A SOCIAL WORK INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSAL FACTORS OF RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS BETWEEN STEPPARENTS AND ADOLESCENT STEPCHILDREN

BY

MAMATŠI EDITH SEKHUKHUNE

MA (SW) PLAY THERAPY

In the Department of Social Work

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR: DR. C.E. PRINSLOO

JANUARY 2004

ACKNOWLEGDEMENTS

I thank God for his grace in helping me to finish this research project. I would also like to thank the following people:

- Dr C.E. Prinsloo for her expert knowledge, patience, time and motivation, which encouraged me in endeavor.

- The adolescent stepchildren for their willingness to participate in this study.

- The parents of the adolescent stepchildren that participated in project , for their permission to conduct the interview,

- Mr. M.J Rampedi for the reading and editing of my work.

- My children Princess Mahlogonolo and Mamogale-Charity for their support, sacrifice, love and understanding.

SUMMARY

A SOCIAL WORK INVESTIGATING THE CASUAL FACTORS OF RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS BETWEEN STEPPARENTS AND ADOLESCENT STEPCHILDREN

By

MAMATŠI EDITH SEKHUKHUNE

Supervisor: Dr C.E. Prinsloo

               Department of Social Work

               University of Pretoria

Degree: **MA (SW) Play Therapy**

_____

The objective of this study was to explore the problems existing in stepfamilies, which affect the relationship between stepparents and adolescent children and their effects on the different systems within these families.

A qualitative research approach was followed. Three focus groups were conducted with the respondents. These focus groups were exploring the way things are regarding the adolescent stepchildren's appraisal of the problems of having a stepparent, relating to him/her; their available coping resources; and their coping responses in adjusting to the situation.

The respondents reported limited family interaction. It was also discovered that they were not freely expressing their feelings, especially about their stepparents. Their respondents, their biological parents and their stepparents have received limited professional assistance regarding their to-be-established stepfamilies.

The outcomes of this study have shown that the stepfamily members need more professional support in terms of coping with the family situation. The stepfamily members need guidance and assistance with the coping responses with the stressors of having a stepfamily.

Further research is recommended to describe the stepparents and biological parent's relationship to their adolescent stepchildren, in order to provide comparative data for the present study.

A study can also be conducted to determine further needs of stepfamilies, especially before remarriage, with regards to professional support services, for instance pre-marital counseling, legal issues pertaining to inheritance, wills, maintenance of stepchildren, adoption and custody of stepchildren.

OPSOMMING

'N MAATSKAPLIKEWERKONDERSOEK NA DIE VEROORSAKENDE FAKTORE IN VERHOUDINGSPROBLEME TUSSEN STIEFOUERS EN ADOLESSENTE STIEFKINDERS

deur

MAMATŠI EDITH SEKHUKHUNE

Supervisor: Dr C.E. Prinsloo

           Departement Maatskaplike Werk

           Universiteit van Pretoria

Graad: **MA (MW) Spelterapie**

_____

OPSOMMING

Die doel van die studie was om die probleme wat in stiefgesinne bestaan en die verhouding tussen stiefouers en adolessente stiefkinders asook die invloed hiervan op die verskillende sisteme in hierdie gesinne te ondersoek.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is gevolg. Drie fokusgroepe is met die respondente gehou. Die doel van fokusgroepe was die verkenning van die adolessente stiefkind se probleme rakende die stiefouer, die houding teenoor hom/haar, die beskikbare hulpmiddels wat aangewend word om die verhouding te hanteer en aan te pas by die situasie.

Die proefpersone het familie-interaksie gerapporteer en kon nie vrylik hulle emosies teenoor hulle stiefouers uitdruk nie. Die proefpersone, hulle biologiese ouers en stiefouers het min professionele hulp ontvang radende hulle toekomstige stieffamillies.

Die resultate van die studie het getoon dat lede van die stieffamilie meer professionele ondersteuning ten opsigte van hantering van die gesinsