and tightly with power practices. One characteristic of a postmodern narrative approach is “a flight from authority” (Glanville 1993:39). One way of practising “a flight from authority” in this research was to avoid using explanatory or expert language such as “healthy” or “unhealthy”, and “functional” or “dysfunctional”. These words are just the explanatory language of some expert groups. Story-telling should not be turned into a kind of explanation (Fee 2000:253, 257).

Instead of using explanatory language, research from a narrative social construction approach considers exploratory language that is similar to the concept of descriptive or externalizing language as used by narrative therapists. Co-researchers use exploratory language to describe the present, to visit and revisit the past, and to pursue the future. With exploratory language, the researchers can formulate their exploratory questions and imaginative work. Also, it is used to fill the relational and emotional gap between the researcher and those being researched. Miller, Hubble and Duncan (1995:54) emphasize its effectiveness in therapy by saying that their clients often experience an

empathic connection with therapists when the therapists use the clients' "language and worldview...rather than...the terminology".

In short, language expresses one's identity and one's system and culture (Tietze, Cohen & Musson 2003:5-14). Thus, to holistically understand my co-researchers' world, I needed to participate in their culture with exploratory language, which contains various images as a catalyst for telling and retelling stories and which they use in conversation.

2.1.7 Imaginative work

Imaginative work was an integral part of this research. Imaginative work enlivened the stories of my co-researchers, to be fulfilled and developed by themselves. This imaginative work always begins its task and starts from "here and now stories". Thus, starting from the here and now, I argue that in our daily life, activity and communication take place in some form through our imaginative work, which is referred to social, historical, cultural and personal experiences in a particular time and space.

From a narrative perspective, stories are "full of gaps which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed....These gaps recruit the lived experience and the imagination of persons" (White & Epston 1990:13). Moreover, these stories cannot be told fully through language, because of its own limitation to express (Graham 1996:21). Therefore, in order to fill the gaps, to employ

imaginative work is to attempt a holistic approach to people's life. Gerkin (1991: 67) is aware that ordinary life tends to be governed by imagination rather than reason.

Consequently, to amplify the stories of adolescents in remarried families and of their influence on the family, imaginative research in conversation with them was of great importance for this research. In this study, I do not use the term imagery to mean "mental imagery" (as developed by behavioural psychological scientists); rather, I believe that the use of imagery is an extraordinary faculty of human understanding and that it carries the capacity of human thinking patterns.

2.1.7.1 Imaginative work and Social constructionism

Traditional psychologists believe that "imagery" is a production of the mind by nature or "as the creative faculty of mind" (Lamarque & Olsen 1994:243). They call it "mental imagery", which is a type of non-logical thinking (Epstein 1989:3). They think that "our minds have their own discoverable, natural principles of operation which owe nothing either to history or society for their nature" (Shotter 1996:22). They think of imagination as individual phenomena or activity, but that view is not acceptable (Riikonen & Smith 1997: 61) to social constructionists.

However, in the light of social constructionism, imagery can be seen as derived from lived experiences in accordance with a social network. This imagery does not pop up either out of the right hemisphere of the human brain, nor from "out

there". Linstead (1993:116) thinks that imagery is produced as a result of and is also influenced in shape by social construction. It has already been constructed through culture and its communities. In that sense, the modernist's belief that an imaginative work is a person's original creation or authentic expression is no longer acceptable to postmodern thinkers, who believe that an imaginative work is a result of a reproduction of a social community. According to Kearney (1988:4), the "individual subject is no longer considered the maker or communicator of his own images. There is a growing conviction that the images we possess are reproduced copies of images already there before us".

In postmodern culture, a key concept is that there are neither transcendent realities nor original realities. Thus, it is no more important to distinguish between the real or the original reality and the imaginary reality. The very bond between imagination and reality can be comprehended not only as inverted but also as subverted altogether (Kearney 1988:3). The imaginary is a construction form in which people describe reality around them. Thus, a task of the social constructionist is "not to supply reality but to invent allusions" (Lyotard 1984:82) via the imagination, which is alternative with stories. Imagination is wider and more flexible than a mere story. In the light of narrative theory, fictional narratives can show how the world is presented to the reader, and they can be seen as imaginary resolutions of real contradictions (Talbot 1995:6).

2.1.7.2 *Imaginative work and narrative*

Imaginative work can be effectively used with a narrative approach in ways in which it accords with narrative to fill gaps in stories and to bring forth possibilities for alternative stories. Indeed, by means of imaginative work, people are able to render their stories to be amplified and performed. To fill their story gaps, they are required to take on the lived experience and their imagination (White & Epston 1990:13). Stories are often not only direct narrations of life events but also concern imaginary lives. Stories can be real or imaginary. This imaginary aspect helps individuals see presumable worlds, transposing themselves there. “These imaginative stories contain similar life changes to the reality worlds...” (Cattanach 2002:8).

A story is a form of representation of what people have known, conveying the meaning they attach to their life through it; and yet sometimes it does not offer a way of providing the possibility for alternative story (Hudd 2002:170). Müller (2004a) states the problem that “stories are often presented with very thin meaning and from the problem perspective”. However, imaginative work engenders other possibilities, stories and perspectives, and brings them forth. Through imagination as a human act, people can catch a credible mode of knowing and it “does yield a possible ‘home’ [a story] when we accept a participating role as ‘home-maker’ [storytelling]” (Brueggemann 1993:13). Imaginative work, in Brueggemann’s (1989:5) terms, fictional or poetical work, does not disappear effortlessly; rather, it walks to the edge of alternatives “not yet available” to people. Through imagination people can access “all kinds of possibilities to make new meanings and place ourselves differently in

relationship to a story” (Roberts 1994:72). Doing imaginative work in this research is not only to evoke lived experiences to embark through them upon the present, but also to draw preferred alternative stories into the present.

2.1.7.3 *Imaginative work and therapy*

Because of the effectiveness of imaginative work, many therapists employ it in their therapeutic work in the light of a narrative social constructionist approach such as drama therapy and play therapy (Cattanach 1992, 2002; Fox 1982; Freedman et al. 1997; Gil 1994; Jones 1996; Roberts 1994; Smith & Nylund 1997). There are many merits of the use of imagination in therapeutic rooms. Firstly, by means of imagination in therapeutic conversation, people, especially young persons, are encouraged to access their own unique skills and knowledge (Johnson 1999:211). They can facilitate their fictional imagination to start thinking another, healthier reality.

Imaginative work, moreover, creates a safe and secure space in conversation, especially for usually silenced or stigmatized stories, just as narrative play therapy does (Vay 2002:35). People, especially children, can find alternative ways of expression in a safe and secure space created in the conversation, and they are able to make a presumable reality in which they have a sense of it as the protagonist of it in the now. In doing so, they are able to enjoy their time and space. It is their time to create multi-stories to choose multi-interpretations looking back on past events and towards an open-ended future.

2.1.7.4 *Imaginative work and research*

“Listening to people talk in their own terms about what had been significant in their lives seemed to us far more valuable than studying preconceived psychometric scales or contrived experiments” (Josselson & Lieblich 1993: ix).

I argue that narrative research should not only rest on facts and concerns about factualism, but should also embrace imaginative outcomes. By contrast, quantitative research and traditional research deal with information, data, and empirical objects which are accepted as facts in terms of their view. Pastoral narrative research has to consider, for instance, subjective experiences and meanings which are incommensurable and subjective. Methodologically, the research takes on the form of largely unstructured conversation. The reasons are set out below.

- Facts and factuality:

In modernism, it is a tendency that propositions, claims and statements of science are very often respected as **facts**. Also, modernist thinkers believe that facts are empirically discoverable. Consequently, they stick to the mindset that research has to do only with facts.

However, Gergen (2001:238) does not believe that all scientific statements are based on actual cases. He thinks that it is dangerous that these

statements purport to inform us about the nature of reality and are used to make predictions. Shotter (1996:80-81) is also suspicious of the nature of facts which are claimed to be empirically identified by scientific communities, because “we must take it that our statements (whether true, false or meaningless) are not always about real things: sometimes what they refer to is imaginary; and there can be (... false and meaningless) statements about imaginary things”.

In fact, scientific claims are another form of story. These claims are narrated out of sequence of events all the time (Talbot 1995:3). Talbot (1995:3) gives us a good illustration: “A child writing up a science experiment in school has to produce a report of the series of actions she has undertaken...[to write her report] scientific discourse requires her to depersonalize by using the passive tense of the verb...to make her report-writing seem more objective. But she will continue to produce stories in her reports.”

Unfortunately, this kind of statement (a reported story) becomes the “truth” about what is empirically experimented on. It finally becomes a belief, which represents a principle or a norm. Yet, this “truth” and belief is a belief of community tradition (Browning 1991:177) or constructed ideas (White & Epston 1990:19). The actual mindset of the scientific statement or proposition as a belief or principle “is to hold it to be true and to have the disposition to assert it as true” (Lamarque & Olsen 1994:244).

In postmodern culture, not all scientific propositions and beliefs are rejected; the possibilities of these are approval. However, the notion is rejected that all claims are applicable to any situation and case. Fee (2000:253) acknowledges the unique ways in which science describes the general patterns of the world. He simultaneously warns that “human (conscious) activity does not have those characteristics; or, at the very least, they are not essential to it. It is a fundamental betrayal, carried out in the name of science, to insist that it must”. Thanks to the above recognition, one of the purposes of postmodern movements is to consider narratives as “container[s] for our constructions” (Paré 1995:7). Bruner (1986:15) says, “narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative”. In other words, stories including imaginations come from real lives which become sources for telling and making stories. Thus, pastoral narrative research emphasizes imaginative work because this research relies on real lives.

- The characteristics of subjective experience:

It is imperative that this research be aligned with imaginative work. The first reason is that without the teller and listener’s constant imaginative work in their conversation, the attempt to understand subjective experience is inconceivable, because subjective experience consists of beliefs, feelings, ways of making sense and evaluating the world as perceived (Stevens 1996:150), which require imaginative descriptions to be manifested. Stevens (1996:150) argues that “we cannot measure [subjective experience], at least not without losing its richness and the quality which gives it its authentic feel. Nor is it usually relevant to set up experiments to test hypotheses which try

to explain actions in terms of cause-effect laws”.

- The characteristics of language:

According to O'Connor (1998:55), the language used in conversation contains meaning, understanding, imagery and information in itself, conveying one to the other. In this respect, while traditional research with its measure box has no space to reveal the content of the language of the researched in depth, imaginative work from a pastoral narrative research is very helpful in that it provides people with multiple descriptions in their language.

In addition, people tend to stick to their daily descriptive language while they are presenting or explaining something, especially if they are sensitive to other people. In this situation, whenever words as descriptive tools are used in conversation, meaning is restricted and thereby cannot be fully revealed. However, by implementing people's imaginative depiction, they are able, not only to express more fully what they experience as possible, but also to think of alternative interpretations of their experience. Therefore, for this research, imaginative work was one of crucial methods to help my co-researchers, remarried families and their adolescents, to develop their stories.

- Alternative possibilities:

Furthermore, in contrast to traditional research, narrative research embraces imagination(s) because it has to do not only with present and past stories, but also with possibilities for the future stories of the researched that cannot

be factual, but only imagined. Therefore, this research adopted imaginative work. Roberts (1994:71) says: “We can fill out the past, project future; imagination is essential for moving stories through time, speaking in different voices, and elaborating memory.” One task of narrative research is, according to Shotter (1993:81), to make new connections, possibilities or more productive metaphors visible.

In short, in as far as research is concerned about its subjects and facts, traditional research has no room for imaginative work. By contrast, pastoral narrative research cannot help but emphasize the importance of imaginative work, because it works on stories, and the feelings and emotions in the stories. It is imaginative work that helps the researched to thicken their stories and the researchers to understand the told stories and to empathize with them during the moment of conversation.

- Practical examples:

In imaginative research, various things could be used, such as colours, tastes, small stones or graphs. For instance, a colour could be representative in that it describes a person’s mood in a specific situation, or tells of her or his anticipation of the future. This colouring offers various poetic interpretations and alternative pictures in the mind that gives the person the privilege of being a multi-self rather than a fixed self. This colouring also cannot be apart from one’s cultural boundaries. A Western person might say his feeling was blue, and the meaning may be different

from a Korean person's view of blue. In Korean culture, a person may think of blue as positive like hope, or cool.

Taste can also be used to represent one's memory. A person may express her or his memory of the past as bitter, which normally means awful and terrible, so that she or he would not want to look back on it. By contrast, another person could say the bitter was painful but an effective medical substance for the future. These are examples of putting imaginative work into research. Through imaginative work, people can concatenate their events from now to yesterday, from today to tomorrow, from factual events to imaginable events, and vice versa. This imaginative research was nowhere more effective than when applied to a narrative social construction approach. By implementing imaginative work in this study, children from the remarried families were not only able to express the fullness of their emotions and moods, but also to build their beautiful future house.

2.2 THEOLOGY

The shift from modernism to postmodernism has taken place not only in theory but also in the theological field. Whereas modernist theologies have tended to reinforce dominant social discourses and support them as an underlying pivot, the mandate of postmodernist theologies is to make marginalized discourses livelier and to give a voice to marginalized people. All the above theoretical stances go well with practical pastoral theology based on the mindset of Minjung Theology. In this study, as I am aware of the historical tendency in the

theological field for such terms “practical theology” and “pastoral theology”, including the attempt to distinguish the concept of pastoral care and pastoral counselling (O’Connor 2003), to be conceptualized and developed differently in terms of practice and discipline (Graham 1996:11). Yet, for the purposes of this study, it is not very important to distinguish between the terms “pastoral” and “practical”, because this study is both pastoral (inclined to counselling for individuals), and practical (to do with paradigms and methodologies for the study).

2.2.1 Practical pastoral theology

In order for adolescents in remarried families to establish a theology, my theological stance is consistent with the following suggestive definition Gerkin (1986:61):

Practical theology is the critical and constructive reflection on the life and work of Christians in all the varied contexts in which that life takes place with the intention of facilitating transformation of life in all its dimensions in accordance with the Christian gospel. Practical theology, seen from a narrative hermeneutical perspective, involves a process of the interpretative fusion of horizons of meaning embodied in the Christian narrative with other horizons that inform and shape perceptions in the various arenas of activity in which Christians participate.

In this definition, Gerkin (1986), on the one hand, does not lose the position of

understanding where the theological work starts, that is, a concrete *habitus* (Graham 1996:103). Müller (2004a) single-mindedly insists: “Practical theology is only possible as contextual practical theology. Practical theology cannot function in general. It is always local, concrete and specific.” Postmodern practical theology is not the application of theory which is categorized by traditional disciplines, studies of biblical theology, systematic theology and church history (Fowler 1999:75); rather, it is constructed from the question of what is happening here and what is going on in this situation (Gerkin 1991: 61). On the other hand, practical theology does not underestimate the dialogical relationship with other horizons in the postmodern era, namely, interdisciplinary work (O’Connor 1998:47). This interdisciplinary work can create a developmental stage for a number of possibilities which are transformable. Thus, in order to explore the influence of various socially constructed discourses on remarried families and their roles in the family, I propose to consult with narrative social constructionism for both interdisciplinary and epistemological work. The formula of practical theology is practice (a naive understanding of a concrete context), theory (a critical conversation from a narrative hermeneutical perspective), practice (a new praxis) (O’Connor 1998: 105) in dialectics.

According to Müller (2004a:s.p.), “practical theological research is not only about description and interpretation of experience. It is also about deconstruction and emancipation....to develop into a new story of understanding that points beyond the local community”. To be regarded as

practical theological research, both deconstructive and emancipative, this research had to take on both a narrative approach and a social deconstruction process. In doing so, the co-researchers in the practical theological research aspect of this research were remarried families and their children as a concrete *habitus*, myself as a research facilitator and God as the mysterious “Other” (Carlson & Erickson 2002:235, Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:175).

The central purpose of practical pastoral theology in this study was to make dialogue possible between the stories of remarried families’ here and now, and God’s story, in order to make them work together to go further toward creating new meaning and new life. It is best to achieve that purpose by means of a transformable and re-interpretive interaction of their stories (Gerkin 1991:59). Elsewhere, Gerkin (1997:13) articulates the notion that a pastoral caregiver has the responsibility to facilitate the maintenance and further development of the person’s spiritual or faith story and the dialogue with its tradition, and to facilitate the growth and creative development of particular life stories.

2.2.2 Minjung Theology

As Müller (1999:s.p.) says, “with our stories we take a position”. Hence, throughout my experience of personal and communal events and incidents in a particular area of Korea, I have spontaneously consulted Minjung Theology as a practical theology born in particular circumstances in Korea. It is a Korean indigenous theology and one way of doing theologies. It focuses on the stories

of the marginalized, rather than on those of dominant power groups. Some theologians understand it as a version of Liberation Theology, but that is not accurate. Unlike Liberation Theology, takes on board Marxism, and thus bars religion and culture as an opium, but Minjung Theology rejects that view (CCA 1989:xv). Also, while the former rejects dialogue with Christian traditional stories, the latter enthusiastically converses with those stories by deconstructing them.

2.2.2.1 *For the marginalized*

This theology is often referred to as the “Minjung Story”. It has gained its other name among its theologians since it started with marginalized people’s storytelling (Chung 1991:104). The extreme case is that some insist that it give up its categorization as a discipline, for they believe that a story is only a story. That is why they call it the “Minjung Story”, instead of the “Minjung Theology”. Its practitioners believe that human history and society have been engendered, has flourished and has been constructed with the blood of the marginalized, which cannot be perceived from a dominant group’s position, and that their stories were often sadly buried in the name of “truth” by power groups’ dominant ideas. Minjung Theology pursues political, economic, social and systemic change.

In a hermeneutic sense, it strives to see people’s context and the Bible from the eyes of the marginalized in the here and now (Kwok 1995:17). Its thinkers suggest that a “dialogical imagination” is an alternative way of interpreting a

biblical truth from the perspective of the marginalized (Kwok 1995:8). The marginalized implement the way, the dialogical imagination, to find out their preferred future stories from both biblical stories and their own people's stories. The dialogical imagination is like a bridge between biblical stories and people's stories, each of which has its own gaps. It is a way to close the distance between both stories.

2.2.2.2 *Dialogical practice*

I regard dialogue as so important that I draw on dialogue as an idea for doing practical theology into my own theology. To take up a dialogue form is to encourage practical theologians to shift the ways in which they strive for a better understanding of objects, to how they genuinely understand each other. According to Shotter (1993:6), this is "a shift from an interest in epistemology to one in practical hermeneutics". This shift leads me to take up a "not-knowing" position, and to apply a researcher's ethics in the process of research and counselling, as well as in pastoral narrative research, which compels that position and ethics. Social interactions and conversations are maintained through dialogues which construct a person's inner development and internalizes it to a greater or lesser degree. The internalization of dialogue is fundamental to the development of all forms of mental function: memory, learning, perception, attention and problem-solving (Dallos 1997:63).

Etymologically, in Greek, the word "dialogue" is derived from *dia* (thought) and

logos (word; meaning; to gather together) signifying the flow of meaning. Particularly, in Scharfenberg's view of pastoral care, the root the word in Greek expresses the idea of "talking through" one's problems and difficulties. Genuine dialogue is practised in openness, receptivity and flexibility to allow a flow of meaning in communication. Dialogue renders possible communication between diverse communities, traditions, cultures and social discourses. This dialogical work between them makes possible good pastoral work (Gerkin 1991:19). To develop his model of pastoral ministry, Gerkin (1991:70) borrows an idea from the Old Testament scholar Brueggeman that a continuing dialogue between contemporary life and the tradition must be fostered. Browning (1991:70) comments on "dialogues that advance the best reasons possible for our positions". He acknowledges a concept of ministry as dialogue to synthesize both individual and social transformation in one model (Browning 1991:247).

2.2.2.3 *Servant leadership*

Practically, in terms of servant-hood, also called "servant leadership", dialogical theology is supportive and facilitative, rather than used to force people. This servant leadership cannot but emphasize team-ship. In practising team-ship in terms of servant leadership, the leader of a team is only a team member among team members and his or her talent is leadership (Cladis 1999:89). This servant leadership is organic team-based leadership rather than a mechanical structure. In this sense, a leader does not lead the whole project of his or her team, but is a facilitator for the flow of the team's project. The underlying principle of team-

ship has several things in common with the participatory method in qualitative research.

In light of that, team-ship is crucial in this research, for this research is inclined to a participatory approach with my co-researchers rather than a mere observational approach. In a team for this research, I am a facilitator and leader in general, but each team member and each of my co-researchers is a leader in a specific story, a particular situation and step in the process of this research. This team-ship prompts this study to take on incarnational care to be culturally participatory. One missionary expounds the incarnation in this way: Jesus, who came as a helpless infant, was a learner, became 100 percent Jew and gave up His position to communicate with people (Lingenfelter & Mayers 1986:125).

2.2.2.4 *Text dispute*

The last part of dialogical servant-hood theology deals with text dispute. Its pattern of doing theology is practice-theory-practice. I believe that God is not sleeping in the Bible and did not merely make sense in biblical times; rather, He is still actively working here and now. It is imperative that the Bible as story is capable of being many texts at once, but that we also consider God's work place and time and the people we study to be a crucial text. In his model for pastoral care in an eco-hermeneutical pastorate, Müller (1991:84) clearly states:

...we work with two texts. We try to understand people as 'texts'...

We listen to them and pay attention to their stories. On the other

hand, we try to understand the gospel in its significance for a specific situation. The aim of interpretation is to understand what text means for people living their lives here and now within a certain ecosystem.

Therefore, with this view, I have the personal responsibility to reconstitute socially constructed religious ideas regarding the stories of adolescents in remarried families and to reinterpret teachings on remarriage in the Bible. Also, fulfilling the purpose of practical pastoral theology from a narrative approach has to do with the social and political dimension of care (Graham 1996:50). In doing this work, Christian narrative, pastoral care and counselling are able to abundantly sustain the everyday life of remarried families and their children.

2.3 RESEARCH CONCERN AND METHODOLOGY

2.3.1 Research gaps

Among the problems surrounding existing research as presented in Chapter 1, I found two critical issues in terms of research gaps in the field of remarriage family studies.

- the subject of research issue; and
- the paradigm and methodology issue.

In the field of family studies and therapy, remarried families are a relatively new issue. Research on issues concerning remarried families and its name in research have only fairly recently begun to be constructed (Carter & McGoldrick

1998:417). Specifically, adolescents in remarried families, who are most significant role-players in the family, have not received sufficient attention from practitioners in the field.

Besides, even though some traditional researchers and therapists have paid attention to them, at best, they have tended to put the adolescents into their “toolbox”. As a result, they failed to approach them holistically, have overlooked their strengths, and have not included their own points of view on their family potencies. Therefore, my research endeavoured to fill the research gaps in the way in which it focused on adolescents in remarried families, listening to them in depth by means of the leverage used, a pastoral narrative approach.

2.3.2 Research question

I was interested in two pivotal questions, namely

- the strengths; and
- the points of view of adolescents in remarried families on their families.

2.3.2.1 *Strengths*

What strengths do adolescents in remarried families have? How have adolescents in remarried families woven their stories to engender their developmental future stories in their particular situation, even though their surroundings tend to stigmatize them?

2.3.2.2 Points of view of adolescents in remarried families on their families

How do the participating adolescents see their families and lives apart from meta-knowledge? How and with what knowledge do they help our communities to flourish with their stories?

2.3.3 The aims of the study

In this study, I had two aims, namely,

- to provide a space and time for adolescents in remarried families to tell their present, past and future stories, thereby reconstructing their past stories and amplifying their present and future stories by implementing a pastoral narrative approach; and
- to bring together the outcomes of their told stories (local knowledge) to their community and the academic world.

Through my studies, I have realized that good research requires a thorough consideration of how the research opens up space for new possibilities and how it helps people look at their worthwhile self. On this basis, the foremost aim of this research should be to be meaningful and useful to the participants involved in the research, rather than to achieve the researcher's interests at the expense of the participants (Cattanach 2002; Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001). Secondly, the concern of how we can aptly enliven their specific knowledge (called "local knowledge") (Geertz 1983:168) in our communities and academic worlds should be an additional interest of this study. Therefore, the following

questions are of less importance: Is the research applicable to any other adolescents in remarried families in any other situation? Is it representative enough? This research is deeply embedded in the local.

2.3.4 The researcher's attitude in this research

I strove to maintain the following attitudes during the research:

- the joy of empathy;
- respectfulness; and
- subjectivity.

My shared story in Chapter 1 and my choice of the story from my past has been identified with me, showing some of who I am now, and it is this that leads me to take on certain methodological positions, such as a not-knowing, qualitative, participatory stance, and to use imaginative conversational interviews, a research processor-oriented rather than controller-oriented, a subjective rather than objective, method. Briefly, I looked back on my remarried family life and my upbringing of children, and these experiences have influenced my attitude toward this study, which explores the stories of two adolescents in remarried families living in South Africa, and my attitude spontaneously became humble and respectful.

- *Joy of empathy:*

My initial response to this field was the joy of empathy with remarried families, for I identify my remarried story with their stories. The joy of empathy draws me magnetically into their companionship, which I am part of.

I am also part of what they will present and what we want to achieve in this study. It enables me to be part of them as a whole and to immerse myself in their stories. Without this, according to Müller (1999), a genuine meeting between people is not possible.

- *Respectful:*

My attitude towards other stories is respectful; each of my co-researchers is the main actor as an expert and a protagonist of her or his stories, which are unique and meaningful to her or him. In this research, I centre “people as the experts in their own lives” by positioning myself in a respectful and non-judgmental position (Morgan 2000:2). Therefore, the not-knowing position is of great significance in this research (Anderson & Goolishian 1990, 1992; Kotze et al. 2002). By means of a narrative approach, we develop respect for each other’s stories, and therefore we may also bring our stories of skeletons of guilt out of the closet (Müller 2004c).

- *The subject-to- subject:*

My story, as well as other remarried family stories, has been objectified at least once for the sake of research. Therefore, it is imperative that each of us be subjective and have a sense of neutrality. I do not seek to gather mathematical data, which focuses on a matter of how many numbers the research includes and what the mathematical and statistical outcome of it is, but rather, I pursue an understanding and the meanings of subjective experiences. Being observed and objectified by data in research is not

suited to subjective matters such as feelings, moods, sensitivities and beliefs about a perception of a world. For that reason, using a subject-to-subject approach in this research is both to invite and to be invited into each other's stories. Subject-to-subject relationships are inclusive, not exclusive, in the process of the research.

2.3.5 The ABDCE formula

With regard to the methodological process, I adopted the metaphor of Fiction Writing developed for narrative research by Müller, et al. (2001:76-96), namely the A B D C E formula: Action, Background, Development, Climax, and Ending. All the abovementioned paradigms and theologies can be activated in the formula of ABDCE Fiction Writing used in narrative social construction research. For that reason, first of all, the flow of Fiction Writing research entrusts itself to the plot of the story, which is not to be intruded on by the intended plans of the researcher. Secondly, narrative research deals with stories being moved back and forth from the present to the past and vice versa and from the present to the future and vice versa. It contains story-telling, listening and interpreting, and is full of a story developmental dialectic. That process can almost be attained by the pattern of Fiction Writing research. Thirdly, as the name, Fiction Writing, suggests, this method readily welcomes imaginative work in certain areas. The process is facilitated to mark a milestone at each stage of the Fiction Writing research. Lastly, it encourages co-researchers to lead this research, to interpret the outcomes of this research and to decide what should be included and

excluded.

2.3.5.1 *Action*

This phase is about the “here and now” of the co-researchers’ stories. The researcher must stay in the now; not the last now, not the next now, but *this now*, being described, as the very first step in the research.

2.3.5.2 *Background*

In this moment, the background to the co-researchers’ now story (in terms of its historical, socio-political and economic panorama) is explored in a manner which invites the researchers and co-researchers to visit and re-visit the memory rooms of their past.

In order to substantiate the information for the background of this action, I watched television shows, sitcoms and various explanations of African families and collected books and journals on issues concerning remarried families. The main source remained my co-researchers’ accounts. All the stories they reported passed through my understanding, which then allowed feedback to and from my co-researchers and my reflection group.

2.3.5.3 *Development*

As the story plot develops, for a unique outcome to be reached, the researcher

and co-researchers try to integrate the narrative(s) of various people within existing narratives. Every story has a plot, a rising action, which is busy making sense of the past story from the point of view of the present and is also re-authoring the future story.

In this stage of the research, narrative researchers need to be patient and curious, to wait for the plot development and its outcome. That does not mean they have to be passive in this phase; rather, they take a de-centered active role (Freedman & Combs 1996:284). This role is an embodiment, according to White (2000:75), as “to embody one’s interest in other people’s lives is to situate this interest in the context of those people’s expressions, in the context of one’s own lived experience, in the context of one’s imagination and curiosity, or in the context of one’s purposes”.

With regard to raising the different stories in conversation, I first introduced what I had collected to my co-researchers. Afterward, I let the stories develop and let them tell stories to each other rather than my clarifying or intervening in their dialogue. That is critical for my understanding their stories. At this stage, the *not-knowing* position should still be maintained with curiosity and exploratory questioning.

2.3.5.4 *Climax*

As a manifestation stage, everything comes together in the climax. The climax

in a story is the turning point which is found in the culmination of the story, yet not even the reader knows what it will be before it manifests. Likewise, nobody can predict what the climax of my co-researchers' stories will be. In this sense, all one can do is just to be sensitive. The researcher never tries to manipulate the climax in this phase.

In general, I had an expectation that my co-researchers' stories would transcend what they had woven with their stories and that they would change impossibilities in the stories to future-oriented possibilities. My curiosity in this phase of their stories was this: could I work for my co-researchers so that they could see that they are in their stories and they are able to see themselves within their stories? Have they satisfied their stories through telling their stories? What are the healthy and developmental resources they have received from the process of this co-researching? Have they found their bondage in their stories? Have they recognized that if they have any, then their bondage(s) has (have) been made up of their possessed stories? In other words, bondage, which restricts a person, does not come from an external source, but from within the person's story, and so, releasing hers or his bondage is her or his responsibility. However, I was very careful in asking questions to remember that it is a prerequisite and imperative in a narrative approach to be patient and to await the climax of their stories without manipulating the climax.

2.3.5.5 *Ending*

Every story has its ending, which is already intended and created by the author in her or his outline of the story. The ending is also formulated by brainstorming before starting the story as traditional research has been doing; the purpose of such research is to prove its hypothesis or suggest ideas. However, an ending in Fiction Writing research is the ending of the story, “where we are left with a sense of what happened” (Müller *et al.* 2001:76). In other words, we, my co-researchers and I, followed the flow of our story toward the ultimate ending of our story. The endings of my co-researchers’ stories would be an envelope of secrets waiting to be opened to a new, next story in their own contexts. If we as narrative social constructionists truly practise what we preach, we have to envision that there are few wrong ends to any form of story, but there are many right answers to end most stories.

2.3.6 Qualitative research

In order to research in depth stories of remarried families and their adolescents, stories which are subjective and somewhat abstract, quantitative methods are not suitable. Traditional research is at fault in the way that it gathers data or conceptualizes the outcomes of research interviews: the subjects of the research undertake passive roles and are being manipulated (Limerick, Burgess – Limerick & Grace 1996:449). Their subjective experiences have been discarded from quantitative research in favour of norms, representativeness, validity, reliability and objectivity in the name of science.

Therefore, in order to avoid this trend, I implemented a qualitative approach,

involving conversational interviews as possible *modi*, which is appropriate to listening for the stories of adolescents in remarried families and for positioning them in a subjective role in the research because stories, as already mentioned, cannot be objectified by observing or measuring data:

For us, the aim of the research is not to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories. While the structuralist researcher has objectivity in mind by trying to be an observer from outside, and by trying to bring about change from the outside, the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory observation (Müller *et al.* 2001:67).

Thus, a qualitative conversational interview is more appropriate to amplify people's stories than any other method, since one task of qualitative research is that the research should be beneficial to the participants. Also, a qualitative researcher can be more aware of the need for humility, credibility and anticipation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:150-151). Moreover, its method allowed my co-researchers' vivid voices and personal experiences to be heard in the process of the research and the conclusion of this study. It was my task to let the voices of my co-researchers be alive and robust. I consulted mainly the method of Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as set out in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research 2000*.

Qualitative methods primarily share analogous epistemological mindsets with narrative social construction in terms of the desire to understand the nature of

knowing, social reality, and procedures for comprehending phenomena (Bryman & Burgess 1999:46). People experience sensory worlds as well as cognitive ones. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:2), qualitative methods “generally examine people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways, to more clearly represent the situation as experienced by the participants”, who are called co-researchers.

By using the word “co-researchers”, qualitative research clearly shows a trend, that is, establishing a subject-to-subject relationship, as in the process of this research. In other words, this relationship is based on “inter-subjectivity”. This inter-subjectivity makes it possible to reduce the distance between the researcher and those who are interviewed, and to maintain the effects of subjectivity (Bishop 1996:27). Narrative practitioners form an opinion on the term “co-research”, that co-researching is to foster a collaborative attitude, to value emotional experiences and reflections, to engage in empowering relationships and to diminish the effects of existing hierarchies (Smith & Nylund 1997:358-359). The participation of co-researchers is always respected as “doing” research with the researcher, rather than being researched, constructing the meanings that become data (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:166). In the mindset of narrative researchers, every person’s story (so-called data) and individual contribution is valuable and unique. A pastoral narrative research and qualitative research are therefore not inherently contradictory.

2.3.6.1 *Participatory*

To become part of the co-researchers' stories, I had to take a collaborative and participatory stance that was true to a narrative social construction approach and practical theology. Being participatory means to participate in a system (Kotzé *et al.* 2002:149), and the participants share tools: co-creating and reflecting conversations or re-authoring narrative conversations (Kotzé *et al.* 2002:153) In the process of participatory research, the researcher and the research participants continually tell their own stories, which are lived out in a collaborative mode (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:265).

Participatory research encourages the participants to address non-rational influences on the researcher and research openly and honestly, especially when presenting findings (Jorgensen 1989:9). Through participation, Jorgensen (1989:12) says, "it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why at least from standpoint of participants things happen as they do in particular situations". That is why participatory research is called "community-based research", so as to expand and maintain social and personal interaction (Stringer 1999:28). The participants can learn from each other via the research process.

2.3.6.2 *Co-regulation*

Participatory research is coherent with co-regulation, as collaboration helps participants to recognize alternative ways and unknown possibilities. It takes

place while people's joint actions come together to achieve a unique and mutually created set of social actions (Fogel 1991:6). Fogel (1991:34) articulates the meaning of co-regulation as "a social process by which individuals dynamically alter their actions with respect to the ongoing and anticipated actions of their partners.... As a consequence of co-regulated interaction, a consensual social pattern is created and elaborated over time". Through this collaborative joint action, we, my co-researchers and I, tried to find preferred future stories. In a co-regulation process, we needed spontaneity without any explicit planning or design, and creativity characterized by a stance of openness to the other, a willingness to help events to be elaborated and to be shaped by the process (Fogel 1991:29-32). In this mode, my story could be changed and the conclusion of this study depends upon what they presented.

2.3.6.3 *Concerning cultural boundaries*

My perceptions of remarried families and their children, as well as those of my co-researchers, may be culturally constructed. Accordingly, I have attempted to cross some cultural boundaries affecting my co-researchers to learn about their culture in advance and to bring our socially saturated concepts, ideas and thoughts into our conversation in the process of this research. In order to achieve a crossing of cultural boundaries, Müller (1999) advises, first of all, that we need to be as honest as possible concerning our own prejudices. Secondly, it is unusual that we can openly verbalize these prejudices. I have also enthusiastically been reflected on by my co-researchers and constantly had to

remind myself of my own influential position, namely one of authority, by questioning my views which are shaped by what I have studied and experienced (Hare-Mustin 1994:33). In doing so, I had to keep in mind the need for openness, flexibility and receptivity for in-depth conversation to take place.

2.3.6.4 *Subjective integrity*

In this study, it is of great significance to maintain the researcher's subjective integrity, characterized by an ethical commitment in which the researcher's practice and her or his chosen paradigm and methodology must not be contradictory, but must conform to each other. As explained above, there has been a paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism, away from a view of research that relied on assumptions and hypotheses concerning reliability, validity and representativity. This shift is one from "scientific objectivity" to "subjective integrity".

- Ethics and subjective integrity:

Subjective integrity is an ethical consideration with regard to the process of the research and the relationship between its participants, including the researcher. This is the question: what is the ethical consideration of narrative research? For what and for whom is this consideration? What is the measurement of this consideration? To construct these ethical boundaries in the research is not an easy task.

The reason for this is firstly that the difficulty that an ethical consideration is not a mere selection of right or wrong and good or bad. Instead, research ethics is a way of establishing relationships between participants. Secondly, the researcher confronts an ethical dilemma. For instance, transparency, the boundary between intervention and encouragement, and between pure curiosity and intended curiosity can be ambiguous or arguable. No one can really be objective when researching. As a result, encouragement can be naively and one-sidedly offered. Pure curiosity in questioning can be seen as intended questioning. In terms of confidentiality, gleaning information from the research is very necessary, and yet a research participant may not want to reveal information.

According to Müller (2004a), the “narrative paradigm and conversational method do not guarantee a sound ethical relationship.... The power relations in a therapeutic context [research context] can be obscure and covert, but they are nevertheless present... To be aware of the developing pastoral-therapeutic relationship [research relationship], which includes the politics of power, is the greatest ethical challenge.”

Lastly, ethical consideration has to do with context, which is sometimes unpredictable. When a researcher is compelled to an ethical choice in a particular context, she or he has to face up to an unpredictable situation.

In this regard, therefore, I used four underlying principles: the not-knowing

position, curiosity, confidentiality and heartfelt compassion. By positioning my research and myself within these principles, an atmosphere of openness could be created (Jones 2003:7).

- Not-knowing position:

First of all, the main purpose of the narrative research was to understand the co-researchers' telling of their stories so that the researcher could "understand", not to "above or beside-stand" them. Thus, a not-knowing position (Anderson & Goolishian 1990:157) is significant. This not-knowing position is a way of showing respect and approval for other people's local knowledge, which has been developed in very different ways, according to themselves, within their culture. This position does not indicate that "I don't know, you know", but that I am aware of my background, preconceptions and knowledge. In Müller's (2004a:s.p.) words, it "comprises an awareness of the dynamics of power relations". The position of being not-knowing means that my co-researchers and I do not know where we will "end up, but know... that we are creating meaning through collaboration" (Kotze *et al.* 2002:154).

A position of not-knowing required me to establish team-ship with my co-researchers as we progressed towards the future story. One way of establishing an ethical relationship in team-ship was by questioning my co-researchers and myself. Positioning myself in a not-knowing position was a way to maintain transparency in the process of research, to stay away from the pitfalls of my own values, judgments and popular fixed discourses. To

create a condition of transparency, I had to get feedback on my understanding of interviewees' stories from them, situating it in the context of their experiences, imagination and intentional states.

- Curiosity:

This position is maintained by questioning, or curiosity (Monk *et al.* 1997:26). According to Epston and White (1994:146), curiosity “evokes ‘concern’; it evokes the care one takes for what exists is and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up our familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things; a fervor to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential.” To practise curiosity, one of the essential strategies is questioning. Morgan (1999:203) says: “Questions are informed by particular ways of thinking.” However, narrative questions are not rhetorical or pedagogical (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:34).

- Confidentiality:

Furthermore, I took up confidentiality because my co-researchers could tend to feel inhibited in telling their stories due to their peculiar situation. In order to facilitate it, I have reported my co-researchers' names using the imagery that they created. If they did not want their stories to be written in my writing, I accepted. If a finding was very significant but they rejected using this finding, I compromised with them in some way.

- Heartfelt compassion:

Lastly, the pastor's heartfelt compassion, which prompted me to be active, is a most essential part of subjective integrity. In servant leadership, compassion is clearly the most significant element. It enabled me to be part of them as a whole and to immerse myself in their stories.

2.3.7 Brief summary

Unlike traditional researchers who focus on pathology, firstly, I focused on my co-researchers' strengths and their open-ended future stories (Monk *et al.* 1997:42; Gerkin 1986:41). I believe this approach makes it possible to find a new identity, one that is distinct and separate from the problems of the co-researchers.

Secondly, my chosen method does not manipulate the co-researchers with expert knowledge and categorical assessment as the traditional approach tends to do, rather, it inclines me and them to listen for detailed and context-specific narratives (Freedman & Combs 2002:19) that may even change me as the researcher. Whereas general and popular approaches try to solve problems as quickly as possible (Müller 1999), one aspect of my approach is to wait to solve problems from my co-researchers' own systems and to wait on the Lord. Müller (1999) emphasizes that "we will have to cease wanting to achieve and contrive in [the] pastoral situation. True pastoral work is not result-oriented, but rather wait-oriented."

Thirdly, doing participant research gave me the joy of empathy, warmth and genuine interest in my co-researchers' own creativity. A narrative researcher shares the above experience (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:29). Overall, my paradigm, in contrast to a traditional one, sought to shift from explanation into interpretation and understanding, theory into narrative (Browning 1991: 83) and technology or methodology into ethics (Kotzé et al. 2002:26).

2.3.8 The possible *modi*

As a follower of narrative social constructionism and Minjung Theology, I preferred to use conversational interviews. A merit of the conversational interview is that it helps the researcher to understand better the meanings that people weave into their everyday life. However, without establishing a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, the purpose of the interview cannot be achieved. Qualitative in-depth interviews take place more aptly in conversation (Marshall & Rossman 1999:108).

2.3.8.1 *The characteristics of conversation*

Conversation is a way of understanding a conversational partner's knowledge within her or his context, of building certain relationships so as to affect or to be affected between conversational partners. This is apart from the result of the conversation, regardless of whether it is "good" or not. As MacIntyre (1981:197) remarks, "[c]onversation, understood widely enough, is the form of human transactions in general". Through conversation, people attempt to portray to

others their understanding of the world and the meaning of their experience.

When conversation occurs, power emerges in a conversational relationship to change the relationship. For instance, Winslade and Monk (2000:138) accept Cobb's notion that, when the first speaker in a conversation says something to the other(s), his or her story has power to influence what the other can speak about afterwards. Whoever starts speaking first is then elevated in the power relationship, and this position had to be abandoned in this research. In this sense, my position in the conversation with my co-researchers was one of a reactor rather than of a first speaker who tries to draw certain responses from the other. I mean that being a reactor in a conversation is to be an active listener who must be responsive, in that the listener has to attempt to clarify what he or she hears in order to respond. Bakhtin (1986:68) explains the attitude of an active listener as follows: "...when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it.... And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning sometimes literally from the speaker's first word."

Furthermore, whoever uses words in conversation involves her or himself in a power relation to create a new relation with her or his partner. Shotter (1993:2-3) gives a good illustration of this; the notion of what he calls a "linguistically constructed relationship": if a person says, "I love you" to the other person, such

a verbalization can function to reconstitute the whole character of the speaker's relation with the other, and thereby, to create a new kind of reality. Following his notion, I used descriptive words and questionings to prompt my co-researchers' imaginations. These descriptive words included references to colours, tastes and images.

2.3.8.2 *Unstructured conversational interviews*

In order to broadly understand the meaning of telling of stories and the cross-cultural boundaries of the co-researchers in the conversational interviews, an unstructured mode was formulated. This structure was non-linear, incoherent and fragmental (Tietze *et al.* 2003:59). An unstructured interview does not mean that I accessed adolescents in remarried families using an empty-handed, unprepared approach, but instead, as Bellah *et al.* (1985:301) put it, "we sought to bring our preconceptions and questions into the conversation and to understand the answers we were receiving not only in terms of the language but also, so far as we could discover, the lives of those we were talking with".

The content of questioning has emerged from an unstructured conversation (Kotzé *et al.* 2002:154). All the questions advanced were not known before the co-researchers responded to previous questions. In this approach, the process of conversation and its relationship was more focused than the content of the conversation. The equal voices of the conversational partners, a sense of solidarity with them, and putting aside the use of any authoritative position had

to be practised in the process of the interviews (Browning 1991:203).

2.3.8.3 *Semi-structured interviews*

It is possible that people may be unwilling to reveal their stories, even sometimes extremely defensive in their conversation (Müller 1999), or it could be that they do not know what they should talk about when interviewed. Therefore, I intended to draw on a semi-structured interview so as to, first of all, create an open space for my co-researchers by telling my own story or using various images, analogies and comparative situations. Secondly, I used similar questions in each co-researcher's interview to elicit common themes.

In any interviews, the questioning, one of the key characteristics of narrative research, was based on the following self-reflexive questions first. Freedman and Combs (2002:8) use some of these ideas when they consult with couples:

- *What am I tending to assume here?
- *How might my gender be influencing what I am attending to and what I am not attending to?
- *Am I in any way imposing my beliefs about what intimate relationships should look like?
- *How can I clarify the preferences, beliefs and values that the people consulting me hold about their relationship?
- *How can I provide the opportunity to those consulting me to unpack their own assumptions about their relationship?

In terms of my pastoral view, I questioned myself in a similar way (Gerkin 1997:12):

- *What was it about that pastoral care experience that made it an experience of care for me?
- *What, if anything, about the experience identified it as pastoral care?
- *What associations does the word pastoral conjure in your memory and imagination?
- *Is it significant to me that the care I recall was offered by a Christian pastor?
- *If so, how and why was that significant?

2.3.8.4 *Using letters*

By using letters, I planned to let my co-researchers bear in mind what they had worked on in telling their stories in the previous interview. A letter helped them to think thoroughly and reflect on how I had listened to their stories. I agree with Epston (1994:31), who sees therapeutic letter writing as “extending the conversation”, and believes that is applicable to research as well. He says: “Conversation is, by its very nature, ephemeral... But the words in a letter don’t fade and disappear the way conversation does, they endure through time and space, bearing witness to the work of therapy and immortalizing it.”

My research letters could also help my co-researchers to think ahead for a next section, contributing to evoking alternative imaginations for the future. Morgan

(2000:104) acknowledges that “letters assist people to stay connected to the emerging alternative story that is co-authored in narrative meetings”. Not only did I expect all of the above effects, but I also wanted to let the letters be re-read, told, and re-told, like “a heroic story of adolescents” or “family tales” in the family (Freedman et al. 1997:112).

2.3.8.5 *Using language to describe*

The use of language is a critical issue in a narrative social construction approach. Who uses what kind of language is the subject of who represents what and whom. In short, language expresses a person’s identity and her or his system (Tietze *et al.* 2003:5-14). Thus, to understand my co-researchers’ world holistically, I needed to participate in their system through the explorative and descriptive language they have used in conversation. If this is not done, Derrida and Caputo (1997:13-30) warn, I would close down many possibilities and prevent my co-researchers from going on a journey to create a new world. Hence, I make use of the first person singular voice in this dissertation when describing my co-researchers’ voices, which is not commonly accepted in many popular journals and writings (Pienaar 2003:66).

2.3.8.6 *Recording*

In order to preserve stories told to me by my co-researchers, I used audio recordings which were used for making notes and documents. One merit of an audio recording is that equipment is readily obtainable, relatively inexpensive,

and easy to operate, which facilitated the recording of their stories easily and without disturbance (Jorgensen 1989:101).

2.3.8.7 *Note-taking*

To make notes, I divided my notes into four sections.

- The first section was a brief description of the action field, which was used for settings, such as surroundings, activities and the characteristics of my co-researchers.
- Another section was for semi-structured themes of stories, such as happiness, roles within the family, coping with conflict, and social discourses.
- The third section was my feelings and impressions of field involvements, that is my understanding and interpretation of their meanings.
- Finally, I wrote reflective notes. These notes were evaluated by my co-researchers and analysed using a narrative social construction approach and my theological viewpoint.

2.3.9 Interpretation

A pastoral narrative approach in the research never tries to analyse the work, but allows for interpreting discreetly. In my case in this study, I wanted to follow a narrative therapeutic model, Müller (2004b:s.p.) insists that “I do not even want to attempt to interpret this story. As my ‘therapist’, it is your task”. In a similar manner, I did not attempt to make one final, clear-cut interpretation, but rather, I tried my best to understand the stories I heard. As in Fiction Writing, which

suggests that there is no ultimate ending of a story, there is no ultimate grand interpretation in this research. To interpret the stories I heard, I have simply let the stories be interpreted by stories.

2.3.9.1 *Interpretation steps*

My method of understanding what I was told in each interview can be described as a pentagon. The lens of my understanding was narrative social construction in accordance with imaginative work. This work took place in the third section of my note-taking (see to 2.3.8.7 above). This idea first came from Anderson's homiletics (Anderson 2001), but I varied his idea for the purposes of my work.

- First: "What's?" This phase as an integration phase was meant to help me to experience with my heart the context of "now" to feel the context: the main character, who, what, mood.
- Second: "What's what?" This phase dealt with the holistic capturing of the context in my head: this phase was an analogical and oppositional approach towards deconstructing information. What is the point of view of the storyteller in my understanding, what is my point of view about "the told story", and how would others interpret that story? This work was meant to comprehend the context, and synthesized my de-conceptualization of the context.
- Third: "Aha but if!" This phase was subjective and imaginative in reconstructing, and found the hidden meaning of the told story within my heart and head. I applied the result of the second step to myself through an

“if” question: if I were them, if I were in their situation, if I had and so on.

- Fourth: I produced a written form of my understanding, which was not final though, to be able to hand to my co-researchers so as to get reflections from them.
- Fifth: I left this phase till last to receive feedback from the storytellers. The conclusion could be received only after the reflection section had been done and would be formulated by my co-researchers. In effect, their conclusion was not an actual ending, but the beginning of a new story.

2.3.9.2 Reflection phase and format

In order to reach the set purpose of this study (reconstructing and deconstructing socially saturated stories on remarried families and their children, and creating ways of reflection and feedback, which is of great significance), I did triangular cross-examinations with my co-researchers' reflections on my understanding, my co-researchers, my focus team and myself. The merit of reflection is to move us closer towards communal ways of working (Cattanach 2002:211).

At an ethical level, to disembody my positional power from my understanding of the data, self-reflective questioning was critical and would get reflected again by all the participants and edited according to their language in the beginning of each section. To facilitate this reflection, I handed in my written report to my co-researchers. If my co-researchers felt uncomfortable about commenting on my

understanding in front of me, I used an online-reflection system (mainly e-mail) in anonymity. When they would like to secretly talk about their honest opinion or complexities with some anonymity, online was best. Also, on the internet they were able to participate more individually rather than in interaction with others (White 2000:59).

- Reflection format: In regard to a critical reflection format on the preliminary findings, this formula was: Finding common understanding in our conversation → (evaluating) → Findings from existing discourses, literature and research → (distilling) → Conclusion → (discussing) → Application. Once we found certain common themes in and understandings of our stories, we evaluated existing and published thoughts, and then we distilled our own conclusions from that work.

2.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

True to a postmodernist perspective, to better understand adolescents in remarried families, I enthusiastically adopted a pastoral narrative approach for this research in accordance with social construction. This approach allows remarried family members to explore in person their unique significance and to account for their experiences. It also involved imaginative work and creative thinking, which is very important in this research, unlike traditional approaches which collect information and perform experiments.

In order for this approach to work fully, I implemented a conversational mode as

the possible *modus* to interview the co-researchers. These conversational interviews consisted of unstructured and semi-structured interviews. My main method in conducting the conversational interviews was questions formulated during the conversation. When themes emerged from conversations, I did not attempt to interpret them, but rather let them be interpreted by the storytellers. In the next chapter, we meet the co-researchers and listen to them.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF THE RESEARCH (CO-RESEARCHERS)

3.1 THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

3.1.1 Changing the main characters of this research

As I indicated earlier, in Chapter One, I encountered some difficulty in finding interview volunteers, particularly remarried families, for this research. There were many setbacks at the start of this research. After searching from church to church, one day I received a call from a remarried family who indicated that they would like to participate in this project. I was beside myself with joy, but was frustrated again, as the father did not arrive at the time and the place appointed. He had been hospitalized. I was introduced to another remarried family by a pastor ministering in Pretoria. This couple was very excited about my project at first. We met and I explained my methodology and the purpose of this research. They signed a consent form for the research. However, before long, this too proved to be a fruitless endeavour. According to the pastor, they did not want to meet me again. He explained that they were carrying a big burden, because they were considering divorce.

After all these setbacks, I consulted my supervisor, Prof. J. Müller, who is in charge of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. He advised me to change my topic and so I decided to interview primarily two adolescents in remarried families. I purposively and thoughtfully chose (Babbie

& Mouton 2001:288) them from among Grade Nine students in a Christian high school in Pretoria.

3.1.2 Meeting the main characters from remarried family stories for the research

The main characters (the co-researchers) of the research are discussed here. In this chapter, two groups of characters for this research are set out. The one group consisted of two adolescents, a girl and a boy from remarried families, who became as the main characters. The second consisted of voices of other people around the main characters. All the co-researchers within the stories of the adolescents are white South Africans living in Pretoria; they are 14 years old and come from a Dutch Reformed Christian faith community. They are all friends and schoolmates of my son.

3.1.2.1 Premises for selecting the co-researchers

On the basis of the following questions (my premises), I purposely made contact with adolescents in remarried families. Firstly, do I know them and *vice versa*, and have we spent time together before? Secondly, did they need space to tell their stories as my research aim stated? For that reason, I was concerned that we had at least some basic relationship, because without it, storytelling and listening could be mechanically conducted. I had already noticed at the start of this project that although the aims of this research were beneficial for the provisional interviewees and they were interested in it, their preference and

priorities in their routine were not my project, even though it was my priority.

Lastly, to choose two adolescents from remarried families, I curiously but thoughtfully divided the broader sample population into two categories labelled by language: the so-called “troublesome student” and “model student”. The reason I chose the two types arose from my curiosity, which I reflected at an early age. For what reasons are adolescents called “troublesome” or “models”? Do they agree with these labels? Who identifies them like that? Do they categorize themselves by themselves, their peers, other people around them such as their teachers and parents, or certain rules? With these premises I took the first steps towards interviewing the co-researchers.

- In order to contact them, I approached my son’s classmates through him.
- After I had met them, introduced my project, making sure of their will to participate, I sent a consent form to their parents.
- Also, I reported their participation to the principal of their school. The headmaster helped me from the beginning of this project and introduced some students from remarried families to me as potential interviewees. From among them, I selected two on the basis of my premise; one was a girl, a so-called “model student”; the other was a “typical” boy, classified as “troublesome”.
- Afterwards, we set meetings for three months, with two hours per meeting. The time frame and place was discussed with the co-researchers: this discussion allowed them to dictate some of the terms and it was a way to

disempower my position.

3.1.3 Interviewing the co-researchers

3.1.3.1 Recruiting an assistant

Because one of my co-researchers was a girl, I had to create a comfortable zone for her, so I employed a female assistant. Also, owing to the difficulty of making my spoken English understood, I needed a person who could make communication fluent. As mentioned earlier, I had some relationship with my co-researchers before they became volunteers. When I engaged in casual and informal talk with them, I realized they were struggling to understand my English and I too was having difficulty understanding theirs. That is why I needed my assistant. That does not mean that the language barrier interfered with our conversation. However, I acted out of my conviction and responsibility to create a comfortable environment for the co-researchers.

- I recruited as my assistant someone who has a lot of experience in adolescent ministry, working for years in the church.
- I trained her according to the principles and philosophy of a narrative conversational interview, and explained the aims of this project.
- I remunerated her as a token of my gratitude to her.
- She interviewed the girl and mainly conducted the group-meeting stages.
- Before every interview session, she and I had a workshop to practise questioning and conducting interviews.
- After every session, I, first of all, listened to the audio-tape of the session

and gave her advice on her questioning in the interview, and suggestions for additional exploration for the following session.

- Secondly, we invested some time in evaluating our work with regard to our attitude, use of language, interview mood, the quality of the co-researchers' participation, and so forth. Also, we shared our feelings and inspirations from the interview in the evaluation, which later became the work of a reflection group.

3.1.3.2 *Reducing the gap between the co-researchers and the researcher*

Living in South Africa, I have encountered some cultural misunderstandings. I will share my cultural blindness in more depth at a later stage. The attitude of South African children towards adults, teachers and friends' parents, for example, is different from that of children in North America, where I lived for some years. Whenever friends of my children in South Africa see me, they address me as "sir", which I have never heard from North American children. I personally interpreted this attitude as an attempt at showing their respect to their friend's parents. However, in terms of my research, it could negatively influence their talk in our conversation to a greater or lesser degree. Also, our relationship was a little strange or peculiar. I am, on the one hand, the father of their friend, and can speak to their school principal as an equal. On the other hand, I am yellow (Korean like the Chinese actor and comedian, Jackie Chan) and my way of speaking is "very funny". The above facts were enough to let my co-researchers feel that the relationship was odd.

Thus, I planned to reduce the gap between us through my deconstruction of the power structure as follows:

- Before starting a session on a Friday, I picked them up from their school on Friday and we always had lunch, chatting together. I also gave them a ride to their homes.
- By using letters as a tool for “extending the conversation” (Epston 1994: 31), I could also build up a close relationship with them. In my letters, I always addressed my co-researchers with the intentional words, “my little friend”. The reason for this arose from my personal experience that when an older person calls and regards me as his friend, I feel friendship with him without losing my respect for him. In this regard, Winslade and Monk’s (2000:138) opinion about the order of speakers in conversation is applicable to the research: “Cobb notes that the first person to tell her or his story in a mediation has a shaping effect on what the other person can speak about. In the terms we have been using, the first speaker’s utterance calls the other person into position in response.” Thus, I conclude that using a word or calling somebody something also influences the quality of the response from the other person.

According to Oakley (1985:41), “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship”. Therefore, throughout the daily routine, I tried, as far as possible, to bring my deconstruction of the power

structure into our project in order to reduce any negative impact on it.

3.1.4 Listening to other voices

Although I intended listening mainly to adolescents in remarried families, for the sake of a better understanding of the background and context of my co-researchers, I paid attention to other voices as well, instead of traditional researchers' voices utilizing quantitative methods on remarried families and their children. In Chapter Four, I introduce various products of traditional researchers' view regarding remarried families and their children. These products would be invited into our dialogue with the other voices and my co-researchers' voices.

In order to do that, I interviewed two schoolteachers and two South African pastors. In the end, the pastors' voices were omitted from this report, because their opinions were very similar to those of the teachers. These voices were helpful in supporting my co-researchers' voices and offering new perspectives, enabling a new dialogue to occur (Smith & Nylund 1997:43). By contrast, they could also be agents of propagandist meta-narratives on adolescents in remarried families. Therefore, we, my co-researchers and I, needed to listen carefully and critically to their voices.

The process of conversing with them and the adolescents on our topic took the following form: I interviewed the adolescents first, making an audio recording.

Subsequently, I sent a summary of the conversation to them in order to get feedback as to whether my understanding was accurate. Afterwards, I shared with the adolescents my summary of what was heard and observed, as well as what we discussed about it.

3.1.5 Interview agenda

I began with a brief explanation of the way my methodology works and explained to my co-researchers the order of the interview. This interview agenda would not be implemented in this precise order - when necessary, it could be adapted to suit the situation. For instance, a co-researcher suggested the idea that when we got to the last session, we would organize a party as a metaphor for the celebration of the milestone of their new stories, inviting their parents.

- *First stage:*

The first interview section was divided into two parts; one was an individual meeting, the other was a group meeting. In this section we covered the “here and now” of their story and the “background” surrounding them. We met three times for this part of the research.

- Firstly, in the individual stage, my co-researchers named their families or themselves. I asked them for an imaginary name for their families or themselves “to invent allusions” (Lyotard 1984:82) to their current situation. Afterwards, in every stage, we called one another by the

imaginary name each one had created. Their actual names were not used in each interview or in this dissertation.

- Secondly, in order to listen to them about their “here and now” stories and their past stories, I let them describe their current stories in terms of colours, and express their past in terms of various tastes, as representative of their situation, mood and emotion. I used colours and tastes because they were apt to be unable to begin telling from “where” and from “what”. In a therapeutic situation, according to Smith and Nylund (1997:43), some “clients may not know at the beginning of a session what they wish to focus on”. Thus, colouring one’s self is a tool to open space to tell a story. This imaginative work, the use of colours, involves visualizing the events of their lives. In doing so, they shared whole life events, drawing a graph on the Emotional Cycle of Life Event. (Refer to Appendix 2.)

- In the group meeting, all the participants, including myself, began by choosing colours for one another, sharing the reasons for the colours we chose. In doing this, we could see each other’s various colourful identities, not the self ultimately fixed or taken for granted. Then, we shared an Emotional Cycle of Life Event, on condition that the person was willing to do so. This tool was used not only in the first stage but also in the last stage of the research. By means of this tool, we could describe our interpreted life events as a whole in the first stage, but in the last stage, we could see our reinterpreted life events as well. When we shared the Emotional Cycle of Life Event openly in the group stage, we

could sense consolidation, partnership and “re-membering” (Kelly 2003; Kotzé & Kotzé 1997; White 1995a, 2000; Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996). Through this group activity, we got to know more about each other. This activity would be of great help in “re-membering” their relationships for their alternative future stories.

- Secondly, we compared and contrasted the co-researchers’ presentation of their own colours and those attached to them by others, and their “told stories”. By doing this, we looked at the existing social discourses and research assertions, such as the role of ambiguity in remarried families, the claim that children in remarried families are the most problematic or the greatest disrupters of the peace of remarried families, and that children are the most victimized or vulnerable among the family members and so on.
 - In the second stage, before the second interview, they needed to create a preferred *imaginative future* role in their family and community by using a name or by choosing a symbol. In addition, they needed to make a list of possibilities of how they expected this role to work in their family and community. I sent my understanding of their told stories from the first interview via a letter to them, so as to get feedback from them as to whether my understanding of their stories was accurate and acceptable to them or whether I needed to reinterpret their stories.
- Second stage

We formed this stage not by dividing our meeting, but simply through the

group meeting. This section was the developmental phase of the metaphor of Fiction Writing research.

Finally, in the group meeting, and by collaborating with one another, we examined each person's successful methods and experiences of resolving conflict and of enhancing their family life in revisiting their past.

- To begin with, I discussed their feedback.
- Next, they presented their imaginative future story, created by themselves and their family.
- Lastly, we compared and contrasted this new story with the existing discourses that had been discussed in the first interview.
- Before the third interview started, I sent, on a weekly basis, a document of our interviews arranged around various themes.

- *Third stage:*

The third stage began one month after the second interview. We finalized this study, finding common themes on influences of members in the family, evaluating our previous work and finally co-operating to re-construct a name for the remarried family as required by my co-researchers.

3.2 WE ARE HERE: THE CO-RESEARCHERS' STORIES

True to a pastoral narrative approach whose methodological process is based on Fiction Writing (A (action), B (background), D (development), C (climax), E (ending)) model as a metaphor for research as formulated by Müller *et al.* (2001), the first part of our collaborative conversation dealt with the "here and

now” stories of my co-researchers, through telling and listening. This process did not cling rigidly to the ABDCE process, but was flexible. It rode the wave of stories of my co-researchers.

Practically, in the interviews, the research was not imposed strictly and was somewhat arbitrary. Thus, the written format also followed the flow of the stories. That does not mean that I ignored a writing structure, but I thoroughly considered the processes of my co-researchers’ telling, retelling and visiting the past and revisiting it.

In order to help the reader understand my co-researchers, I first set up a summary of the stories and then divided the transcript into detailed sections, into the themes which emerged. To sum up the stories, I implemented the writing style of a chronological novel, which favoured the narrator. In my writing, the quotation marks signify the actual words of the narrators. I did not correct the grammar of their utterances. The reason for this is that I wanted to preserve their real voices as far as possible, embracing their hesitations, iterations, repetitions, equivocations and so on.

3.2.1 The story of Co-researcher One

Light²: I am 14 years young, like writing songs, enjoy dancing, drawing and playing guitar. My nickname as seen in the teachers’ minds, but not in [that of] my peers in school, is a troubled boy. This name came to me when I got

² Light is the narrator’s imaginary name.

detention in the school. I have four brothers; only one is my blood brother, the rest are stepbrothers living with me.

3.2.1.1. *Overview of the “once upon a time” story*

Once upon a time there was a guy who received a dream from God through my mom. One night, He appeared in her dream, saying that “when you deliver a baby, name him ‘xxx’ as metaphor of a leader of mine like Joshua in the Old Testament.” Almost at the same time, a pastor, xxx in Klerksdorp, met her and told her that he had received words of God in his prayer, one that names her baby ‘xxx’. Born in the mystic event and the family, I was blessed and many people have said I was so handsome and looked as smart as my name connotes. I had great happy times with both my parents in my childhood. I played football with my father in the garden. When I was hungry, my mom prepared food and when I needed her hands, they were always around me. My life was easy, fun and enjoyable by nature when in childhood.

All of sudden, a great storm blew up with dark clouds in my unconsciousness, swallowed my family and destroyed the family, sending them out of my control. I was powerless at the strange gate of turmoil. I could do nothing at all; I was incapable of stopping it and to prevent my parents from divorcing even though I was a promised child of God who chooses to install me as His servant and a leader of His people.

My beloved father, who is a computer designer, left us to earn money in England. Years later, he called his wife and demanded a divorce. As a result, I unwillingly moved to my grandparents' house and had to separate from my most sweet mom for six years. Even though I wanted to live with my biological father, my request was rejected. In six years I got a call from my biological father just once, and on that day, I expressed my anger at him and got a promise from my father that he would call again and email me and yet nothing happened. Owing to that, I started smoking when frustration invaded me. "You not gonna care, I am not gonna care".

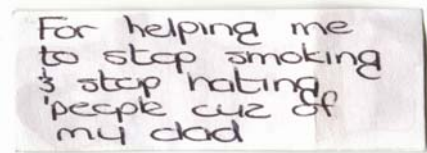
During the period of living with my grandparents, I had compelling experiences in person of what bitterness is all about and what the meaning of abusiveness is. Bitterness was far and near and set its seat as the main character of and in my childhood. One particular anecdote is that one day I accidentally spilled coffee on the carpet during a prayer meeting at my grandfather's house, then the word "stupid child" fried up and landed on my face and a big palm covered it with enormous power.

Time did not stop flowing; gradually my circumstances were changed, regardless of my intention. I had to move a lot, so I had a struggle to make friends and because of that, I was forced to be silent. Two years ago I achieved my dream of living with my mom after she remarried. She is an architect. Her current husband is a singer. However, I felt change at the expense of the achieved dream, one thing is that her attention towards me is different from

before. I cannot see her often and she cannot spend much time with me, which never happened in my early childhood.

However, I am busy renovating my old house and building a new future house.

“I’m just looking [at] my future instead of staying in the past...He[God] just umm...always confirms me that He gives me talents and I must use them and He gave me a gift, and that I must use it...and.” One clue he showed was that “I tried to get rid of smoking gradually...I am busy changing for where I was once upon a time”. After saying the above, the protagonist of the story gave me a little tag:



3.2.1.2 *The story in detail*

The various images the protagonist picked up to describe himself and his current inner and outer status were summed up with a rainbow. It consisted of his interpretation of his here and now in bright [white]³ and dark [black] colours. They are cryptic and exuberant resources for him on which to build his future house. Yet, they are also concealed behind many problem-saturated and taken-for-granted stories. They contain both the bitter and the sweet.

● ***Bright and dark***

³ In fact, he used the colours black and white but with his consent I changed them to bright and dark. We decided this because the colours black and white could cause unnecessary fuss (about racism) in a South African context.

One side of his life is light, which is white, when he is happy. Most of his white and sweet story deals with relationships with his biological mom, older brother, friends and the God of Christianity. This story would help him take darkness out of his life and develop his story towards his future.

Questioner: If you describe yourself as a colour, what colour do you see yourself as?

Light: "Colour? Let, see...Can I use more than one?"

Q: Why not! Of course you can.

L: "Bright [white] and dark [black] because I am not so sure what to do, one side of my life is like umm...light, which is bright [white] when I am like happy. Dark [black] is just there."

- ***Bright (happiness)***

Q: Rainbow is bright and dark?? Bright is like happiness?

L: "Yeah, let me say, my mom is bright, my brother [older brother] is green and stuff. Yeah, when I visit my friends, having fun, I'm happy."

Q: Tell me more in detail.

L: "Like, going to movie with my brother and talking with him, talking with mom when she is not busy. She was always there when I needed help, always around me." In addition, he felt that his older brother has taken a paternal role which, according to him, his biological father has to fulfil for his family and him.

- ***Bright = Mom's "being there"***

At first in this conversation, he was in “bright” and “dark” again and again, because he kept shifting back and forth. He felt that without his consciousness and knowing his sweetness and brightness, he was just there as his darkness was. However, throughout our attentive conversation we could both reach a potential conclusion that we needed to talk to augment our happiness. His older brother has offered him the space to talk. His mother has held the tremendous side of sweetness in his life. She has been always around him, whenever he needed help, she was always there. In this case, I was curious about the meaning of “his mother’s being there”. He commented on “mom’s being there” as her attention towards him.

His emotional attachment to his mother was different from that to his biological father (his attachment to his father will be discussed later). His longing for his mother’s attention plays a crucial role in the developmental phase of his life. He said: “Mom’s attention is very important for me because I need her opinion, umm...I don’t know in English... ‘*wysheid*’ [wisdom] .. Sometimes she just gets angry at me, but I don’t know why? So I try to talk but she said, “nothing”, but I know, something is there with her.”

- ***Motherhood by talking and listening***

Overall, “mom’s being there” means his mother’s being a mentor who can give her opinion and wisdom to him. He desires to get attention from her about her talking when he needs her to say something. His mindset about

the value of talking was revealed in his description of his older brother. “Older brother is green which is cool and relaxing colour. He is like father, we talk a lot, and stuff, and he’s done for me what father [biological father] was supposed to do.”

In his descriptive language, “being there” connoted paying attention to somebody, which implies being a mentor through talking and listening. He was eager to talk and longed to be listened to. In talking and being listened to, he could be and feel sweet in his relationship with his mother and his older brother. In conclusion, one of his thoughts about motherhood is that it takes place in talking and listening. Of the many themes in this research, telling and listening was one of great importance and it was continuously addressed in this research.

- ***Dark (Bitter)***

The narrator’s dark story is presented here in accordance with the above bright and sweet story. He kept moving back and forth in telling his dark story, which was intimately connected with his story of brightness and sweetness.

Light: “I don’t like step-dad, instead, I want to get back my real dad. That is dark, I mean step-dad. He is dark...I don’t want to talk with him because I don’t really know him so I don’t know actually what I say to him...”

Q: You don’t know him very well? So, you don’t want to talk of your personal stuff with him?

L: “Not really, but because I didn’t have a dad, I don’t trust, like, my dad, I don’t know...I’ve lived with him just for a year, I just need to talk to him, trust

him...I just have to talk to him. ”

- ***The root of darkness***

Through the above explorative conversation, it appeared that his darkness was coming from his problematic relationship with his stepfather, but that was not true. He just mentioned the difficulty of having a conversation with him: that was his method of improving the relationship with his stepfather in his mind. The main cause of darkness was initiated by his biological father, who is living in England and who has not responded to his telephone calls and emails for seven years. His father has only phoned him twice in seven years, even though he promised to call his son often. That has affected him and pushed him towards darkness and prompted him to do rebellious things, for example, smoking. The narrator said: “You not gonna care, I am not gonna care”. In our first meeting, he admitted that he still missed his biological father a lot and was eager to receive his father’s response via phone or email.

- ***The other cause of his darkness***

According to him, the darkness was derived from himself. He knew that he did not like his stepfather, but felt that he could not accept him because of the obstacle caused by longing for his biological father. Also, he was struggling against his anger when I conversed with him. Two months later, however, he had eventually got over it, at least in my view. I will introduce his winning story later.

Q: Where is darkness coming from? As you said, is it coming from your stepfather side?

L: “No, no, no umm...usually umm...because umm...I hated my anger because [of] my dad [biological father] I don’t want to with anybody, I don’t want to, like, associate, whatever, with anybody else that makes me pressure by myself and something like that...and usually when I don’t actually do something, something like that, my mom accuses me, then I’m angry at my mom easily and then, yeah!”

- **Anger one**

In his darkness story, he and I agreed on the fact that he did not dislike his stepfather and his darkness did not come from him, but rather, it was anger and the anger was based on his need to gain acceptance and attention from his biological father. “I’m not actually angry at him [my stepfather], but angry at myself because I can’t really accept him because of my other father [biological father].” He has lived this emotional attachment to his biological father.

However, through our “externalizing conversation” (Freedman *et al.* 1997; Morgan 1999; Roberts 1994; Smith & Nylund 1997; White 2000; White & Epston 1990), he started to draw the line between his darkness and causes of it, one of which was derived from his longing to receive attention continuously from his biological father. Given his broken and frustrated anticipation, he has been hampered in creating intimacy, not only with his

stepfather, but also with others. He saw that a byproduct of this broken heart was, as he named it, “anger” which always relates to his anticipation of a response from his biological father. This anger was contagious with regard to his other relationships.

- ***Anger two: The past was bitter***

Another source of anger was rooted in living with his grandfather for a long time after his mother was informed of the divorce by his father. He remembered that his grandfather was very strict and indifferent towards him. He scolded him very harshly when he made even a trifling mistake: “One day I accidentally spilled coffee on the carpet during a prayer meeting at grandfather’s house, then the word “stupid child” fried up and landed on my face and a big palm covered on it with an enormous power.” He called this abusive experience the “bitterness” of his past.

- ***Another bitterness***

He remembered that he moved a lot. Because of that, he had difficulty in making friends and became secluded, keeping silent. He said: “Always silence and self-struggle is there.” He likes friends, playing sports with them. Yet, in his past, he could not afford it. When I asked him what makes him happy, he said, “Being happy?, Umm...visiting friends, having activities with them, play sports...”

One anecdote with regard to having fun with friends was that he often forgot

or did not keep to our meeting schedule, as he had appointments with his friends. This occurred even after I had confirmed a meeting in some way. I interpreted this as an indication that being with his friends was a top priority in his routine. This attitude was not an aspect of his “problematic behaviour”, but his constant moving had resulted in his choice of his priorities and schedule. I presented this interpretation to him and he laughed. He said: “Can be, anyways, unfortunately I lost that time.” He attributed all of his “darkness”, including anger and bitterness, to a lack of attention from and acceptance by his biological father. His comment was: “My past is bitter because, yeah, he [father] was not there when [I was] growing up.”

3.2.1.3 *The start of an alternative view on his story*

- ***About his biological father***

Light’s story did not demean his story although it was already somewhat overwhelmed by the bitterness. Thus, I questioned him with a view to developing the story. The purpose of my questioning was to gain “developmental information” (Smith & Nylund 1997:4). This was a form of what Amundson and Stewart (1993:118) call “a therapy of curiosity”. For this project, I employed their words as “a research of curiosity”. In this sense, I shared my story about my father who had passed away before I was born. As a result, I did not have any feeling of attachment him. Therefore, I did not quite understand his attachment to his father. I shared this story with him. From the second stage of our interview, in as far as he longed for

acceptance from his biological father, he gradually took the path of splitting darkness from his father and his relationship with others. He thereby disjoined it from his life.

Q: (After sharing my story) Do you think his attention toward you is very significant? Is it very helpful to you to build your future home? Why?

L: “No ...it used to be that attention of my father, now probably that it’s my future because I know my father’s not gonna give me any attention....so I’m not gonna worry about what he was to do...oh...oh his attention towards me, because umm...[repeating the above sentence] I’m not gonna care, I’m just looking to my future instead of staying in the past.”

Q: Do you mean by saying “I’m not gonna care about him” that you try to be indifferent towards him? Or, what? And how can you put the darkness aside?

L: “Well, I need forgiveness. I need to pray, ask God, forgive me for the anger I had and then I ask myself to forgive my dad, I think I’d better I have to forgive my father...I have to phone him, tell him ‘I have forgiven’ and then...towards EMIMME [a popular singing group] laying the devil, like, come, like, uses me, destroys me as a person that people, like, look at me. And then I need ask forgive for my dad and ask lots of forgiveness.”

As transcribed above, he wanted to ask forgiveness for himself first. That suggests that he began to think of the attribution of his darkness as anger’s

work in advance. He initiated a reinterpretation of darkness as not his dad, but as the devil who tries using and destroying him by using anger as it is, not as the protagonist is. In order to resist this, he was implementing forgiveness on himself and his dad against the anger. This anger had detrimental effects on his life.

- ***About anger***

He used to live with aggression born from living with his grandparents, but through a re-association with people in the church, he started to look back on the “once upon a time-dream” of being a leader of the people of God. He used to blow up when his mother blamed him as if he had done something wrong. However, he did not merely stay in this place. In his telling, he often used the terms “used”, “I thought”, and “unconsciously”. Therefore, I utilized questioning again as my compassion towards him, like “therapeutic loving” (Smith & Nylund 1997:23).

L: “I used to be aggressive but, umm...like, after that then I liked to decide to attend the church on a regular base umm...all people [in his church] said, ‘I pray for you’...His [God] plan for me isn’t aggressive...Stand to be calm and he [the storyteller] will be a leader...God has planned up...I must stop being angry.”

Q: You know sometimes anger is often out of control of myself in my experience. (I shared my story about anger exploding out of me.) What

method do you have to gain control of it? Have you tried your method to gain control over it?

L: "Ok, let me tell you several things."

- "Yeah, I just said [to] myself each time I'm not gonna get angry because getting angry is not gonna answer... doesn't give me any benefit...if they start talking someone, say something to you &^%\$... anyways, self-discipline is to ask yourself."
- "Also, what I can give in ...start living a lifestyle like a new person that doesn't show my anger any more... including people in the church [those who prayed for him] and stuff."
- "Keep on the path the Lord has got to me, ask Him for help, not to do it in the way I need it...I remember if I have needed Him, He is always being there. He changes my life. He always confirms me that He gives me talents and I must use it and He's given me a gift and that I must use it, using, like,...towards Him yeah...Because of that I started to think of myself."
- "I want to help my mom [who is living with him now]."

Q: Helping her is a method to stop being angry?

L: "Yeah, it makes me feel good because she is my sweet."

Q: How?

L: "I gonna obey her...do my schooling well...I can show umm...it's not meaningless for me to be here, actually I want to be here to make a success my life. I gonna obey her in love."

In order to manage his anger, he reminded himself of his vision first and then instilled it in people around him. In other words, in our conversation we commenced “re-membering” (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001; Morgan 2000; White 1995a ; 2000; Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996) to go forward. This work was to reconnect us with our past and with others (Novy 2002:223) and involved re-considering our past events through our collaborative imaginative questioning and imaginative memory (Madigan 1997:339). We have facilitated this “re-membering” in our group meetings to reinforce and strengthen our alternative stories.

- ***About the stepfather***

We had already concluded that his stepfather was not the cause of his darkness; as yet, he was still a stranger to him. Indeed, through a re-investigating conversation, I could see his endeavour to improve his relationship with his stepfather. Also, fortunately, I could reach one constructive definition regarding the stepfather by chance. The remarking of the storyteller that “I don’t know him very well”, did not mean that he really did not know him, but rather, he meant that he was not able to accept him as his father because “I didn’t have dad, like, he was there. I should have a real dad”.

- ***Image of the stepfather***

At that moment, I was speechless for a while because I could not find a

relatively relevant question. He was possessed by the ghost of his biological father (Carter & McGoldrick1998:419). Thus, I tried to question him further by using images.

Q: What is the imagery of your stepfather in your mind?

L: (Thinking long time) “Water? Yeah, he is water because he got a lot of power...because water has a lot of power... because water can kill you, but it can save you.”

In this moment, I jumped to the conclusion that his stepfather was cruel or inexorable towards him. Consequently, I asked an invalid question. Even despite that, his story was enough to enable some understanding of his relationship with his stepfather and his thought about him. Besides, his continued story gave me a key to enhance the intimacy between the stepfather and the stepchildren.

L: “...Not happy with him, but better than nothing.”

Q: Better than nothing???

L: “I want to respect him like he was my dad, I said earlier, I should have a real dad...He is water, powerful, but he rather save than destroy you...His power is not threatening, but he got just power to tell me ‘you are not gonna there, I don’t give you money and stuff, something like that...he just pushes me.”

- ***The other side of the stepfather - a positive view***

He remembered a positive deed of his stepfather for him in the sense of “re-

membering”. From the manner of his telling of his view on his stepfather’s deed for him, I could see a seed of his developing relationship with his stepfather. This will be presented in Chapter Five: “He sent me to a proper school [his current school], well, I was in a proper school, but I mean...but [it] wasn’t like a real decent school. My mother was living alone with us, he was helping us like, he is helping me to develop my talents like guitar lessons and dancing and stuff. He’s still kind to her...He doesn’t have to do [it] but he does.”

- ***Improving the relationship with the stepfather: mutual telling and listening***

This dialogue gripped my attention enough to think of what the attitude in the dialogue between the children and their parents should be. He was struggling to converse with his stepfather because of a lack of space for mutual telling and listening. He therefore conceptualized what a better relationship should be like.

L: “He has to take time for me to listen to me, spend time for me....He did for me what a father [biological father] was supposed to do, like, be with me.”

To enhance his relationship with his stepfather from his side, he repeatedly said: “I just need to talk to him...trust him...I just have to talk to him. ” It cannot be said that his view of his stepfather was always negative.

- ***A lens to see the stepfather***

In a casual chat with Light's older brother (17 years old), I gained a lens through which to see step-fatherhood. Through his opinion I have a clue to conceptualize step-parenthood. In our conversation, he was worried about his brother's mindset regarding their stepfather and he said: "He has to see our father [stepfather] through his heart [stepfather's] towards us, not in terms of blood...Our blood father has done nothing for us, but he [our stepfather] has done a lot for him, I don't understand why he doesn't like our father [stepfather]." The significant phrase here is "through his heart". In other words, I interpreted, "through his heart" to mean "through a deed in love". There, I asked him again: "You mean he sacrificially does something for you guys?" He said: "Yes, indeed, he fetches us every day, gets on with my mom well...helps him much. "

I concluded that a lens to see step-parenthood can be "through his heart" and "through a deed" for stepchildren. Also, as a consequence, one's identity is dependent upon how one sees others with whatever lens one has.

3.2.1.4 *The voices of Light's peers*

As mentioned earlier, we conducted group meetings after every individual interview. In a group meeting, we invited two of our friends, depicting one another's personality with colour. The purpose of this work is collaboration as a community (Combs & Freedman 1999:27; White 1995b:60) The idea was to extend one's perspective about oneself. Sween (1999:193) comments that

personal identity is co-created in a relationship with other people, as well as one's history and culture. This work took place through friendship, in other words, teamwork in the light of servant leadership, which emphasizes mobilizing people to achieve one another's intrinsic values and gifts (Maxwell 1993:120).

- ***Green and brown***

Light's peers described him in colour as green (or lime green) and brown because he was ambivalent, between bright and dark, bright and gray; and as a good guy and a negatively influential guy. In his green, they saw him as "cool". One group member who identified him as green said, it was "because he sometimes becomes dangerous but he is cool. I remembered when a friend was not selected to be a rugby player, he just gave up his position and called him". Another guy added, regarding this kind of attitude, that, according to him, when they had a group project last term, two classmates were not involved in any group, so he dropped out of his group and then he teamed up with these two. One peer commented that she never saw his negative side, even if she knew his family situation. Another peer gave us both positive and negative information on him: "He has great talent as a leader but is sometimes dangerous when he gets angry."

3.2.1.5 Getting to the start of a new potential being

In describing him as "cool", they prompted him to look back on himself alternatively to deconstruct his current self through group work. Also, through

our various conversations, we finally got to a new avenue. To pave the new avenue, he created two pivotal works for his future. He coloured himself as a “rainbow”, which represented his ambivalent mood about his present in the first meeting, but from this moment on, it was reinterpreted as and for his future house. The other was that he made his metaphorical name “Light”.

- ***Rainbow***

Apart from the metaphoric meaning of a rainbow, Light thought that the rainbow represented colour, describing his uncertainty and his emotional antipathy towards his stepfather. He said that “because “I am not sure what to do, one side of my life is like light which is white when I am happy. Black is just there...I don't like step-dad, instead, I want to get back my real dad.” On the other hand, he said: “He [stepfather] is better than nothing.”

However, on the journey of our collaborative research, he has slowly but surely rethought his rainbow, which will be beautifully described for his future. First of all, according to him, this colour is relational with other colours and sucks in dark and bright light to create other colours. Moreover, light in this colour affects all other colours to be colourful. He wanted to be like this colour in his functioning. He wanted to influence his peers and people positively. He wanted to embrace people in need and guide them into the will of God like light lightens the way for people in the dark: “He [God] gives me talents and I must use it and He's given me a gift and... I must use it, using like towards Him so that He can lead people.” The rainbow which is no

longer affected by uncertainty and ambiguity is “God-given talents”, “self-actualization” (Browning 1991:258), future roles and his multi-selves. His future rainbow is being an architecture professor and a church minister.

- ***His future imagery, and his name, Light***

Before the last interview I was curious how he could re-capture himself and how he would summarize his told stories. In a therapeutic sense, in order to facilitate “a further practice for creating an experience of reflexivity”, I tried to thicken his emerging new story by means of his “summarizing” (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:108) his story as a whole, in imagining himself. Thus, I asked him to name himself, in imaginative work. He himself called “Light”.

Questioner: Light!

Light: “Actually, umm...I made my name Eagle; it flies high, can see everything, keep everything something is own but ...umm...like, brings fear, threatens something sometimes...Instead, I'd like to have the name Light, because it brings not fear, in the dark people [are] scare[d], but light shines people's way. Therefore, I am Light, like, I will shine people...I am not any more keep back and forth in dark and bright. I am so sure [of] what I have to do.”

At that moment, I wanted to know how the metaphor of Light would function in his daily routine. I wanted to know how I could help facilitate it in his milieu, as a member of his community. We sat together and made a list what it would do for him. In the list, we also delineated when, where and how this

would take place. The reason was that there is a tendency for people not to do what they claim they will. Simply put, they have a propensity to relapse.

- ***The work of Light***

We collaboratively made a question list about Light at school. Before discussing our list of questions, let me introduce his story a little more. When he shared his story, he wanted to recompense the sweetness of his mother in that he did well in his schoolwork. However, an obstacle arose in focusing on his schoolwork, because, when he was with friends, he became a joker or a disturbance in class. On the other hand, however, when he was alone, he could handle himself easily to study well. He said: “At school, it will help me concentrate my schoolwork.” Thus, we focused on his being with friends in questioning. Does Light exist only to concentrate on schoolwork? Does Light think that he can help only himself or all his peers? Does he fit himself into a small box in terms of his capacity to help people?

In this discussion, he externalized and animated Light and conversed with Light like a real person: “Hey, Light, have you studied well done? What else have you done? Did you just claim you are my Light! Or, you are still in my imagination or you are still my real Light?”

In short, Light wanted to practise shining on people and to keep a shining from his family to the world, so, for example, one way of his shining in his family is loving his stepfather and listening to him. He said: “My mom and dad started

fighting again, I want to intervene [in] their fighting, asking them to pray and stuff.”

3.2.1.6 *Summary of Light's story*

Throughout our journey by means of storytelling, the co-researcher explored many different developmental paths of his story. In listening to him, I noted several themes that emerged congruently. He longed for intimacy with his biological father and current stepfather, and wanted to talk openly and to be listened to. In order to achieve this intimacy, he did not act passively but has actively worked towards it. The method he has chosen is “forgiving” his biological father, “just telling” his current stepfather and living as a light for his life and people in the dark. To summarize his story, I wrote the following poem for him.

<Light>

Once upon a time

Light was born.

He loved his pine tree but it was gone.

He pined the pine but never came back.

He planted the pine in his heart.

It just grew and grew in his heart but became dark.

And yet, he still pined the pine.

The pine became his pain but soon turned into his maturity.

The pine caused him to learn forgiveness.

The pine allowed him to know the value of mutual reaction.

As a result,

He became a struggler in the rainbow.

He has kept back and forth in the rainbow.

He finally goes back to who he originally was.

He proclaims: "I am Light".

"I am being a light of myself."

"I am being a light of people."

Once upon a time

3.2.2 The story of Co-researcher Two

Dripping⁴: "I am in Grade Nine. Most of my schoolteachers said I am a good student. I love to love, philosophizing, drawing, chatting and listening to my friends. I have three stepsiblings who do not live with me. They are living with my biological father."

3.2.2.1 Overview of a love story

There was a love which was both intricate and beautiful. By its hands I was born

⁴ Dripping is name my second co-researcher chose for herself.

in 1990. I did not and could not see whether it delivered me, because as a neonate I was too immature. One day the love approached me in a very strange way in which my parents got divorced when I was still very young, two years old, too young to understand its way. “I don’t really know much about it because I wasn’t old enough to understand.”

The love changed its face to the face of remarriage. The love gave an opportunity to my dad, a composer, singer, to find this face so that he got remarried when I was about three years old, while my mom was still single. She carried on her life for thirteen years. Of course, she went on dates, but she would not get married if “I didn’t like the person”. She has had to work very hard as a businesswoman to support me and to maintain her life without the subsidy of her ex-husband. As a consequence, I have often stayed with my grandparents on my mom’s side, whose bosom was very cozy, and sometimes visiting my biological dad.

Because of the change, a bit of salt (the narrator described her experience as “the salty”) gradually overwhelmed my life in part. This was a moment to change its face again. She, my stepmom, living with my dad was fine when she first got married to my dad, but after delivering her first child, she became nasty, cold towards me although I have never had a problem with her own children whom I have a good relationship with and we enjoyed one another’s company. In that situation, I was still too young to cope with it and to know what to do. Thanks to that, I compulsorily learned love could be salty. I do not know why she is cold to

me, even though I have not lived with them. I have just visited them irregularly and I like my stepsisters and have a good relationship with all of them. Only one reason comes to me, and that is that she interpreted in a way that her husband gave more attention to me than to her and her own children, my stepsisters. That was her misinterpretation, I think. Without any discrimination between my stepsiblings and me, her husband, who is also my dad, just enjoyed writing songs and singing with us together.

The love taught me the taste of salt which consists not only of the bad but also of good ingredients. “Probably because salty can be good or bad. It sometimes...if it’s too salty then you don’t like it, but salty can be nice. People like salty, they like the taste of salt, so it’s good with some things....it’s bad with some things sometimes.” For instance, my mom eventually got married to a very fine man whom I like as well...during the last Christmas season. The love approached her first and then me next as good saltiness. I can taste it in a good saltiness that “I can share with him many things...my desire, feeling, anger, agony, problems, something like that. He listens to my story and is a good mentor. I get on well with my stepdad.” I feel comfortable enough to share with him. He really helps me with a lot of stuff, such as giving advice, listening, chatting and sharing in an honest way. On the other had, I do not share as much of what I feel with my mom and biological dad as I consult on my problems with my stepdad.

My stepfather experienced the bad saltiness. His ex-wife died of illness. When

she passed away, she left her own two children whom he really loved and got so attached to. However, because of the fact that he was their stepfather, he could not keep them in his bosom, even though they were living with him for quite a long time. The law and the biological father took them away from him. “He knows what pain life gives you.” I think through his salty experience he became a person embracing people in need. Through his painful experience, his bad saltiness could be changed to the good saltiness. Therefore, we need saltiness in life.

There was a love which has consistently changed its face in one way or another in my life. I am not sure it has affected me to a greater or lesser degree. However, I know that love flourishes in my life. “It can make you⁵ happy, it can make you sad. It’s part of your life...I love love” in spite of the fact that “I don’t think you can really ever know what love is”.

3.2.2.2 *The story in detail*

In Korean discourse, the English word “crisis” connotes two meanings: a crisis in itself is the critical moment which contains both a hazard and an opportunity at the same time. In a similar manner, the story of the narrator’s love story has progressed through simultaneous difficulties and developmental changes. The sum total of the images created by her was an interpretive choice. Through her storytelling, we could glean a harvest of the life of a remarried family and its adolescent. Indeed, various concepts were yielded. These concepts were

⁵ It is her habit in speaking that when she says, “you”, the “you” actually indicates herself.

constructed in our own language in the process of the research (Josselson & Lieblich 1993:xi). In addition, through her own story, we could hear indirectly another story (Roberts 1994:5). This story was about a broken-hearted remarried family, one that gave us an insight into a cause of pain in life and focused us, to rethink the distorted social discourse on remarriage. Her colour for herself was purple. She defined her “experienced experiences” as the taste “salty”, whose meaning was both good and bad at the same time.

The heading words, in bold, are our interpretation. The words in *italics* in the story are key words leading our conversations and questionings.

- ***Purple: creative and combinational***

In a way, she does not like the colour purple much, but she does like its characteristics. She sees purple as both creative and combinational. Consequently, she chose the colour purple in that it represents her character and what kind of a person she wants to be. At first she hesitated about where to start her storytelling. Her deliberation on a starting point for her storytelling was resolved by colouring her identity. Because she told her story in an achronological way, she went back and forth and up and down. I changed the order of her told story to give the reader a clearer sense of the events.

Dripping: “Ok, umm... where must I start from?...*(smile)*...Umm...*(time flowed)*.”

Q: Ok, let me begin in this way. If you had to describe yourself as a colour,

what colour do you see yourself as?

D: “I would see myself as...I’m don’t like...I’m not crazy about the colour purple, but if I had to refer to myself as a colour, it would be purple.”

Q: Oh, you’d be purple?

D: “Uh-huh. I don’t really like the colour, but I don’t know... I don’t like to wear purple, nothing in my room is purple...Umm... but I’m purple.”

Q: Without any reason?

D: “Well, yeah,...no, I like it, but it is not my favorite colour but it seems to be who I am. I just see myself as the colour purple...It just may be...think purple is a creative colour, a colour that is *combining* with many other colours and a colour that can be *expressive* of anything, it can be a man’s colour, at the same time a woman’s colour. It’s actually... just a colour that explains everything...I can be combinational...It expresses my personality...I like the characteristics of purple.”

Q: Oh, you’re combinational, you’re combinational with your family members and friends...?

D: “Yeah, I am, I get on well with my sisters, I mean stepsiblings. I’m still trying to get on well with my [biological] father’s wife...she started becoming nasty, she was cold towards me. And I was small [young], so I didn’t know what to do and then when I went home I cried about it.”

● ***Relationship with her biological father’s wife, not living with her: coldness is a tree***

Q: I’m so sorry to hear that. Coldness? Tell me its characteristic or make a

name for it.

D: “Umm...Maybe I would say...no, no...yeah...[a] tree because it’s got many branches. So it can be her coldness, that’s what it branches out into, like, she can be cold towards me but it’s also many...small and always so much [so many small branches], so it goes down but still because I was small [she was one of small branches]. So it’s depending on sometimes her real [ity], it’s not me, she [is] just cold but sometimes she’s very nice.”

Q: Where did it come from?

D: Sorry, I don’t get it.

Q: I mean, the reason. You said, you did not make her cold.

● ***Coldness is a byproduct of a complicated structural relationship***

D: “Yeah, it is like this, I’m his daughter, and she is his wife, but I’m not her child, so it makes things *complicated and makes fiction* [not friction]...And then.....I think she was...it all started when they had their first child because she was more jealous that my dad was giving me attention and not to her or her newborn child, but that is her wrong interpretation...well it is never new that we didn’t like each other but we try to be nice each other.”

Q: Wait a minute, you also tried?

D: “Of course, well, I try to be as nice as possible ...I mean I never liked her...[her being nice was being polite and giving a kiss when she met her]...as um...may be well I like her some stage, she came to me, she said, she was sorry that she always nasty to me.”

3.2.2.3 *A successful story of her family as a remarried family*

- ***Relationship with her stepsisters, not living with her: the coldness did not affect her relationship with them***

On the other hand, although Dripping felt cold in relation to her father's wife, Dripping likes her children, and still gets along well with them.

D: "Yeah we've got the same type of talents. We all love-well, not all, but the eldest one...the other two are still a bit small [young], so they're little...We've shared our interests and have fun."

Q: You are quite purple. Aren't you?

D: (smile)

Q: Also, everyone else, you get along well with? Your mom, your stepdad?

D: "Yes, indeed, my mom and I have a good relationship."

- ***Her relationship with her stepfather, living together: building intimacy before remarriage***

Dripping did not say, "her mom married" but said we married him". The reason is as follows:

D: "And, ever since we marry him, really umm...really umm... we have ...we get on love even before marrying, I trusted him."

- ***Telling, listening and sitting on the stepfather's lap***

D: "...Told a lot of things...he just listened to me and I just talked and talked...sitting on his leg, like a little girl. I mean teenagers don't do that but I

did. He was warm towards me, he was embarrassing [when I sat on his lap]...I enjoy spending time with xxx. He really helps me with a lot of stuff. He gives me good advice 'cause he's very wise."

Q: You feel comfortable enough to share with him?

D: "*I share more stuff with him* than what I do with my mom 'cause *he listens* to me so I can talk but I can't do to my mom...She might not understand 'cause her parents were very over-protective...And now when I do something wrong, and I feel bad about it, I don't wanna tell my mom 'cause she won't understand. She won't, can't understand why...she'll just tell me to get over it. But xxx will *try to talk it through with me and find out the reason behind the reason.*"

- ***Getting married not only to my mom but also to me***

D: "When he got married to my mom, he bought an engagement ring for me as well and gave me it on the wedding day because he said that he's getting married to my mom, but also getting married to me as well...it's like another wife."

- ***Giving chocolate on Father's Day***

"And I made a little card and gave him chocolate to say 'happy father's day'. Actually, he is not my father but I still do that. He really felt as if...um I tell him, like, 'happy father's day' even if you won't marry...and he started crying...he cried so much about me."

- ***The marital law gave him pain: the custodial issue of children of remarriage under the law***

Coincidentally, I am aware of the poisonous fixed law of remarriage and that so much of it is painful in that the law takes stepchildren from the stepparents who do not have a right to custody. I knew through literature that the law is harsh to them, but I had not heard of or experienced such a case. In listening to my co-researcher's story, however, I experienced the case indirectly (Roberts 1994:5).

D: "He's really nice. He never had his own children. His wife died, so he wasn't divorced. She left her two children who were not his own. He got so attached to them and then the mother [his wife] had died, her ex-husband, the boys' father took the boys away from him. And then he was totally broken. For two years...he was so depressed...he knows what pain life gives you, and he's experienced a lot of stuff."

Q: You said, you have a good relationship with your mom. Could you tell me more about it?

- ***Her relationship with her biological mother: accepting a new life by doing what she wants to do***

D: "We're like, because we have lived together for so long, I was just near her till [I became a] teenager. We sleep together, not because I am scared, but because [we] want to be together. Like *friends*...We enjoyed bath [ing] together until my mom got married, we could be just messy, no one care, we were *very casual, comfortable, knotty style*, but after she got married, we

changed our life style because we have xxx [her stepfather's name] as well, she changed a lot.....she has to give attention to xxx. I don't mind, it doesn't bother me at all. *I am on my own ways. I like what I am doing*, like, to store or something so now we little bit space out...yeah."

Q: That's it?

D: "Well..umm..."

- ***Her biological mother did not decide to marry a person whom she did not like***

D: "She [her mom] was alone for thirteen years. Well, she had dates but she wouldn't get married *if I didn't like the person.*"

Q: Your mom didn't want to get married to the persons you didn't like? You got to know her other dates?

D: "No, she would never...I got to know them, she would *introduce* them to me, and *ask* me what I think about them...she was dating with xxx, and, for 2 to 3 years...and they got married but I love my stepdad" [it was the first time that she called him her stepdad].

- ***The family's happiness depends on you: It depends on the situation, interpretation, good communication, trust and love (not money)***

Q: So you get on well with most of the people around you, especially with your families. So you are happy?

D: Yes, indeed, I am happy. We got on very well, my family circumstances at the moment aren't bad at all. I don't *think* I've ever really been in a bad

situation, as a result of the divorce, because my mom and dad got divorced *when I was two years*, so *it doesn't affect me so...* I mean, it affects me, probably...but not so much...as it's affected someone if they're older and their parents divorce because then *they're conscious* about it, then they would know what's happening."

Q: Then can I say that happiness or a bad family circumstance is dependent upon your situation, like the age stage, or how you choose to view it?

- ***The past is salty: it is good and bad***

D: "Yes, indeed, for instance, I would say...my past is salty..."

Q: Salty?

D: "Probably because *salty can be good and bad*. It sometimes... if it's too salty then you don't like it, but salty can be nice. People like salty, they like the taste of salt, so it's good with some things, it's bad with other things."

Q: It's a good balance.

D: Yeah, it's a balance, you [I] have your [my] ups and downs, but you're *not unhappy*."

- ***Good communication: involving patience and love***

From this moment, she interpreted a cause of her biological parents' divorce and presented her view on good communication and genuine love.

Q: How can I make it balance?

D: "You can *communicate* with yourself, you can communicate with parents

in honest...If you do that you're just gonna sort things out...But, I think they didn't have *patience* with each other, and they just thought that they couldn't carry on. But I think if their love was a *strong love*, then it could have worked."

Q: You mentioned "they" who are "they"?

D: "Hoho...sorry, my parents [biological]...There was love, but I don't think there was *patience*.....and then I think there was a large communication gap, 'cause they didn't know *how to communicate* with each other. 'Cause my dad *won't wanna say* something. I experienced the same thing with my mom like my dad, in that way, when my mom is moody or something, I can't go speak to her about something because I think she's gonna shout at me, and she probably does. But, as I said, if you do that then you're just gonna sort things out."

She emphasized the need to consider not only the mood of the parents and their inability to communicate with each other, but also that of their children. She felt that most parental communication was one-sided.

She continued to speak about happiness in relation to a good communication.

Q: Why do you think that your mom's communication with you is *one-sided*?

D: 'Cause, she had something so that I asked what happens, then she just said nothing or shouts at me, she won't wanna say, but if I was in [the] same mood like her, she was irritating me, she *had to know* what happened with me."

Q: Hehe...like me, I do too...You emphasized good communication.

D: "Yes, indeed."

Q: You know I really want to be patient in my family and workplace but sometimes I can't. What is patience in your experience?

- ***Patience: It is recognition, decision, and responsibility, what we do for others***

D: "It is easy to say 'be patient' but I think being patient means to *recognize a person's need* and you must adapt to his need, but he also adapts [to] your need. Then that is fair obviously....Then they come to a conclusion of being patient together. You should be patient because love is patient."

Q: If it does not work?

D: "Well, I can tell someone who can help toloveit is *their decision*... After that, you should be reminded of your *responsibility*. It is your determination, your decision you made...you choose....*experience that is you've chosen*."

- ***Genuine love and puppy love (high-school love): patience, responsibility, getting to know each other***

Q: You love love?

D: "I love love...without it...Love is everything, it is dangerous, it is sweet, beautiful. Love can hurt you. It breaks your heart."

Q: Dangerous, hurt, break...??

D: "If someone tells you they love you and they wanna have sex with you or

something. That is dangerous in a way, or...I mean...I think people misuse love....I remember I think many times you love him, but you don't actually know what love is. I don't know. Love is something that we all think we experience, but I don't think we really know what love is. ...there is just teenage *puppy-love* or just lust...or ..anyways I love love. It can make you happy, it can make you sad...but it's part of life...Like my mom and dad, I think there was love in their relationship but they had no *responsibility*...I mean *patience*...if you really love someone, then why you divorce, you should be able to stay with them for the rest of your life...there is love when you get married but there is no *patience*. *Be patient*. When you think you love him, and yet decide on getting married, you have to have *responsibility* for your partner...I mean both of them...making *strong love is to get to know each other better*. Without it your love is *high-school love*.”

At one time, she revealed her thoughts about the value of relationships when she described her past as being salty:

D: “*The good type of salty is having relationship with people*. People, I think, they sort of keep you sane. They keep you ‘here’, right now, they keep you going.”

Also, with her concept of a cozy house, we could analyse superiority in relationships with people.

D: “I’ll not buy a big house as I live ...I’ll buy a small and cozy house, ‘cause

then you can see your partner the whole time. When I buy it, it must be cozy and the location is very important because I want to live in an area where they are people that can live with me...in the area people that *you can communicate* with them.”

- ***Trust is an element of good communication, happiness and a good relationship***

D: “I think you *should be able to love and trust* each other so much that *you can tell each other things*. Then you can rely on that person so much. And I’m not talking about your husband or boyfriend, I’m talking about your mother or your father, whoever you have a relationship with. You must be able to tell them everything ‘cause sometimes you *can’t tell someone something and then you know that there’s something wrong*. You know that person doesn’t ...you don’t have a *good enough relationship* for them to be able to share that with you. Then you can be happy...There’s one of my friends that I trust very much ‘cause she’s also been through hard...she was raped. And she also has got a lot of stuff she hasn’t told people. We have a *close relationship* that I tell her a lot of stuff. But I trust xxx as well, but I wouldn’t talk to anybody in my family so much as I talk to xxx ‘cause they tend to tell it to another family [members], just for when they talk....not to make me bad, don’t do it purposely.”

Q: Trust is definitely something you value?

D: “Yes, indeed, not that I tell my mom everything, ‘cause sometimes I don’t

think she's gonna like what I tell her..... She'll speak a lot to my maid....or tell my grandmother. When my granny hears something, she tells the whole family, and then I'm scared that the family might think *something bad of me*. So I don't share really like sharing. Not my problems, but *my frustrations*, 'cause I get frustrated easily with stuff that doesn't work, or whatever if something's stuck in my head..."

- ***Categorizing teenagers is problematic: restricting self-esteem, creativity and relationships: keep yourself who you are***

Q: So you are worried about what other people think about you; how others view you?

D: "In a way, meaning that they think I am rebellious...I don't like it when someone puts you in a category like 'you're a nerd, or you're popular'. I'm not a nerd or something. I like to associate with everyone 'cause everyone is different and everyone should be who they wanna be. And if someone puts you into a category, they don't have self-esteem, 'cause self-esteem is low, therefore they put you lower than they are 'cause they don't want to be seen as low. So I don't like to put people into a category. If you categorize someone, then they can't be creative and active, then you affect their relationship with other people...It restricts my thinking, I just care about what my family thinks of me. But I don't mind what the public thinks, what people at school think. *I don't worry about that 'cause they're not really relevant to my life. I try to keep a good image not being bad, I'll be myself, I mustn't, I don't want to try and fit in if I don't. If I just be myself, then I fit in 'cause*

everyone accepts you.”

Q: Sorry! I don't get it by your saying 'fit in'?

D: “It doesn't matter what people say about me because I am who I am, then I can become really who I am....I believe I am one, it's me, me in this world. I am more important in the problem.”

Q: Your saying seems to say that you ignore other people's eyes on your deeds in spite of your misbehaviour.

D: “Nooo...It's just what they say about me, even though I don't do wrong, of course, in my view.”

Q: Then, let me put it in this way, you are not so frustrated by other people's evaluation on your work. Is that right?

D: “Yeah, I mean, I like what I want to do and to be, but I don't go along sidetrack.”

● ***To overcome frustration: let it flow by itself, drawing and writing a dairy***

In this conversation, my assistant interviewing her has the same interest in drawing. I cut out some of this conversation due to limited space:

Q: Let me go back to the matter of your frustration. When do you usually feel frustrated? How do you get over it?

D: “For instance, people, like, mom or anyone tells me something...and then I'll just... they don't quite understand me then I'll just go and sit, lying on ...yeah... and then drawing something [she likes drawing] or writing something in my dairy... forget them...I leave people, forget about it and

then let flow by themselves...then [it] doesn't bother me any more."

Q: Do you paint realistically or...?

D: "I can draw realistically, or I can draw cartoons. Whatever mood I'm in. Sometimes I feel like sketching someone..."

Q: What subject do you find yourself drawing the most?

D: I definitely draw people the most, like young people and *their love*...I use symbols to express *love*."

3.2.2.4 *The voices of Dripping's peers*

In a mood of a reciprocal assistance, her invited peers propped her up exuberantly, sharing her identities in the imaginative work. Through this group work, she was confirmed as a person who valued the priority of her relationships with others, someone who practises good communication in her daily routine and tries not to be swept away by others' judgments or evaluations of her. This confirmation shows her story of consistency and relevance.

(Bright) Red: A friend said, "Her colour is the colour of love. That's why she is red."

.....(Other friends, shouting and laughing)

Q: Why? Do you love her? That's why she is red?

.....(Shouting and laughing again)

The speaker (laughing): "Because... you can talk to her umm... whatever... and then she responds and then you can get comfort.... She is very sensitive, like feminine, she can [be], like...like, [a] consulter"

Another peer: “Yeah, she is bright red...not dark red...because she is ‘standable’, not much changeable...just there...outstanding with others...I mean we can see her easily.... One’s personality and outlook depends on who you meet, and depends on the situation like school, what school do you go...something like that, but she is always the same... she keeps to herself but she also helps her friends.”

Q: So can I say, she is a relationship-oriented and love-oriented person?

The peer: “Absolutely”

To assist the reader, let me share an anecdote with regard to her attitude towards people in need. One day when we had lunch at a McDonalds, I saw her red eyes. I soon realized that she was glancing at a girl who was physically disabled.

The narrator of the love story responded to her friends’ description about her. “ I will not be and I don’t want to be so feminine... but I do try to be close to other people but through an emotional stance....I care about other people, I want to experience what their pain is, listen to it, and try my best.”

3.2.2.5 *Getting to the start of a new potential being, Dripping.*

In her imaginative work, she envisioned her future image as the metaphor of “dripping”, so we, all the participants in this project, called her “Dripping” instead of her actual name. This, her new name, connoted her future being and doing in

accordance with relationships with other people. The following is her actual voice.

“Dripping for the future”

“I want to expand my horizons, limits and cross my borders.

Step out of my comfort zone and drip into a large dam.

I want to go into a field of art and graphic stuff.

The paint drips.

My mind drips with creativity.

The water drips and flows from the same source [herself: I am who I am] to the same source; my thoughts, ideas drip and flow from the same source (my mind: who I am) to the same source (my physical doing: what I am doing)”

3.2.2.6 Summary of Dripping’s story

In Dripping’s storytelling, I sensed that the characteristic or nature of interviewing her was richer research ground than that of “Light”. Her story provided some facets of the life of a remarried family and the way in which the painful experience of parental divorce was dependent upon her interpretation of it and the life of being in the remarried family as seen by her as well. To put it plainly, one’s experience, whether it is “good” or “bad salty”, is one’s own choice.

Through her telling her story, she has given voice to her ideas, telling parents that they have to listen to their children’s voices in advance. She sometimes

distrusted the adults' attitude in communication, in that they tended to shout or try to give advice without listening to the child in depth. She emphasized good communication which could render possible genuine love, and forming good relationships. Overall, she spontaneously summed up her love story with her poetic words:

I love love

“Love is pain, love is sweet, kind, dangerous, and sad.

Love is everything.

It breaks your heart, makes you cry, expresses something.”

“Pain is good because pain is a form of love.

because pain is a form of impetus for being mature.

[It] doesn't matter what happens.

[It] doesn't matter which people are with you.

Either way you try to make it possible and turn it into love.”

“Who I am I gonna learn something out of this,
going to make me stronger person.”

“It adds to experience.

I don't think you should be 'hung up' on stuff that's happened to you and hold on to it

because that makes you sad and depressed,

but I think you should turn it into something beautiful and just say[:] tough life[!]

And love is supposed to be good.”

CHAPTER FOUR: OTHER VOICES SURROUNDING THOSE OF THE CO-RESEARCHERS

From a narrative social construction perspective, the stories that my co-researchers told and that I presented in Chapter Three were their own, and yet their stories were also caught up in socially constructed stories that they have lived out “in their personal lives” and the socially constructed stories “that are circulating in their cultures both their local culture and the larger culture” (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). These stories powerfully influenced my co-researchers’ choices about “what life events can be storied and how they can be storied” (Freedman & Combs 1996:43).

Thus, listening to other voices is imperative in order to understand the co-researchers’ stories better. My co-researchers and I have discussed many voices of literature and existing research on various issues surrounding remarried families and their adolescent children, and the voices of two high school teachers and pastors who were very close to the lives of my co-researchers. My co-researchers were adolescents who are going through one of the so-called developmental stages of the human life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick 1999:42). They have gone through the turmoil of parental divorce and are placed within a new set of circumstances, those of remarriage. Therefore, in order to present my co-researchers’ points of view in an alternative manner, through deconstructive methods, both on their life stage and on life in a remarried family, two pivotal themes studied by existing research were

scrutinized in our discussion, namely, the domain of adolescence and life in a remarried family.

4.1 BACKGROUND: ABOUT ADOLESCENTS

4.1.1 A constructed definition of adolescence

I used various dictionary definitions to construct a definition (see also Chapter One). The life stage of adolescence can be defined as a process or period of growth between childhood and maturity (*Webster's New Explorer Dictionary*). The adolescent is therefore a young person who is no longer a child, but who has not yet become an adult. The term adolescent also refers to the behaviour of young person (*Collins Cobuild Dictionary*). From this dictionary definition, one can infer that adolescence refers to immaturity while adulthood implies maturity, consequently, adolescents are as yet immature, but evolutionally moving towards being mature.

In the academic field, the foremost categorical term used to describe adolescents is "transitions". Adolescents are understood largely as being in a process of transition, and going through major bodily, emotional, sexual and spiritual changes (Kelly 2000:303; Carter & McGoldrick 1999:41). The ambiguous state of adolescence is the central developmental crisis to be dealt with during adolescence. Carter and McGoldrick (1999:38) summarize the characteristics of the period of adolescence as follows:

Adolescence (Approximate Ages: 13 or 14 to 21)-Looking for an

Identity: Continuing to Voice Authentic Opinions and Feelings in the Context of Societal, Parental, and Peer pressure to Conform to Age, Gender, and Stereotypes; Learning to Balance Caring about Self and Caring about Others

- Continue to deal with rapid bodily changes and cultural ideals of body image
- Increase emotional competence and self management
- Learn to handle one's sexual and aggressive impulses
- Develop one's sexual identity
- Increase physical coordination and physical skills
- Increase ability to think conceptually and mathematically and learn about the world
- Increase discipline for physical and intellectual work, sleep, sex, and social relationships
- Increase understanding of self in relation to peers, family and community
- Begin to develop ability to handle intimate physical and social relationships as well as increase ability to judge and handle complex social situations
- Increase ability to work collaboratively and individually

This descriptive and “expert” framework on adolescence is used as a measure for “normal” or “abnormal” and “healthy” or “unhealthy” teenagers. This conceptual framework is based on naturalist and evolutionary studies which

view human beings as mechanisms. As a result, this type of work provokes anxieties among adults about teenagers today (Watts 1993-1994:120). Moreover, it leads youth studies to focus overtly on what Kelly (2000:301) calls a “problematizing practice” whose purpose is “institutionalizing practice” (Kelly 2000:301) or governing a set of problems specific to the issues of population (Foucault 1991:87). Kelly (2000:306) argues that the phenomenon of youth studies based on a “problematizing practice” is “an artefact of both these diverse forms of expertise, and of attempts by expert systems to regulate the behaviors and dispositions of populations of youth, via the mobilization of the truths of youth produced by these forms of expertise”. For Rose and Miller, this practice is to control the lives of others in the name of what is normal, abnormal, healthy, unhealthy, virtuous, capable or beneficial (cited in Kelly 2003:168). This expertise framework has detrimental effects on individuals and populations of young people (Kelly 2003:167).

4.1.1.1 *Deconstructive views on adolescence*

Instead of a “problematizing practice of youth studies”, a growing movement of studies on adolescents uses a methodology focusing on the contextual. According to Wyn and White (1998:36),

[t]his means listening to young people. It also means putting what they say about their experiences into a wider interpretive context, a process that demands theoretical categorization and analysis. More than this, we think that youth research is inherently political. As such, assessing youth

problems is a matter of critically evaluating social institutions, of taking a holistic approach to the problems, and of being able to articulate a political vision which promotes forms of intervention that, for us, are informed by an emancipatory project.

In this way, the quantitative or popular beliefs as “truths” of adolescents are rejected, instead, a contextual narrative “truth” of youngsters is adopted, since we “reveal ourselves in every moment of interaction through the ongoing narratives that we maintain with others” (Lax 1992:71). A contextual narrative truth of self rejects any fixed self. Lax (1992:71) expounds this meaning as “the process of developing a story about one’s self that becomes the base of all identity and thus challenges any underlying concept of a unified or stable self”. Similarly, Madigan (1996:50) argues that a person’s identity can be viewed as a culturally manufactured and constituted self. Thus, it can be said that adolescence is considered as a social construction, rather than as a developmental truth or “expert” truth as advocated by naturalists and evolutionary theorists. Through a postmodern lens, Madigan (1996) sees adolescents’ identity and the stage of adolescence as culturally manufactured.

4.1.1.2 *The case of my co-researchers*

In respect of an identity as an adolescent, my co-researchers saw, not only themselves but also their peers, neither as problematic nor as fixed. In our group meetings, they described one another as multi-faceted beings. In their

own stories they are living out not only what they have been, but also anticipations of what they will be (Cattanach 2002:39). For instance, they did not attribute their emotional turmoil or misbehaviour to “adolescence” as a developmental stage in the human life cycle, but rather to how they interpret their experience as their chosen one (Dallos 1997:32).

My co-researcher, Dripping, commented on “experience that is your choice”. Also, she resisted the idea of categorizing somebody in an interview that “if someone puts you into a category, they don’t have self-esteem ‘cause [their] self-esteem is low, therefore they put you lower than they are ‘cause they want to be seen as low. So I don’t like to put people into a category. If you categorize someone, then they can’t be creative and activity, then you affect their relationship with other people...It restricts my thinking, deed a lot of stuff.”

4.2 BACKGROUND: THE MILIEU OF MEMBERS OF A REMARRIED FAMILY

4.2.1 Typological argument for remarried families

I mentioned earlier the harmfulness of attempts to categorize remarried families (see Chapter One, Section 1.3.1). However, it is helpful to know how traditional researchers categorize “the remarried family” for practitioners to see how absolutising studies of remarried families categorize, regardless of the real lives and voices of the family members.

Many researchers have argued that structurally there are several types of

remarried family. Among them, Wald (1981) categorizes 15 types of remarried family. His typology, which is overlapped when a remarried couple have children in common, is based on the criterion of the residence of children from the prior unions of both adults. Another example is the typology of Pasley and Ihinger-Tallman (1987), based on the presence or absence of children from either prior relationships or the present union of adult children and the residence of children from prior relationships. They identify eight types of remarried family. Clingempeel, Brand and Segal (1987) developed a system of nine types of remarried family, a structural taxonomy based on two variables: the presence or absence of children from prior relationships, and the residence of those children.

In categorizing, practitioners must consciously or unconsciously use some measurement, criterion or regulation, trying to place in it a family whose life is dynamic, diverse and always contextual. Therefore, it can be argued that categorizing is merely an attempt to manufacture social stereotypes and is to some degree a producer of prejudice.

4.2.2 Characteristics of remarried families in general

Before observing the milieu of remarried families, it is both critical and fundamental that one gets to know the characteristics of remarried families. The depiction of such attributes here is not intended to interpret or popularize understandings of other literature but it tries to be relatively factual in its outlook.

Firstly, at least one of the members of a remarried family has a minimum of two historical household narratives (Belovitch 1987:2; Ganong & Coleman 1988: 689; 1994:129), which could influence the current family life in one way or another. Secondly, at least one member has gone through losses and changes in terms of family life (Lewis 1985:16; Ganong & Coleman 1994:132; Schneller & Arditti 2004:24). Thirdly, a former marital relationship remains, either in actuality or in memory, to a greater or lesser degree (Ganong & Coleman 1994 134). Fourthly, a legal relationship between stepparents and stepchildren does not exist (Belovitch 1987:7; Cronje & Headton 1999:178; De’Ath 1992:78; Pink 1994:2). Stepparents basically have no legal status in relation to their stepchildren, in contrast to biological parents: for instance, they have no right to discipline, to consent to medical care or to access school records and no responsibility to support. Lastly, there is no consensus on a definitional name for remarried families. That does not mean there is no prescription for their lives. In the literature, there are many labels for remarried families; reconstituted, blended, reconstructed, reorganized, reformed, recycled, combined, step-, second-time around, merged and remarried families (Ganong & Coleman 1994: 1; Kelley 1996:535; Pink 1994:1).

4.2.3 Prejudice

Of all the factors surrounding remarried families and their children, the foremost is social prejudice. It is pervasive in the daily lives of remarried family members. As I shared in my remarriage story earlier, for instance, my sons and I have

been overwhelmed by prejudice in a church family and even from my niece. Through my own experience I am aware of the detrimental effects of prejudice with regard to the life of a remarried family. The life of a remarried family is caught up in prejudice and its various effects as set out below.

4.2.3.1 *The effect of prejudice on remarried family members*

According to some American reports, researchers have found that remarried families often tend to hide their status from others or they simply deny that they are remarried families, implying some awareness of a negative stereotype and their social distance in their community (Pasley 1987:34). According to Ganong and Coleman (1994:77), prejudice may interfere with appropriate socialization.

Remarried women suffer more from these prejudices or stereotypes than men do. Even researchers produce stereotypes with their own prejudicial findings on remarried women, in search of a scientific method. Some common examples are the notions that remarried women are more apt to be involved in conflict and are poorly adjusted, that they are less contented with their relationships with their family members, that they show more negative behaviors toward stepchildren and the like (Ahrons & Wallisch 1987; Clingempeel & Segal 1986; Hobart 1987; Kurdek & Fine 1993; Santrock & Sitterle 1987).

Children within remarried families also suffer from social stereotypes, even within remarried families. One study in 1989 found that 15% of such families did

not list their new family child living with them as part of the family (Carter & McGoldrick 1999:421). Several studies have found that even school personnel, teachers and administrators treat children from remarried families more negatively than students from first married families (Carter & McGoldrick 1999:16). Some researchers in their statistical research deleteriously assert that the most problematic member in remarried family life is the child (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley 1987:63; Prinsloo 1993:41).

4.2.3.2 *Alternative findings*

There are many different findings in research that differ from the above negative findings. Although the data of some of the research reviewed here is not very recent, it is worth looking at alternative views on remarried families and their children. For instance, the establishment of step-relationships between stepchildren and stepparents can be positive (Parish & Dostal 1980). In terms of school behaviour, one study found no differences between children from biological and remarried families (Touliatos & Lindholm 1980). Regarding the social behaviour of children from a remarried family, these children can be more competent than those from a biological family (Santrock & Sitterle 1987). Well-being in a remarried family can be as good as in a biological family (White 1979).

Ganong and Coleman (1984:108) reject the pathological findings of some research. Instead, they strongly argue that stepchildren do “not differ from nuclear family children in peer relationships...delinquent behavior...

companions...school behavior...”. Most studies on the influence of remarriage on children’s social interaction suggest that children from a remarried family do not behave in any more problematic manner than other children do.

All the assertions and conclusions of the above research are based on cases from North America. However, I have assumed here that the findings would be similar in South Africa, if South African researchers used similar tools or methodologies to their North American counterparts. Based on their statistical data, interpreted from the perspective of what they want to see, researchers and practitioners need to consider that their outcomes may produce social prejudice and stereotypes.

4.2.3.3 *Producers of prejudice: stereotypes*

Prejudice is closely related to stereotypes, which are socially constructed ways of thinking of people, or a group’s beliefs whose power is functional. This is the basis for prejudice in general. Stereotypes tend to restrict one’s preferred and developmental stories and even distort one’s identity and notion of the self. Most stereotypes are negative and are apt to create social distance, so that they sustain themselves by constructing a person to perceive others and their behaviours in a way that reinforces the prejudice (Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman 1987:19).

Ganong and Coleman (1994:33-35) highlight the effects of stereotypes and

prejudice, which distort perceptions in a negative way, leading people to treat the stereotyped persons or groups less favourably. As a result, the people who have been stereotyped may go through inappropriate socialization. Secondly, prejudicial thoughts about a group of people may affect behaviours directed toward members of that group, so that they accept what their members do and think in such a way that the expected behaviour is drawn out. In this regard, on the basis of their therapeutic experience, Whitaker and Bumberry (1988:40) metaphorically address the notion that “we find theories that fit in with our biases. When we stumble onto an idea we like, we automatically run it through our computer. If it fits with our programming, we claim it. If not, we reject it as being wrong, or at least not useful”. In a similar manner, through prejudice people tend to decide who is wrong and who is right. This prejudice influences people’s thinking. Through it, people create social distance in socially constructed value systems (Visher & Visher 1979).

This created social distance allows people to fit into and maintain certain power relations with one and another. The basis for the maintenance of such a power relation is not necessarily to overwhelm the other side or other persons without power, but to govern norms, criteria, a dominant culture and knowledge to serve their distinctive power as such. The result, in reality, however, is that they enforce certain lifestyles on others to a greater or lesser degree (Foucault 1975; Lukes 1974; Dallos 1997; Freedman & Combs 2002; White & Epston 1990). This is an attempt to administer the lives of others in the light of a stereotyped conception of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient or profitable

(Kelly 2003:168). From this perspective it can be argued that adolescents in a remarried family are understood as an “artefact of expert knowledge” and on the basis of it, “truths” about youths, their behaviours and dispositions are to be regulated (Kelly 2000:306).

In short, stereotypes not only produce individuals’ biases, but also social distance. They are sustained by power relations that allow someone to rule the lives of others. Needless to say, my co-researchers and I have been stereotyped, as adolescents in remarried families often are.

4.2.3.4 *Producers of prejudice: cultural myths*

Another “predator” interfering with the growth of members of remarried families is cultural myths. Culture can be understood as “socially transmitted or learned ideas, attitudes, traits of overt behavior and institutions” (Steward 1972 cited in Bernal & Alvarez 1983:34). This culture makes a skeleton of the flesh and blood of a person’s lifestyle, social behaviour and value systems.

Throughout the history of the family, a mythical belief that the biological nuclear family life is an unalterable standard has pervaded many forms of family life. Within this myth, all non-nuclear family lives, especially those of remarried families, have often been excluded and stigmatized (Jones 2003:228).

Culture produces, for example, normative roles, orders and rules for family

members and rituals, values, life styles of the family which are regarded as being applicable to any other type of family and to other situations. At an institutional level, this agenda is crucial in the disparate treatment of remarried families in court systems, schools, churches and the media. At an individual level, this cultural myth is insidious in regarding a remarried family as inferior (Jones 2003:1). In these prevailing but outdated cultural beliefs, there are many negative factors that reflect on remarried families in society.

- *Cultural myths: propagated by dictionary terminology*

A vehicle of a negative attitude affecting remarried families in society is dictionaries, as most dictionaries do not contain the term “remarried” or “stepfamily”. *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Pasley 1987:20) defines a stepchild as “one that fails to receive proper care or attention”. The implication of the dictionary definition is a myth: it implies that biological families are inherently better supportive and optimal environments for children to dwell in. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) describes a “stepmother” as “one who becomes a mother to an orphan”. According to Cherlin (2002:466), the prefix “step -” in Old English referred to a family relationship caused by death. Thus, the original meaning of “stepchild” was “orphan”. The common usage of the word “stepmother” was a woman who had married a man who had lost his wife through death.

This dictionary definition reinforces a cultural myth and a negative view of remarried families. It carries pejorative connotations such as inferiority,

neglect, problems and victimization. This problematic dictionary definition may influence people's narrations of their daily lives, which consist of spoken and written language.

- *Cultural myths: propagated via children's literature*

In one way or another, children's literature makes a significant contribution to underpinning the cultural myth. One of the main saturated stereotype manufacturers in literature is fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Hänsel and Gretel*, and *Snow White*. According to Pasley and Ihinger-Tallman (1987:22), these tales are well-known as favourite children's stories in various versions, told and read for centuries throughout Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America. They describe almost all of the stepmother characters as evil, and the wicked stepmother tortures the stepchild. The stepchild is mostly depicted as good and she or he finally triumphs over the stepmother. This popular portrayal infects children's perceptions and rouses unacceptable feelings about their stepmother. Rather than actual experiences, these fairy tales are typically the first producers of the steprelationship for young children, whose perception would be constructed towards stereotypes about such relationships (Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman 1987:23).

More dangerously, today, these stereotyped steprelationships are perpetuated via the media: films, home videos and family sitcoms on television. Jones's (2003:230) observation on this problem is insightful. He says:

Ironically, other more positive stepfamily myths may be just as insidious and problematic. As television programming began to reflect more diverse families, the idealized nuclear family story such as *Ozzie and Harriet* was replaced by equally romanticized versions of the stepfamily story. Programmes like *Brady Bunch* and *Eight is Enough* helped to popularize the term ‘blended family’ and the notions of instant family and instant love. These simplistic visions of ‘one big happy family’ are hazardous to remarriage because they create unrealistically high expectations that are likely to result in frustration and disappointment.

Several discourses on remarried families’ lives have emerged in professional literature: role ambiguity (Felker et al. 2002:126; Jones 2003:232; Kelley 1996: 541; Pink 1994:3), family structural or boundary ambiguity (Ganong & Coleman 1994:63; Ihinger-Tallman 1987:54; Prinsloo 1993:45), custody issues (De’Ath 1992:79; Jones 2003:232; Ihinger-Tallman 1987:79), the notion that the biggest problem or the biggest victims are children (Ihinger-Tallman 1987:63; Prinsloo 1993:41), and the assumption that being a stepmother is harder than being a stepfather (Cherlin 2002:465; Clingempeel & Segal 1986).

- *Deconstructing the literature*

Although this notion is not supported by evidence from existing research, the myth that the biological family is inherently better, and creates a better

environment for children (Hansen & Falicov 1983:9), has been sustained and maintained by children's literature, which popularizes distorted images of remarried families and manufactures stereotypes. The manufactured stereotypes result in social distance (Pasley 1987:34). More specifically, though, they play a great role in interfering with appropriate socialization for a common family position (Ganong & Coleman 1994:77). In addition, members of the remarried family may not feel interconnected with one another.

Nevertheless, as fairy tales strongly affect children's construction of their perceptions, children can create their own fairy tales, allowing themselves to imagine other alternative constructions of life which can be in their hands (Allanson 2002:63). In doing this, they can help themselves to connect, make sense of, and go forth in their future beings. The issue of whether this created story or imaginative work is real or imaginary is not significant from a narrative social constructionist perspective (Lamarque & Olsen 1994:225). For that reason, a story "can be 'real' or 'imaginary' without loss of its power...the sequence of its sentences rather than the truth or falsity of any of those sentences, is what determines its overall configuration of plot...indispensable to a story's significance and to the mode of mental organization in terms of which it is grasped" (Dallos 1997: 64). In short, even though the old-fashioned fairy tales storied by other people can serve as a producer of social prejudice on remarried families, a new kind of fairy tale created by the family through their own imagination can provide a new

direction for the family itself.

- *The case of my co-researchers*

All my co-researchers assumed that fairy tales might have influenced children's conceptions of steprelationships, but, by contrast, for themselves they did not feel that their attitudes towards their stepfathers had been affected by these stories. In particular, the relationship between Dripping (my co-researcher's chosen name) and her stepfather was close. Interestingly, when she had difficulty, she often chose her stepfather as her conversational partner instead of her biological father, even though she loves her biological father very much. She said, "...[I] told [him] a lot of things...he just listened to me and I just talked and talked...sat on his legs, like a little girl. I mean teenagers don't do that but I did. He was warm towards me." According to her, her stepfather also enjoyed his conversation with his stepdaughter, and she said: "He thought that he's getting married [to] my mom, but also getting married [to] me as well".

Light (my other co-researcher's chosen name) seemed to have a negative assumption about his current stepfather, but it was unclear whether his negative feeling towards his current stepfather was caused by his previous stepfather or was as an overt reflection of his emotional attachment to his biological father. Apart from his assumption, his imaginative work creating his own fairy tale via his storytelling enabled him to find a new direction for his relationships with his stepfather and his biological father. He repeatedly

said: “I just need to talk to him...trust him...I just have to talk to him”, and with regard to his biological father: “Well, I need forgiveness. I need, pray, ask God, forgive me for the anger I had and then I ask myself to forgive my dad, I think I’d better I have to forgive my father.” The both cases, Light and Dripping are living in a “storying culture” to “construct [their] life” (Paré 1995:13), rather than simply being caught up in a “storied culture” which constructs their lives for them.

4.2.3.5 *Producers of prejudice: Attachment theory*

When one examines social discourses on remarried family issues, one notes that attachment theory (Emery 1999) has provided crucial leverage to support stereotyping children in remarried families who have gone through phases of separation at least once. The term “attachment” refers to the emotional tie holding together the relationship between a parent and a child. Attachment theorists argue that experiences of poor attachment result in various problems in children’s development. They propose that attachment in a primary relationship has a great influence on children’s behaviour, internal work, and social development, and that that subsequently affects their relationships with others (McCune, Dipane de Fireoved & Fleck 1994; Meins 1997). McCune *et al.* (1994:163) state that when children feel that they receive appropriate acceptance and interactions from their primary relationships, they feel freed of an emotional burden and tend to go forward in their development.

According to Hudd (2002:177) (a play therapist using social constructionism),

experiences of abandonment, rejection, low self-esteem and a sense of isolation are frequently found in stories of children with disorganized and insecure attachment. Research on the antisocial behaviour of children produced outcomes showing how strongly the issue of attachment relates to antisocial behaviour and relationship problems such as aggression and avoiding relationships with others (Hudd 2002:152).

Carter and McGoldrick (1999:419) believe that children from remarried families “never give up” their attachment to their first relationship, “no matter how negative the relationship with that parent was or is”. They observe that children, especially those who have lost a parent through death, tend to obstruct their new relationships by referring to a previous relationship. Carter and McGoldrick (1999:422) identify this as “ghosts”. They say that “...ghosts can be even more powerful” than the need to acculturate to a new family relationship. The quality of the relationship between a person and that person’s ghosts, primary caregivers, plays a great role in her or his subsequent close relations. This unfinished relationship strongly ties into the problems in children’s attachment in new relationships. The issue of attachment of children in a remarried family generates problems not only in their relationship with others but also in the family. These problems can enable a remarried family to immobilize its members (Freedman *et al.* 1997:3).

- *Deconstruction of the issue of emotional attachment*

Attachment theory is primarily based on the propositions of evolutionary psychological models (Tomlinson 1997:109), whose view on human

behaviour and actions is individualistic and that of a natural process (Gergen 1994). By contrast, from a narrative social constructionist perspective, human behaviour and actions are seen as products of social interchange and of being immersed in interdependency (Gergen 1994:186). Gergen (1994:187) argues that to “understand an action is indeed to place it within a context of preceding and subsequent events”. In this sense, it is almost conclusive that children’s emotional attachment can be seen as a phenomenon of a given culture in a context. Tomlinson’s (1997:114) cultural perspective on the attachment issue is remarkable in that it “is obviously true that attachment is not the only relationship or facet of development which plays a role in the growth of the child. Other elements such as peer relationships, religion, art, and the rituals of the particular culture all contribute to the shaping of the individual world of the child. ...Attachment theory can only account for [the] quality of relationships, and not [their] strength”.

Thus, emotional attachments to previous relationships are not a decisive element that accounts for children’s behaviour and deeds, but it is merely a construct of a culture which is manufactured throughout a social and historical interpretive process. One of the causes of children’s broken attachments is their parental divorce. This event cannot be a static fact because it has taken place in the past, but repeatedly goes through a personal interpretive process. For instance, Schneller and Arditti (2004:28) clearly argue that “divorce serves as [a] context and catalyst for the

interpretive process. Overall, without consideration of cultural differences and socially constructed views on children in the remarried family researchers and theorists can restrict their developmental behaviours and social actions and create uniformity of children as “Problematizing Studies of Youth”.

- *The case of my co-researchers*

Although all my co-researchers had been broken-hearted owing to their parents' divorce, their emotional bonds with ex-relationships and their interpretations of the divorce process were different. They had in common that they used their sorrow towards enhancing their future stories. As Schneller and Arditti (2004:27) suggested, one outcome of divorce is that it provides an incentive for individual growth and reevaluating relationships.

- *Light*

As a consequence of Light's emotional attachment to his biological father, he has tended to avoid pursuing a relationship with other people, and to distrust them somewhat. His emotional attachment has had a very strong impact on his life in a number of different ways. For instance, he started smoking when he did not receive attention from his biological father. He did not want to grow closer to other people. His girlfriend, whom I spoke to as well, has several times mentioned that he attributes his misbehaviour, smoking or being angry, to his situation in a remarried family. I assume that her interpretation was not actually based on what he said, but was what he

attributed his “darkness” to, to his family status, in his own interpretation.

- *Dripping*

Her heart-breaking event took place when she was two years old. However, she felt that this event had not influenced her emotional development so much, because, firstly, she was too young to internalize it in her emotional world, and, secondly, her mother has replaced her biological father.

In order to explain their behaviour and reaction to the broken relationship, one can say that obviously the forms of emotional attachment put forward by those kinds of theory did not suit either case. Instead, in the light of narrative social constructionism, their reaction to the divorce situation is accurately explained in that its meaning may be constructed by language, in terms of the explanations they create, by social interaction with others, and by the cultural meanings of divorce that have influenced their thinking and perceptions (Schneller & Arditti 2004:27). Simply put, emotional attachment is a form of interpretation, social construction and meta-narrative (Dallos 1997:170).

More importantly, the proposition of attachment theory, whose agenda is to put children coming from divorce into a specific category, is never as great as the capacity of my beloved co-researchers to manipulate and incorporate the sorrowful experience into their maturity and future being. These manifestations of their being mature and growing in their perspectives are the point of view on meaning of pain and love expressed by Dripping, and the fact that Light was

willing to forgive without any expectation of a response from his father.

Therefore, whereas attachment theory's proposition as a professional discourse looks at children pathologically emerging from a separation with their first caregivers, narrative social constructionism attempts to see them here and now as they are, and their potential future, through imaginative work. In the case of my co-researchers, they suffered from their parental divorce to a greater or lesser degree, but simultaneously, they have the ability to mobilize their strengths for the family and their future.

4.2.3.6 *Producers of prejudice: the community around my co-researchers*

As I explained earlier, we, my co-researchers and I, were also interested in listening to other people around us. Hence, I interviewed two more people, teachers, because of my limited ability to conduct an interview. In this section, I will just introduce (in point form) their experiences, in their workplace, of children from remarried families.

4.2.3.7 *Teacher One*

- *Description of the interviewee*

- He is a principal of a high school and a pastor in a church.
- He has served as a teacher, pastor and psychologist for 20 years.
- He has two sons, both of which are teenagers.
- He is very gentle, an organized talker and developmental thinker.

- He has heartfelt compassion toward his students.

- *Semi-structured themes*

- About children: His experience with children in remarried families was quite positive in a bigger picture.
- About negative views of existing research: He rejected views such as that children from remarried families are more violent, aggressive, misbehaved, disturbing and defective in the learning stage. He does not agree with such research, and thinks that children's behaviour has to be clarified case by case, and especially with children from divorced and remarried families.
- His view in detail: Adolescents in remarried families have at least two different pivotal underlying worlds (two family structures). They are struggling to adapt to both structures. This view is similar to that of the other teacher and existing research. As a result, they are forced to build at least two identities, two rooms; values, thoughts, worldviews, lifestyles and the like. Under such circumstances, they are required to enhance their skills of adaptation. He thinks the impact of the parents' divorce and remarriage on children is different experience.

- *Anecdotal experiences*

- Intimacy and coffee: One boy he taught when he was a young teacher was in Grade 10. The boy had gone through trauma owing to his

parents' divorce and remarriage. He had fallen into depression and had been rebellious for a long time. However, he finally overcame his difficulty through his activity, such as sports and exercise, and proved to be a great help to the teacher.

- The teacher established a strong bond of intimacy with the boy, in which he positioned himself as an older brother, father and teacher to him. He always opened his door to the boy whenever he wanted to come over and have coffee and a casual chat. He even checked his school report card. Now the boy is around 35 years old, and happy with his own family. The teacher still keeps in touch with him.

- Acceptance: Two boys (A and B) of four brothers still have difficulty because of the turmoil they experienced during childhood, whereas the other two brothers (C and D) are well. After each parent got remarried, the two boys (A and B) wanted to visit their biological mother, but unfortunately, they were rejected, as their mother only wanted to see the other two (C and D). By contrast, their current mother has striven for them to feel at home where she lived with them, emphasizing that it was their real home. She has given them emotional confidence. As a result, the other two brothers (C and D), thankfully, have adapted to their life very well, but the two boys (A and B) did not.

The teacher did not know why the result is different in the four boys but

just assumed that the two boys (A and B) experienced a lack of acceptance by their biological mother and that this may be the main cause for them.

● *His advice*

- Let children plan their own time.
- Opportunity: He thinks that the structure of a remarried family by its very nature gives opportunities to its children to cultivate more diverse identities and personalities.
- Influential role within the family: children in the remarried family have a great role within that family, so he advises them “don’t choose just one family as an ultimate one”.
- In this, they can cultivate their leadership and life survival skills because they have to enhance how to adopt the two structures of their family.
- Don’t be shaken: disappointment is everywhere. Keep being on your right track whenever trouble invades into life.

4.2.3.8 *Teacher Two*

● *Description of the interviewee*

- She is one of my church members.
- She has two children, one is a teen, the other is a young adult.
- She has served as a teacher for 26 years and has been in teenager ministry for eight years.

- She gets tired of paperwork of her school, but enjoys teaching and meeting children.
 - She said many children who have problems want to talk with her rather than other teachers in her school. She thinks the reason why this is so, is that she is a Christian.
 - She is a passionate speaker.
- *Semi-structured themes*
- About children: Her experience of children from the remarried family is that they are for more disturbed than children from biological families.
 - About the negative views of existing research: She said children from remarried families were “definitely” more problematic and misbehaved than children from first married families. They were emotionally disturbed. She used the words “definitely” and “I am quite sure” many times.
 - Her view in detail
She mentioned insecurity: adolescents in remarried families require love (intimacy), and there is lack of interrelation. She pointed out financial problem: children’s moving from a private school to a public school was a sign of their parents’ financial difficulty. Because of changing schools, they feel a lack of self-esteem which affects their attitudes towards schoolmates in a new school. They feel that they have no right to have a

say. They lack confidence and a sense of comfort, but have a sense of responsibility for the family. They face disruptive situations: a weekly meeting with the other parent and different discipline from two families. The children have a feeling of power: they believe that they are able to change their biological parents' relationship to the past. They feel guilty because they think they were the main cause of their parents' divorce. There is a tendency that when they successfully overcome their problems within the family that they show more maturity than others.

- *Anecdotal experiences*

One girl loved her stepfather much more than her biological father because the stepfather totally accepted her, whereas her memory of her biological father was always a bad one. A boy in a divorce situation was nervous and sometimes even shaking, striving to bring change into his family, but soon becoming frustrated. However, some time later, he successfully overcame this, through concentrating on his schoolwork, which was a strategy that she recommended. She said that today, almost a quarter of the children in her class are from remarried families and divorced parents. She knows the demographics from the school's personal files which, in the beginning of the first school term, "have to be filled in", including a section on the marital status on the parent(s).

- *Her advice*

- Adopt a do-able role: don't think of yourself as the trigger of the parental divorce which has already taken place and which was out of your hands.

Instead, position yourself as a supplier of your family's happiness.

- Concentrate on schoolwork, rather than concern yourself with your parents' conflict.

4.2.3.9 *Our reflection upon the teachers' views*

In my co-researchers and my understanding, the first teacher may see that all adolescents have gone through a certain stage and developmental phase in the human life cycle to a greater or lesser degree, regardless of whether they are in the remarried family or a biological family. Therefore, he believes that the actions and behaviour of adolescents cannot be judged in terms of their family status. We agreed with his view of our situation and advice. Also, we believed that not only adolescents, but all human beings need intimacy and a feeling of acceptance. His way of treating his student in his coffee story was very favourable.

My personal opinion regarding the second teacher's thinking was that she seemed to have read books dealing with remarried families: her view on its children was almost the same as the findings of some existing research. One of us said: "Yeah, I agree with her 'absolutely' as she said, 'definitely', (laugh)...not every case is the same though, like us...".

From what she said, we could extract one political issue as a manufacturer of prejudice, that is the student file. We assumed that it might affect teachers'

attitude towards their students, creating preconceptions about their students.

In general, we accepted the teachers' opinions and views and advice. One positive confirmation of our research assisted by them was the fact that we have many opportunities to weave different threads of possibility into the multiple fabric of our life. Also, we could see that not everyone predicates our actions, behaviours and capacities as a pathological affirmation of the statistical findings of some existing research.

4.3 BACKGROUND: CONSULTING WITH THE BIBLE

Consulting with the Bible for this study is inevitable, because all my co-researchers have a Christian background. In the view of social constructionists, their cultural and personal backgrounds would influence their lives and interpretations of their experiences. Thus, investigating aspects of the Bible on the issue of remarriage (which today usually involves a divorce dispute) is decisive for my co-researchers and their remarried families. The values received from religious assumptions on family life imply that the life of a remarried family can either be restricted or sustained. In order to study biblical aspects of the issue of remarriage, this section deals with biblical aspects of divorce as well.

Is remarriage really a biblically permissible option for believers, or does it constitute living in adultery while the previous partner is still alive? What do the

Scriptures say about remarriage?

As understood by the Bible, remarriage is a fulfilment of God's grace for both "the failure of [those] who dropped the ball" or "the lost who lost their spouse from death" (Ellisen 1977:71). Cornes (1993:86-87) interprets Genesis 2: 18, 17: 2 to argue that the "Old Testament is not at all positive about being single and ...a prolonged single life is disaster in the eyes of the Old Testament and early Jewish thinkers".

The Bible preserves the notion that God's intention for marriage is that of a permanent union of His children. However, because of the "hardness of men's hearts", Jesus (Matthew 19:8) said that the Bible confirms permission for divorce and remarriage on two conditions: first, Matthew 19: 9 seems to indicate that unchastity, *porneia*, is a condition of divorce, and second, 1 Corinthians 7: 15 seems to make an exception in the case of a mixed marriage between a believer and a non-believer (Keener 1991:67). Thus, it is possible to draw the conclusion from those conditions that both Jesus and Paul reluctantly permitted divorce within these difficult circumstances. It is permission rather than prescription (Atkinson 1981:102) in a particular situation. Divorced believers, therefore, are not under bondage, rather, they are free and have the right to choose to remarry. I do not mean, of course, that permission to remarry is meant to encourage divorce, but I mean that remarriage is an option for life after divorce.

However, then, one difficult situation in terms of modern society and pastoral ministry arises, in that divorce and remarriage in Christianity today do not only result from unchastity and religious mixed marriages but are also caused by personality, economic situation, or lifestyle. Are those kinds of divorce a sin? If so, should divorced people be forbidden to remarry? Are there any other opportunities to remarry for such divorced believers? The answer is yes, there are.

Literally, the Hebrew word *na'af* in Exodus 20:14 is not identified merely as “adultery” in the criminal sense. Rather, it refers to the irregularity of sexual relations outside (Atkinson 1981:102) the *hāyâh le* “one-flesh”, the marriage covenant of God. This implies that the purpose of a human sexual relationship is to fulfil a uniting purpose of expressing and deepening personal communion between married partners and, moreover, building a family (Atkinson 1981: 103). Another literal reference is *erwat dabar*, “some indecency” in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. It does not merely mean adultery nor premarital or suspected adultery. It refers to a certain embarrassment caused to the husband by the wife’s public behaviour (Atkinson 1981:103). Jesus extends its meaning to the inner meaning of adultery, including any unfaithfulness. The Greek word *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 indicates the meaning of betrothal or intercourse (Atkinson 1981:115; Keener 1991:302). A suggestion is that *porneia* means “something offensive to the eyes of God” which is the same meaning of *erwat dabar* “some indecency” (Atkinson 1981:117). Consequently, it is conclusive regarding *porneia* to be an exposition of the *erwat dabar*, “some indecency” through the

words of Jesus. Overall, the term *porneia* is broader than just the crime of adultery. In Jesus' time, public legislation regulating divorce was needed, and Jesus allowed divorce to those whose spouse was unfaithful, displayed some indecency and threatened to break the marriage covenant, "one flesh".

Briefly, although a couple may "drop the ball" due to their sinful nature and the hardness of their hearts, God gives them room for their redemption through their genuine repentance. As the statistics on the failure rate of remarriage show, like success, failure has a tendency to become habitual. Thus, to avoid that, authentic repentance along with a repentant act is indispensable for remarriage. In sequence, the remarriage constitutes a new life (Ellisen 1977:75) and a new family as a result of God's forgiveness, helping to build a successful body of Christ. Remarriage is not a sin. It is possible and necessary for vulnerable human beings, thanks to God's grace, caring for broken-hearted people and fulfilling their social, physical and spiritual needs.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this postmodern era, one growing phenomenon with regard to the types of family form is remarried families. However, as a result of family lives that are commercialized and normalized, its lifestyle is treated as strange and even somewhat distorted or denounced in the name of normality and universality. The dominant "predators" bearing down on the life of remarried family members are social stereotypes and modernist meta-narratives. Its adolescents carry a

burden of at least four imperative social and religious discourses: the adolescence discourse (focusing on the developmental phases of the human life cycle), the remarried family discourse (pronouncing its instability), the divorce discourse (a cause of emotional turmoil), and a religious instruction discourse (Christian principles).

Nevertheless, my co-researchers stand in opposition to these “predators”. They presented their point of view on remarried family life and shared how they have rewoven the fabric of their lives. Also, through our conversation, I could not find any struggle among my co-researchers regarding their received religious values on the life of their remarried family. Especially Light indirectly revealed the importance of faith. With these outcomes, we attempted to integrate our knowledge with other perspectives on issues regarding remarried families and their.

CHAPTER FIVE: ATTEMPTS TOWARDS INTEGRATION FOR THE FUTURE

My co-researchers in this research not only told their stories, their present, past and developmental future stories, but also accounted for some aspects of the lives of remarried families in terms of their own experiences. Both their stories revealed practical common ideas which consistently and coherently emerged during the conversations. My co-researchers also proposed that these ideas be disseminated to remarried families with a view to “spreading the news” (Freedman & Combs 1996:237) in order to help other families and their children to enhance their lives. Based on their practical ideas and true to their points of view on remarried families and their children, I will introduce co-constructed knowledge as a proposal for an alternative perspective on a pastoral theology on remarried families’ households and pastoral care.

As stated in Chapter Two, the aims of this research were the following:

- to provide a space and time for adolescents from remarried families to tell their present, past and future stories, thereby reconstructing their past stories and amplifying their present and future stories by implementing a pastoral narrative approach; and
- to bring the outcomes of their told stories (local knowledge) to their community and the academic world.

In fulfilling these aims, all the participants in this research would benefit from our conversations and would make significant contributions towards the research process. In doing so, my co-researchers added their wish for this research to

these aims of the researcher - a desire for other remarried families to gain practical ideas for their own circumstances.

To assist other children in remarried families to gain new perspectives from our sharing of our stories in order to enhance their own lives, we have a practical proposal. My one co-researcher said: “I think our focus should be on any other child who has problems, like, with my stepdad and stuff because you must make a book, then they may read the book...then, they say, ‘Ok, this is what he did...I will try that example... then, let them save themselves of what they are doing.”

Also, we wanted to share our own perspectives on what it means to live in a remarried family with other people and to present our voices to our parents. Dripping said: “We are not different of other people’s lives so tell them who we are and how we live...(little sigh)...If somebody like us...hears from us...no... any ways we want to help them with our experience.”

In line with the above, we would like to attempt to integrate our knowledge with other voices relevant to the life of remarried families and their children. Through this effort we attempted to establish an alternative perspective on adolescents in remarried families and their parents so as to build better “remarriage-households”. Presented in this chapter, all emerging practical ideas, and unique aspects from my co-researchers were filtered through their own interpretation. I simply organized their own work and arranged it accordingly.

5.1 PROPOSALS FOR PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR REMARRIED FAMILIES EMERGING FROM OUR STORYTELLING

As I listened to the narrations of my co-researchers, I was aware of their concerns and the critical life themes which emerged from their stories. Although each of them had articulated her or his unique experience and method of enhancing her or his life, they also consistently revealed some common practical ideas which account for their successful remarried family lives. In order for themselves and other remarried families to develop multi-life options, my co-researchers and I formed an opinion on a way in which the common themes were practical and applicable in the routine of family lives. When I present the common themes, I use the first person voice “we” instead of the third person voice “they”, because my story is part of their stories as well.

5.1.1 The first proposal to remarried families: responsive conversation, rather than reactive conversation

5.1.1.1 Reactive/responsive conversation

One of the key ideas that we became aware of in our research is that the family system does not create the problem, but rather, that it is produced through conversation with other members of the family (Hoffman 1990:5-6). During our conversation, I realized in my co-researchers’ contexts that there were at least two kinds of conversational attitudes: “reactive conversation” and “responsive conversation”.

First of all, I call “reactive conversation” conversations which are closer to “speaking in one side”, “hearing” and “shallow listening” than “talking with” “listening for” and “listening in depth”. This conversation is to react immediately to the words of the speaker or the listener without considering meaning and the feeling of the speaker’s utterance or the listener’s attention, although the utterance carries simultaneously both its meaning and its content. This reactive conversation may produce a side-effect in a particular conversation. Every utterance has its own intentions in terms of saying or achieving something, and it is also shaped by the previous utterance, by things “already-spoken-about” (Riikonen & Smith 1997:84).

For instance, a child cries out when about to go to the school: “Mom, where are my socks?” Then, the mother’s reply in terms of “reactive listening” is this: “You don’t have eyes?” The content of his utterance is the fact that the socks are lost, but, his actual meaning is “Please help me, I cannot find them.” The reactive listening of the mother affects her, so that she is unable to understand the real meaning of the child’s utterance. Also, it immediately influences her following utterance towards her child. Riikonen and Smith (1997:108) point out the importance of the manner of listening, in that “the very nature of the person with whom we speak is partly constructed through the manner of our listening”.

- *Responsive conversation*

Therefore, it is suggested that our manner of conversation be “responsive conversation”. Responsive conversation is to interact sincerely to the reason

why the speaker talks or how the listener understands. It is to find out, as Dripping calls it, “the reason behind the reason”. According to Shotter (1996:51), for instance, listening must be responsive, “in that listeners must be preparing themselves to respond to what they are hearing”. Bakhtin (1986:68) characterizes this listening as an “active attitude”.

In the case of Dripping, her stepfather showed his responsive conversation as a good example. She said: “When I do something wrong, and I feel bad about it, I don’t wanna tell my mom ‘cause she won’t understand. She won’t, can’t understand why...she’ll just tell me to get over it. But xxx [her stepfather] will try to talk it through with me and find out **the reason behind the reason.**” Whereas her mother’s reactive conversation rendered her unable to talk with her mother, her stepfather’s responsive conversation stimulated her to “talk a lot of things” and to “enjoy spending time with xxx”.

- *The meaning of responsive talking and listening*

Therefore, we believe that a significant life skill demanded in the life of a remarried family is to facilitate responsive conversation as a form of good communication. In addition to responsive conversation, responsive talking and listening are not a mere conversation, but reveal a desire to get to know each other better, an essential part of building intimacy, and a way of stepparental care and help. Light (my co-researcher) said: “I’ve lived with him [stepfather] just for a year, **I just need to talk** to him, trust him ...**I just have to talk** to him ” (my emphases). Also, Dripping (the other co-

researcher) shared that she “told a lot of things...he just listened to me and I just talked and talked....I enjoy spending time with xxx [stepfather]. He really helps me with a lot of stuff”.

In our understanding of our family life, responsive talking and listening as such are a signature of a way of building intimacy, including acceptance, and a means of good communication between steprelations. According to a practical theologian, Pieterse (1990:236), communication is concerned with a member’s existence in the family. Talking and listening underpin relations with others in daily routine (Shotter 1996:4), such as children’s self-esteem, a feeling of acceptance and family happiness. Furthermore, talking and listening as a means of creating intimacy means spending time with children and their stepparents. Weingarten (1997:75), a narrative therapist, thinks that through this time family members can talk about relationships that can be taken as the measure of intimacy.

For instance, a report shows the importance of spending time - the more time a stepparent spends with the stepchild, the more positively she or he perceives the child (Cohen & Fowers 2004:56). One researcher reports that communication between children and their parents has a great influence on children’s positive self-esteem (Berg 2003:84). Even if it takes place in a negative or hostile manner, children feel better than in the face of absolute disinterest by the parent(s) (Berg 2003:84). Another report is that communication also affects marital happiness, possibly more strongly than

any other marital component (Beaudry et al. 2004:98), which has, needless to say, a great impact on the life of children.

- *As joint action*

Responsive talking and listening are a mode of “joint action” (Fogel 1991:6), rather than just individual’s activities. Through the process of this joint action people’s internalization occurs in their development (Shotter 1996:46). One of my co-researchers evidently experienced that lack of talking with his biological father, which had a negative impact on him, leading him to go through a self-destructive pattern. He did not live under any illusion about his father nor did he have any fantastical expectation from him, but he simply longed for his acceptance, for one that would listen to him.

On the other hand, talking with his mother made him happy, feeling that his mother was “there”. It is his mother’s care that mattered, because in his conversation with her they were responsive to each other. Also, through the form of our responsive conversation, collaborative conversation (Anderson & Goolishian 1992) took place in the interview. Light not only emancipated himself from his emotional attachment to his biological father, whose disinterest in him was a cause of his smoking. Furthermore, he determined to stop smoking and forgive himself and his father. For him, the meaning of talking and listening was mutual acceptance, care and intimacy.

In the case of Dripping (my other co-researcher), it can be said that her

relationship with her stepfather is a conversational relationship. Responsive talking and listening was a crucial means of building their intimacy from the very beginning of their relationship. According to Paperno (1998:249), one of the indispensable stages in a remarried family is getting closer to the stage of “aware time”. The main feature of this type of encounter in the early stages is to concentrate on awareness tasks and to get to know one another and learn about insiders and outsiders in the family. It brings about some skills and attitudes that enable family members to achieve family developmental tasks more smoothly. Through responsive talking and listening, Dripping and her stepfather have interwoven parent-child-intimacy. By means of responsive conversation, they have lived in “storying cultures” to construct their lives (Paré 1995:12).

In conclusion, the matters of parental acceptance, building intimacy and stepparental care did not require philosophical or intricate theories, but the practice of “responsive talking” and “responsive listening for”. This practice has influenced us toward personal internalization and simultaneously to work for family happiness. Consequently, we cannot help but emphasize mutual responsive conversation as “joint action”.

- *Method of facilitating responsive talking and listening: “Just talk and tell a lot of things”*

We know that to sound words in responsive talking and to be attentive to these words in responsive listening, rather than reactive listening, sounds

easy, but in the practice of daily lives, is not so easy. However, we simplified this practice in the way that we try to “just talk” (Light’s words) and “tell a lot of things” (Dripping’s words), even though we may not get an adequate response from parents. The intention of Light’s “just talk” yielded fruit in that he could forgive the indifferent attitude of his biological father without any conditions. He said: “I have to phone him, tell him ‘I have forgiven’ and then ...towards EMINEN [a popular singer group] laying the devil.” We have enough space in our hearts to offer forgiveness. It is our understanding of forgiveness that to forgive is to lend a room in our hearts to the recipient. It does not matter whether or not the recipient responds to the forgiver. Also, Light tried to approach his stepfather, whom he described in a metaphor of powerful water, to build intimacy through his remark, “just talk”.

In the case of Dripping, via her method of talking, “tell[ing] a lot of things”, her stepfather could get closer to her. Through it, she made him feel warmly towards her and they enjoy spending time with each other. Thanks to her method “tell[ing] a lot of things”, her stepfather could adjust to his parental role in helping her and advising her.

- *Second method of facilitating responsive conversation: questioning*

Through the interviews with my co-researchers, I have fully experienced the value of questioning in conducting our responsive conversation. Questioning in itself carries across an attitude of responsive conversation. Questioning is heuristic in nature, for it enables us to find our own strengths and

possibilities, in my research experience. Thus, I would like to suggest “questioning, talking and listening” because questioning is very effective for teenagers to find their own ways and to see optimal ways. My co-researchers shared their experiences concerning my questioning interviews when we evaluated our project as a whole. Due to my questioning, they could reflect on what they told me in our conversation and they were even surprised in that they could see their strengths more discursively than they had initially thought possible.

Questioning is a form of responsive talking and listening that is not passive (Riikonen & Smith 1997:110), but active. Morgan (1999:203) clarifies that questions “are informed by particular ways of thinking”. In other words, questioning is an active thinking to open wide thinking. Kotzé *et al.* (2002:146) thinks of questionings as actions that generate new possibilities. In continual questioning, according to Riikonen and Smith (1997:111), “the listener is offering alternative descriptions to the other person, and each alternative description will imply different ways of relating to their experience, different possible stances and different ways of shaping their experience.”

Hence we suggest “questioning responsive talking” and “questioning responsive listening”. These require responsive listening rather than reactive listening, because the listener should be responsive. In questioning conversation, we experienced that the boundary between a researcher and the researched became vague, but that the collaborative relationship in the

research was more concrete. Through this practice, we could achieve more positive and preferred stories by our own answering. In a similar way, we believe that questioning conversation can be applicable to a stepchild-stepparent relationship and can help build intimacy. It may be more helpful for the upbringing of stepchildren than merely giving them advice in a one-sided way. In short, “unconditional talking” and “listening for” are an essential means of building step-relationships.

5.1.2 Second proposal for remarried families: an alternative concept of step-intimacy

The second proposal is the issue of intimate relationships between stepchildren and their parents. A proposal for an alternative view on the meaning of “a healthy intimacy” is that it is a relationship on the basis of the approval of each one’s differences⁶. In other words, to build intimacy does not mean only moving closer to each other, but rather, acknowledging differences from each other. An individual needs to retain his or her differences in the remarried family in order to establish greater intimacy with other family members who are aware of and acknowledge their own differences. In Patton and Childs’s (1988:51, 191) term, the word “difference” is alternatively used with a sense of individuation and self-identity in order for the relationship to be a healthy one.

Fisher and Strichker (1982:xi) summarize that there are two approaches, seeing intimacy as “self-disclosure” or “the production of an interaction’....Each one is

⁶ This idea came up with J. Müller when I consulted with him on 4 August 2005.

able to touch something meaningful in the other, whether at a conscious, behavioural level or an unconscious and inferential level”. Through “self-disclosure”, the “self differences” are revealed to be understood and “the production of an interaction” through this disclosure can be achieved as intimacy. The Latin term, *intimus* is intimacy, which refers to meaning “inner” or “inmost”. In a dictionary definition, intimacy is “inmost, most inward: essential...2. most private or personal...3, closely acquainted or associated; very familiar...4, resulting from careful study or investigation (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*).

In a narrative approach, a person’s differences (Müller’s word, “story”) including that person’s characteristics, experiences and events, are constructed with others’ differences (stories) (Müller 1999). Müller (1999:s.p.) explains the above notion with the good metaphor of a Russian doll. He says: “Each of us has a series of ‘little dolls’ within us...a person not only has ‘little dolls’ within him or her, but that simultaneously you are engaged in constructing the next ‘little dolls’...we are very aware that this is an ongoing process which is aimed at the future.”

In these references, to build a healthy intimacy with another person is not merely to get to be closer but, according to Sexton and Sexton (1982:1), to comprehend his or her inmost and inner reality by accessing each other in accordance with each other’s differences. Accordingly, maintaining each one’s differences can establish a healthy intimacy.

Establishing this kind of intimacy between members in the remarried family is a critical issue for them. As we shared earlier, the intimacy experienced with our biological parents and stepfathers was also a task of our remarried family life. We have striven to achieve it in various ways.

Dripping illustrated herself as a good example in her storytelling. She tried to be nice and polite to her biological father's wife, who has not yet lived with her, though she felt her stepmother's coldness towards her. Her being polite is a way of acknowledging the other's differences. Her being nice towards her stepmother is a method of building a healthy intimacy against coldness.

As far as she was concerned, with regard to her stepfather who is living with her, firstly, she built a healthy intimacy with him even before her mother married him. Secondly, she became like a little girl and talked a lot to him: "I just talked and talked...sitting on his leg, like a little girl. I mean teenagers don't do that but I did." Thirdly, she showed her heart to him with "chocolate to say happy father's day". The response to that from him was that "he started crying...he cried so much about me".

This healthy intimacy is significant for the development of a healthy personality (Sexton & Sexton 1982:12). Wilner (1982:24) states that intimacy is a mode of communication which infers a quality of being in which something is being conveyed. As we see in the case of Dripping, to build healthy intimacy with her stepfather, she facilitated not only responsive talking and listening but also

touch, gesture, action and writing. These are methods through which people share what is meaningful to them (Weingarten 1997:179).

In her case, by applying these methods, Dripping could create mutual sharing with her stepfather. In turn, this mutual sharing created a healthy intimacy. Weingarten (1997:180) points out that mothers (all parents) have to be able to let themselves share stories of who they really feel themselves to be, rather than just believe that being a good parent is created by being selfless and maintaining a position of authority in every situation. In other words, sharing stories without considering one's position in the family is critical for a genuine intimacy, as Dripping's stepfather did. This is at the heart of the matter of a healthy intimacy in step relationships, as well as maintaining each other's differences.

5.1.3 Third proposal for remarried families: personal growth

The last proposal is the matter of personal growth. While examining these unique experiences, we were not entirely overwhelmed by the aftermath of the broken-hearted situation and embarked on a journey towards new circumstances, in spite of the fact that each of us was somehow or other in turmoil. We have manipulated the broken-hearted situation towards our own personal growth.

My co-researcher Light's developmental story was this: "However, I am busy renovating my old house and building a new future house...I'm just looking at

my future instead of staying in the past...He[God] just umm...always confirms [to] me that He gives me talents and I must use them and He gave me a gift, and that I must use it". The other co-researcher, Dripping, testified: "I don't think I've ever really been in a bad situation, as a result of the divorce, ...I mean, it affects me, probably...but not so much...Pain [as a result of parental divorce] is good because pain is a form of love, because pain is a form of impetus for being mature.... It adds to experience...I don't think you should be 'hung up' on stuff that's happened to you and hold on to it because that makes you sad and depressed, but I think you should turn it into something beautiful and just say 'tough life'." We know that, according to Dripping, "we cannot change our parents [divorce] but we can change ourselves".

5.1.3.1 *Through pain*

Qualitative research has demonstrated that even though the divorce experience is a great cause of personal insecurity, it also provides a catalyst for personal growth (Schneller & Arditti 2004:1). Another research report on the sources of the strengths of adolescents shows that a primary source of personal growth comes from an experience of hardship (Steen *et al.* 2003:10). The formula that the divorce experience yields pain, which in turn causes a pattern of self-destruction, is subverted by Schneller and Arditti (2004:8), who argue that such a view is just a received meaning, a socially constructed interpretation. Dallos (1997:170) supports this view that feelings (including painful experiences) can be known as socially constructed and are bound up with the meta-narratives

and conventions of a culture which go through interpretive social processes. In other words, there is enough room for an alternative view of our experienced pain and hardship derived from divorce and new circumstances.

Briefly, when we create an alternative interpretation of a painful experience to turn it into “a form of love and an impetus for being mature” (Dripping), we can take advantage of it so as to grow towards “renovating my old house and building my new future house” (Light). One of our interviewees (one schoolteacher) was supportive of our view, saying that “the structure of the remarried family by nature gives opportunity to its children to cultivate more diversely their identities and personalities. Therein, they can cultivate their leadership and life survival skills because they have to enhance how to adapt to the two structures of their family”.

5.1.3.2 *Through maternal wisdom*

I do not want to simply continue a discussion on divorce, but it is indispensable to introduce how my co-researchers overcame this situation, because one of their purposes in sharing their stories is to help remarried family members. Although parental divorce has caused my co-researchers to undergo many painful experiences, in their contexts, their biological mothers have been the greatest role players for them to triumph over this pain. Their mothers were sometimes mentors, friends and conversational partners.

Light remembered that it was his mother who held the “tremendous side of sweetness in his life”. She has been always around him. Whenever he needed help, she was always there. His “mom’s being there” means his mother’s being a mentor who can give her opinion and wisdom to him. He said: “Yeah, let me say, my mom is bright” He likes talking with her when she is not busy: “...mom’s attention is very important for me because I need her opinion, umm...I don’t know in English... ‘wysheid’ [wisdom] .”

In the case of Dripping, her mother was her closest friend and regarded her as a co-decision maker. She shared the story: “...we sleep together....because [we] want to be together. Like friends...We enjoyed bath together...we could be just mass, no one cared, we were very casual, comfortable, knotty style...Well, she had dates but she wouldn’t get married if I didn’t like the person...she would introduce them to me, and ask me what I think about them.” From her case, we can draw the inspiration that we could not prevent our parents’ divorce, but we can participate in having a say about our parents’ remarriage, which would enable us to adjust to a new situation. Also, owing to this participation, we assume that our building intimacy with a new member of our family may be easy. Dripping’s case provides good evidence of this.

It is not necessary to firmly state that the mother’s role is the most important or that it is more significant than any other role in the family for the growth of children in a remarried family, because, from the narrative approach, every case should be contextually. In the case of my co-researchers, their mothers took

over the most significant role in the growth of their children. Some research confirms the importance of this, indicating that, compared to fathers, mothers tend to have better communication skills and feel more emotionally close to their children, and this greatly affects adolescents' self esteem (Berg 2003:84). A similar report illustrates that sole-custody mothers did not feel more burdened, but rather, experienced greater custody satisfaction, despite parenting fatigue (Arditti & Madden-Derdich 1997:42). According to my co-researchers, their mothers' efforts resulted in their children's personal growth.

In summary, in a narrative paradigm, the remarkable features of and emphasis on personal storytelling is crucial to an understanding of the storytellers' world and life experiences. Through storytelling, we can also highlight common themes which are relevant to other people's daily practices. We shared these themes not only to present our views and voices to our community, but also in order to help remarried family members.

We value unconditional talking and responsive listening as a means of good communication with a view to building intimacy and parent-child acceptance. Also, we want to advise adolescents in remarried families on their experiencing life in a remarried family and the heart-breaking situation of a divorce. Their pain is dependent upon how they internalize it, whether they allow it to destroy them or if they enable themselves to be matured through it. We triumph over it, thanks to the great efforts of our mothers. They have been mentors and friends, and even respected us as decision-makers for a great part of their lives. Their

effort, wisdom and attitude towards us should be considered as a maternal application in the life of remarried families. “There is no natural system in which they [remarried families] can grow” (Blow & Daniel 2002:96).

5.2 PROPOSAL FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON PASTORAL THEOLOGY FOR REMARRIED FAMILIES

True to a pastoral narrative paradigm, we proposed an alternative perspective of pastoral theology on remarried families and their children. A number of studies have accounted for issues raised in the lives of remarried families and their children. In general, their focus was mostly structural, psychological or quantitative data as analytical bases. To account for remarried families and their children, they have attempted to conceptualize or categorize the vivid life experiences of remarried family members. Because of their nature, these studies have failed to capture the practical wisdom (praxis) and local knowledge practised every day. A pastoral narrative account relies on active life stories such as those revealed during this research, since the told stories enable the audience to capture certain knowledge(s) of a palpable and convincing praxis.

5.2.1 Alternative perspective on remarried family households

As indicated earlier, in Chapters One and Three, a host of theorists and practitioners on the remarried family have conceptualized the family label or categorized it, using certain criteria, into certain forms. As a result, they found themselves in the impasse of “writing about ‘the families [remarried families]

with no name' or to be more accurate, the families with no widely agreed on name" (Ganong & Coleman 1994:1). Therefore, the first step to re-account for a remarried family household is, according to Müller (s.a. :100), that "we should stop applying special names to such post-divorce families", including remarried families. Instead of naming them, we, my co-researchers and I, want to present a contextual description of a remarried family household in referring to our two specific contexts, as follows.

- The current family is the family my co-researchers live with.
- The ex-family is my co-researchers' biological families who do not live with them now.
- The left/right, and front/back columns as a whole bolster the current family life.

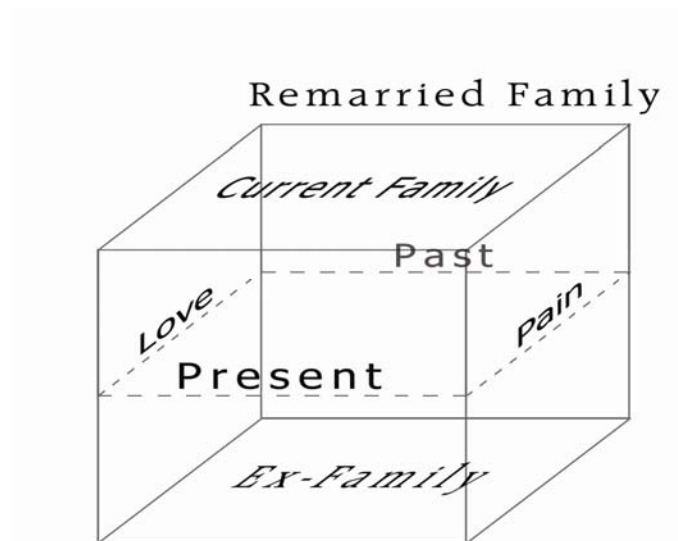


Figure 5.1: The co-researchers' households as presented in this research.

The daily lives of the current families of my co-researchers consist of the four columns which maintain the stories of ex-family and which make the families

stronger in that through them we, remarried families, have grown as we saw in Chapter Three. The present story and future story of our current families are healthily developing in keeping in touch with members of our ex-family in a positive manner. That means that the past story constructed with our ex-families and their present stories are crucial resources for developing the present and future story of our current families (Müller 1999).

For us, love and pain, and the present and the past, cannot be separated from constructing our healthy preferred future stories. The four elements serve as resources of our growth and of connecting us to two households, our current household and our ex-family household. The two households exist in the everyday lives of my co-researchers, visiting and revisiting them. In the case of Light, superficially, his ex-household has nothing to do with his current household in the present. Yet, in his memory, his ex-household still manifests itself and it is influential in the present and for his future story. In his memory, he is busy visiting and revisiting his ex-family household.

In conclusion, adolescents in a remarried family have two households, supported by the four columns of love, pain, the present and the past. They manipulate these columns to develop their future stories. In addition, the attempt to put a label on their current household circumstances is indeed unnecessary. The endeavour to name such households is semantics on the part of experts in the academic field, without any benefit to the family. Consequently, a pastoral theology must deal with the meaning of the existence of the

remarried family and how to care for this family.

5.2.2 A pastoral perspective on remarried families

As clearly stated in the Bible, remarriage is not strange in the community of Christian believers and cannot be excluded as a subject in and from the context of pastoral theology. Müller (2004a:s.p.) asserts, “Practical theology is only possible as contextual practical theology. Practical theology cannot function in general. It is always local, concrete and specific.” In this respect and for the purposes of this study, the context of pastoral theology, which is intimately connected with practical theology, is the story of Light and Dripping as members of a remarried family, who were once regarded as lost.

Often pastors and pastoral practitioners take action “only on fragmentary and even distorted perceptions of what the story contains” (Gerkin 1991:16) within their received religious context. In order to avoid the above phenomenon, the perspective of pastoral theology on remarried families should rest on a functional view and family life (Patton & Childs 1988:189), rather than a received religious context. Thus, the task of this study here should be, as Gerkin (1991:59) illuminates, that a pastoral caregiver has the responsibility to facilitate the maintenance and further development of the person’s spiritual or faith story and to facilitate the growth and creative development of particular life stories.

5.2.2.1 Supportive family

A supportive family enthusiastically implements “responsive conversation” to support its individuals’ differences in order for such intimacy to grow. In the light of pastoral theology, this study has to deal with the specific needs of human beings (Gerkin 1997:85) and that includes persons’ relationships (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:33). These needs can be supplemented by the supportive family’s adopting “responsive conversation”, “intimacy” built with differences, and “personal growth”.

Needless to say, members of a remarried family need a new relationship for life after facing heart-breaking situations. Some researchers have found that the main reasons of remarriage are financial security, help in raising children, a response to social pressure, a response to legal threats regarding the custody of children, relief from loneliness, the need for a regular sexual partner, pregnancy, the need to have someone to take care of, the need to be taken care of, and love, a desire for companionship, shared interests and liking the partner (Ganong & Coleman 1994:49). These reasons reveal how much a divorced person suffers from being solitary. An option for solving this human need is remarriage. Indeed, the sum total of remarriage, like all unions, is the issue of choice.

Accordingly, for the foremost reason of God’s consent to remarriage, the fulfilling of personal needs (Ellisen 1977: 71; Müller s.a.:109), marriage was envisioned and ordained by God to fulfil many personal needs of a spiritual, physical, psychological and social nature. People cannot be fulfilled in solitary

living and without a helper (Genesis 2:18). That does not mean that a couple is able to complete each other, but that they need each other to fulfil their needs through their gifts toward Christlikeness. A remarried family is a form of marriage which is supportive. Cornes (1993:289) believes that this type of marriage is recognized by God. In Him there are no “foolish” marriages. In this situation, care for the ordinary lives of church members is an essential part of church ministry (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:33).

Indeed, the Bible allows remarriage that is chosen and whose life is dependent on its members' choices, one which requires responsibility in such circumstances to establish the body of Christ. Consequently, the care of the pastoral theology has to be supportive and socially constructive by promoting reciprocal interaction between the pastoral carer and the receiver (Sevenhuijsen 1998:147).

5.2.2.2 *As an institution containing children*

Of all of those victimized by the turmoil surrounding divorce, the foremost vulnerable members in the family are unquestionably the children. A remarried family as a supportive family can be an alternative primary institution for children who have lost the first family institution (Cornes 1993:316; Gerkin 1997: 202). In terms of the fulfilling of family needs, the harmful impact of a marriage breakup is broader than the couple itself. Particularly the children of divorced parents who are often quite innocent suffer from a lack of the appropriate institutional support of their parents. The effects of such a disaster infuse the

child's life in one way or another. In order to raise children according to God's will (Deuteronomy 6, Ezra 7: 25, 1 Timothy 4: 11), God charges parents to take on their educational mandate in a household.

Arditti and Madden-Derdich (1997:41) report that, in general, childcare from either a (step-) father and a (step-) mother is more effective and instructive than from a single parent. Andrews et al. (2004:616) found that effective upbringing of children depends on the (step-) father's co-operation in parenting decisions and taking responsibility for financial support. Also, the above research reports that children who experience regular religious activities through their parents' involvement with them have fewer social problems (Andrews et al. 2004: 617).

In the cases of my co-researchers, they felt that their current family life was more helpful for them to grow in terms of their personality and spirituality. Although Light was a little bit sceptical, he also thought that if he was not "happy with him [stepfather], but [he was better than nothing...He sent me to a proper school [his current school], he is helping me to develop my talents like guitar lessons and dancing and stuff." Dripping's satisfaction about her stepfather was this: "He really helps me with a lot of stuff. He gives me good advice 'cause he's very wise."

In summary, biblically and theologically, the foremost principle is the concept of "the relationship of brother and sister in Christ" prior to the relationship of a marriage. That means that marriage types are not a decisive issue to be a

member of the body of Christ. To build the body of Christ, pastoral care encourages remarried family members to be supportive of one another and instructive in the upbringing of children. Also, fulfilling personal needs and family needs is considered a basic biblical and pastoral practice principle. A remarried family as an institution has definite spiritual effects. The last principle implemented in this study is the fact that remarriage constitutes a new life which is regarded in the same light as the first married life. It is not to be lived with guilt and regrets, but to be accepted as a new experience in the grace of God.

Conclusively, I adopt the therapist, Carter's words, in the sense that for a pastoral carer the first underlying principle is focusing on the new life with the new family, and not to "making up for" past mistakes or complaints. That does not mean that the focus is on undoing, redoing or ignoring the past, but that the focus is on having experiences in their family (Carter & McGoldrick 1999:425).

5.2.3 Other grains: "heart eyes", the law and remarried families, student files

5.2.3.1 Seeing the "step-relationship" through "heart eyes"

The negative connotations of the prefix "step-" have a long history. These connotations have intruded into our daily lives and our concept about step-relationships. Needless to say, my co-researchers and I are also somewhat caught up in these discourses.

Light's story, for instance, evidently showed the above phenomenon. He

described his stepfather as “dark”. His perception about him did not come from what his stepfather did to him but rather from how he compared his stepfather and his biological father. He said: “I’m not actually angry at him [stepfather], but angry at myself because I can’t really accept him because of my other father [biological father].” On the other hand, he reminded us of what his stepfather has done for him: “He sent me to a proper school [his current school]...he was helping us like, he is helping me to develop my talents like guitar lessons and dancing and stuff...He’s still kind to her [his mother]...He doesn’t have to do [it] but he does.”

- *A lens of heart eyes*

However, he finally took his negative preconception of the prefix “step-” away from his perception. Instead, we got to an alternative lens to see step-parenthood as it is. We call the alternative lens “heart eyes”. To re-account for the step-relationship we would wear “heart eyes”. Incidentally, this concept appeared when I talked with his older brother, as described in Chapter Three. His brother said: “He [Light] has to see our father [stepfather] through his heart towards us, not in terms of blood...but he [stepfather] has done a lot for him.” The key point is “through [his] heart”. I tried to understand its meaning and to interpret it with my co-researchers as we sat together and discussed it. As a result, we got to a conclusion that “through...heart” means “through deed(s) in love”.

Hill’s (2002:467) book introduces an interesting movement concerning the prefix

‘step-’ as stigmatizing taking place in France:

In all these ways, stepmothers today face a situation so different from the past that perhaps we shouldn't even use the same term. In fact, the French have dropped the old, pejorative term for stepmother, *marâtre*, and replaced it with *belle-mère*, literally 'fine' or 'beautiful' mother, a term which also means 'mother-in-law'. French scholars of the family lament the absence of a prefix, such as 'step,' with which to precisely label relationships brought about by remarriage. But the *belles-mères* of France may be fortunate that, unlike their Anglo-American counterparts, they no longer have to bear the stigma of an outmoded archaic term.

Briefly, we suggest that to see the step relationship, we have a lens which is not coloured by biases or cultural myths. That is a lens of "heart eyes". We think that the step-relational identity is dependent upon how a stepfamily member sees other members in the family and what lens she or he has. We argue that a lens of "blood eyes" which contrasts with a lens of "heart eyes" is narrower than a lens of "heart eyes". The latter is far wider than the former. Therefore, we believe that this lens can enable us to see our stepparents as *belle*-parents.

5.2.3.2 *The law and remarried families*

- *The law*

It is a reality that even though remarried parents have no enforceable responsibilities to their new stepchildren in the strict sense, many of them willingly shoulder children as their responsibility and yet they cannot find

their identity as parents in the law. Under the law, typically, in a remarried family, the stepparent is a person married to the parent of an illegitimate child. She or he is acknowledged solely by the legal act of marriage and not by the terms of any bond to the stepchildren (Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman 1987:217). Thus, an unmarried person who has taken on a long-term parental role, such as a cohabiter, is not recognized as a stepparent by the law. By contrast, people married to non-custodial parents are classified as stepparents although they have no relationship with the children.

A. C. Jones (2003: 232) summarizes his assumption on the harmful effects on children in the remarried family:

...this lack of legal recognition may undermine role expectations of the stepparent, who in turn may abdicate family responsibilities. Similar to students from whom teachers expect little and who give up trying, some stepparents also may give up, perceiving their role to be superfluous...The 'silence' of the law on step relationships puts children at risk in two major ways. The first is economic because there are few legal safeguards to ensure that children who reside with stepparents are adequately supported during the marriage...The second is emotional because current laws afford few means of protecting and nurturing attachment bonds that may develop between stepparents and children.

In the case of Light, let me repeat his saying again: "He sent me to a proper

school [his current school]...he was helping us like...helping me to develop my talents like guitar lessons and dancing...He doesn't have to do [it] but he does." Although his stepfather has offered great care for him, he may not maintain any legal status and authority even consent legally to a school activity. This case is evidenced by the stepfather of Dripping. She commented: "His wife died...She left her two children who were not his own. He got so attached to them ...[but] the boys' father took the boys away from him. And then he was totally broken. For two years...he was so depressed."

We could not conclude in our conversations what it is that would be better for children if the above case would happen to us. Yet, one thing we agreed was that our stepparents have to have a legal right in the upbringing of children, at least when living together; such as consent on a school report card, any emergency, and for discipline. The law of South Africa should support stepparental roles and regulate them in some way as some other countries do.

5.2.3.3 The personal file at the school

We assumed that the school's personal student file could affect teachers and school personnel's opinions and preconceptions on their students coming from a remarried family or a divorced family. They can see the demographics through the personal student file which, at the beginning of the first school term, has to be filled in, including the section regarding family status. My co-researchers were not overly concerned about whether their family status would be uncovered or not, but some students, rather than students living in a biological

family, may not want this information to be revealed. Moreover, it can create prejudice in school life. Furthermore, to fill in the column on family status has no real advantage for either the students or the school personnel. We discussed this matter with the teachers I interviewed. In the discussion, we insisted that it might create prejudice and we asked for what purposes the school asks for and what benefits accrue to the school from this information. They had not thought of it in that way, but the teachers did not have reasonable answers either. Thus, we insist that revealing family status is not necessary for caring for students in the school. The marital status of parents should be disregarded.

5.3 CLOSING RESEARCH

5.3.1 Evaluation from all the participants

On 23 May 2005 my co-researchers and I sat together and evaluated our research as a whole. To do this we did not have any norm, and conversed freely. I am going to introduce their evaluation in point form.

5.3.1.1 Dripping

- Having a casual conversation over lunch at McDonalds before starting the interview created a comfortable environment.
- Our goals were clearly influential on both other adolescents and us in rethinking our family and life.
- Questionings helped me (Dripping) understand myself in that I could see

other facets of my life and characters.

- Imaginative work has made me (Dripping) think of a lot of different options about my life.
- Making my (Dripping) imagery name for the future was odd at first, because I did not fully understand what the interviewer was talking about. Also, I felt this work seemed to fix myself in a cage; I (Dripping) always accentuated this, saying “I am who I am”.
- Group meetings were interesting in that many perspectives on me appeared which yielded positive results.

5.3.1.2 *Light*

- In a word, the interview was cool and gave me (Light) a special experience.
- Offering me (Light) a ride to go home after the interview helped my parents to feel I was safe.
- The interview place (a quiet house) was good for us to feel cozy.
- It stimulated me (Light) to live fully in my life today and not in the past.
- Questioning helped me (Light) “open a lot of doors”.
- Making my (Light) imagery name was the most difficult one because naming on an invisible world (future) was technically difficult.

5.3.1.3 *My assistant*

- I felt that Dripping was implosive whereas Light was explosive.
- Dripping seemed to like to be listened to. As interviewing went by, she

engaged in animated conversation.

- I felt that Light marred the atmosphere of the group meetings by making jokes, trying to draw attention from other peers that I as a member of the group meeting did not agree with.
- The lack of explanation about the purpose of making imagery names degraded a part of this research.
- I benefited from understanding adolescents in a more in-depth way.

5.3.2 The researcher's remarks

In this evaluation, I gained mostly positive responses, but the process of creating imagery names was marked as lacking an adequate explanation.

5.3.2.1 Goal achievement

We satisfied my goal as set out at the outset of this project and my co-researchers' goals were fully achieved. The first evidence of goal achievement was the testimony of my co-researchers' satisfaction about their participation. Secondly, their parents were impressed when they participated in our party which was organized at the completion of our journey as a celebration of a metaphor of a new journey for the future. During the party they shared their impressions with one another and hugged their stepchildren. Lastly, I was inspired by all the participants. As a result, my conversation style with my own children was challenged and changed.

5.3.2.2 *The matter of contribution*

Individually, each of us internalized what we have experienced through our conversations and developed it towards our open-ended future. We shared our local knowledge with people around us in a manner that showed we wanted to help them to flourish in life, rather than that we initially believed that our constructed knowledge would be representative of adolescents in remarried families and applicable to everyone. Politically, we have a voice in our community: we are presented prejudicially in the personal student file in the column on family status, and there is the custodial issue in re-marital law in South Africa.

5.3.2.3 *The matter of subjective integrity*

First of all, this research dealt with subjective experiences derived from two characters, Light and Dripping, rather than objectives or data collection. In order to interpret personal narratives, I have been true to social constructionism, as presented in Chapters Four and Five. In doing so, I have looked at questions on social discourses, including the findings of existing research on the lives of remarried families. Also, I got feedback from the storytellers as to how I had listened to their stories. In conducting conversations with my co-researchers, I followed a metaphor of Fiction Writing research as the methodological process: the ABDCE process as introduced in Chapter Three. In our conversations, the heart of pastoral care emerged. Without the joy of empathy with my co-researchers, my genuine understanding would not have been possible, as

Müller (1999) said. A pastoral imaginative approach has effectively worked, for instance, in interpreting told stories, in colouring one's self and in naming one's future stories.

In the light of a pastoral narrative research perspective, a participatory and collaborative stance was adopted in this research. Thus, in practice, I enthusiastically participated in the storytelling of my co-researchers during our conversations. For instance, I shared my story with Light when he was troubled by his biological father and I empathized with his story. Also, I was sincerely concerned, in an interview, about his smoking habit (refer to the transcript in Chapter Three).

With regard to the issue of disempowerment from “my position” in research, I firstly, practised a “not-knowing” stance. Also, I endeavoured to reduce the age gap between my co-researchers and me in ways such as having casual conversations over lunch before every meeting and using the words “my little friend” in my research letter. Another way was that I asked about their goals in this research, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and discussed our programmes. For instance, Dripping suggested the party, and so we organized one. The last way of disempowerment of the “expert view” was to facilitate evaluation from the view of the researched.

5.3.3 Research experience

5.3.3.1 *Critical self-reflection*

I thought during the journey of this research that critical self-reflection was vital. The first reason was that this research had to do with the subjective experiences of my co-researchers. I might distort their told stories to create impressive words in the name of academic competence. Especially, when I was about to work on my thesis, this temptation struck me. I experienced a growing movement in the research field, knowing that research is a matter of ethical issues rather than of mere “scientific” concern. To overcome the temptation of using of “academese”, I had to have a dialogue with myself all the time. I had to remind myself to maintain pastoral ethics and pray for it. I had to be alert moment by moment and not fall into that temptation. Also, I always submitted my transcript to my reflection team to have it criticized.

5.3.3.2 *Cultural blindness*

As I mentioned earlier, I had to change my topic. Before I heard of the unsuccessful result of the principal’s effort, I thought unrelentingly that white South African remarried families had a more open mindset about their stories than Koreans did. Therefore, I assumed that I would be able to find my interviewees easily among white congregations, but I was imposing my cultural ignorance on them. In the process of finding South African participants for my project, I experienced that in both the cases of the white and that of the Korean remarried families I tried to contact, they have been unwilling to share their stories.

Another cultural experience was the co-researchers' attitude towards me. When I lived in North America for years, I was never called "sir" by children, they just called me by my name. I felt that the culture of my co-researchers compelled them to show respect to an adult, which is similar to behaviour in Korea. Therefore, I did not feel odd, but I felt that it was hard to reduce the gap between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Lastly, there was a great difference regarding the main motivation of the co-researchers' parents' remarriages, which was not culturally compared between South Africa and Korea in this research. This was not really examined but simply used as a multiplicity of voices based on my experience of Korean culture and through my own experience concerning my remarriage. I felt that in terms of Korean decorum, the main concern was the "upbringing of children" in the family. In the case of the parents of my co-researchers, the main reason for remarriage was "togetherness with a partner for life", which might make a more stable basis for remarried family life than that of Korean remarriages.

5.3.3.3 *Barriers*

As expected, the language barrier between my co-researchers and me was not really a major concern for this research. They did not treat me as a "funny man" who is yellow (Korean like the Chinese actor-comedian, Jackie Chan) and whose spoken English was "very funny". The above fact was enough to let my co-researchers feel odd. However, I felt that our mood was one of mutual

respect. The biggest barrier I struggled with was making appointments with my co-researchers and members of my reflection team, organizing my reflection group and conducting this group. I realized that it was a reality that the priorities of their daily activity were very different from mine. Secondly, as to organizing a reflection team, my social interaction was very narrow, so, to find members and to ask for their participation was a source of great stress for me as a foreigner in South Africa. However, my beloved friends, the two teachers I interviewed, and my supervisor, have encouraged and given me great help.

5.3.3.4 *Pastoral compassion*

During the interviews I faced two main difficulties. First of all, I struggled to draw the line between being a researcher and being a pastor while I was listening to them, especially Light. I knew that if I had too much empathy with him, this research might be affected. Thus, I asked the advice of my supervisor, Julian Müller. His advice is set out below:

It also seems as if you are struggling to keep your role as therapist and role as researcher apart. The fact that you are open about it is a sign of subjective integrity and I would urge you to also write openly about this confusion in your mind when you report on the research in your thesis. To be drawn into a story to such an extent that you have empathy and find yourself crying is not a bad thing for a researcher. With the narrative approach we do not believe in objective distance as if that gives you a better position as researcher. On the contrary, we believe

that you have to be subjective, but always work towards subjective integrity, instead of subjectivism. In the latter case you are subjective, but unaware of it, while in the case of subjective integrity there is an awareness of one's own subjectivity. Let this awareness and honesty become the strength of this approach, because it enables you to, at least, reflect on your own subjectivity.

True to his advice I always had a dialogue with myself about whether I was overly subjective or too objective. Yet, with regard to Light and our interviewing process, I got frustrated at first, since, according to the narrative research perspective, my research should be beneficial to the researched, but in my view that did not occur in Light's daily life. I did not know whether or not I was aware of his inner movement. The reason I was frustrated was his lack of participation in this project. He seemed not to be interested in it. For instance, he did not often keep our appointments. Thus, I asked him several times whether he wanted to carry on our interviews. However, he then always replied that he wanted to continue. In fact, he contributed plenty to this research by sharing his story and presenting his ideas.

Secondly, I confused the line between confidentiality and sharing with what I listened to the storytellers. One day I had a chat with Light's older brother concerning the relationship his brother and his stepfather. He required me to meet his parents and to tell the story I had heard from his brother. He thought that first his parents had the right to hear his brother's story and my meeting to

tell the story would help their family if I shared. My supervisor recommended me to continue listening to my co-researcher. However, his parents received the outcomes of our research at the party. Additionally, although I received a consent form from the parents and sufficiently explained what we would do, parental wariness prevailed over curiosity. One day Dripping asked me to call her mother and report to her what we did, because she was wary of what things I asked her daughter. Therefore, a member of my reflection team, who is also the principal of her school, called all the parents and reported.

5.3.3.5 *Personal growth*

This research is also of great importance for my family and me in that it has influenced me to bring a change into my parenting style. My parenting style was not very different from that of the parents of my co-researchers. However, during the interview, I realized that questioning was an effective tool to converse with adolescents. As a result of my changed style, my son, who was involved in our group meeting as well, dramatically changed from his rebellion in his school and at home. He willingly approached me, having a conversation with both his stepmother and me. His change, in turn, brought comfort into our family.

5.4 CLOSING STORIES

We want to close our storytelling. We hope that you as a reader can find some inspiration and wisdom through our storytelling, and are thus able to help yourself to enhance your life. As you have already read our future stories, let us

close with these, each of which is the beginning of a next story in the future.

5.4.1 Light for the future

“I am Light because it brings not fear; in the dark people are scared, but light shines people’s way. Therefore, I am Light, I will shine for people.

I am not kept back any longer and go forth in dark and bright.

I am so sure of what I have to do.”

5.4.2 Dripping for the future

“I want to expand my horizons, limits and cross my borders.

Step out of my comfort zone and drip into a large dam.

I want to go into a field of art and graphic stuff.

The paint drips.

My mind drips with creativity.

The water drips and flows from the same source [herself: I am who I am] to the same source; my thoughts, ideas drip and flow from the same source (my mind: who I am) to the same source (my physical doing: what I am doing).”

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In spite of the fact that remarried families are a growing family pattern in the world, various issues regarding remarried families have been shallowly treated

in traditional research. As a result, the unstructured interview method, which is true to a pastoral narrative approach, was adopted in this study. However, even this method could not guarantee that it included all the members' voices in this study.

One crucial voice concerning the upbringing of adolescents in a remarried family is that of a stepparent living with them. Although this study indirectly heard the stories of the stepfathers of the co-researchers, that was not enough to see how the stepparents bring up their stepchildren in terms of daily family routine. Also, it is necessary to listen to a biological parent and stepparent who do not live with the children. What do they experience with children in parenting and how do they help children to grow? How do they cope without precluding, or being precluded from, other opinions on the upbringing of children which may be different from that of parents living with the children? All the above questions are of critical significance in the growth of the adolescents in remarried families.

As one co-researcher in this research implies, one remarkable role in the growth of adolescents in a Christian remarried family is the family of Christian faith. If a researcher attempts to contribute to the life of the children and their families, she or he should include the voices of their community of Christian faith.

For this study, the pastoral narrative theory provided not only the basic ethics but also the methodology for conducting the research, and understanding and

interpreting the told stories of the researched. It is strongly suggested to future researchers in this field that they utilize the narrative approach, so as to adequately understand the lives of members of remarried families.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent forms

1. Consent form for co-researchers' parents

Dear parents

My greeting to you. I hope you are all doing well and trust that God is working and leading in your lives. In order to listen to adolescents in a remarried family, your daughter/son would like to help me when I asked him/her whether he/she would be willing to participate in my project. Thus, I am sending a consent form to you. Please sign it. If you have any question and if you want to stop him/her participating, feel free to say that at any time.

The rights of the co-researchers

- All your information and stories will be protected.
- Whenever you want, you can withdraw from this project, without any harm to you.
- In each step of this project, your voices, ideas, and views will be considered and adopted so feel free to present your opinions, ideas and viewpoints.
- You have right to a copy of any document of this project in the process and a final draft at the end.

Information on the researcher

Name: Young Kim

Operation: A pastor of the Republic of Korean Presbyterian

A student for Ph.D of Practical Theology in Pretoria University

Tel: (012) 991-5134, cell: 072-188-0112

Email: kbunyoung@yahoo.co.kr

.....
I give consent to my child to participate voluntarily in Young Kim's project, subject to the protection of my child's confidentiality.

(Signature of participant)

(Parent)

(Date)

2. Consent form for participants (teachers)

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am greeting my best to you. I hope you are all doing well and trust that God is working and leading in your lives. In order to listen to adolescents in the remarried family, Your daughter/son would like to help me when I asked her whether she would be willing to participate in my project. Thus, I am sending a consent form to you. Please sign it. If you have any question and if you want to stop her participating, Feel free to say that whenever.

The right of the co-researchers

- All your information and stories will be to be protected.
- Whenever you want, you can withdraw yourself from this project without any harm to you.
- In each step of this project your voices, ideas, and views will be considered and adopted so be free to present your opinions, ideas and viewpoints.
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Name: Young Kim

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.....
I give consent to my child to participate voluntarily in Young Kim's project subject to the protection of my child's confidentiality.

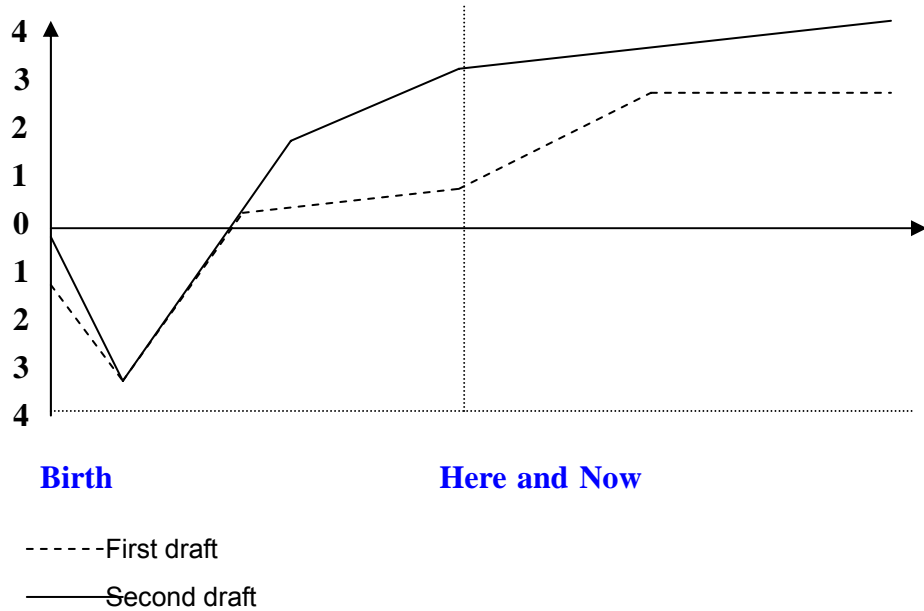
(Signature of participant)

(Parent)

(Date)

Appendix 2: Emotional cycle of life events

Light's Emotional Cycle of Life Events



Dripping's Emotional Cycle of Life Events

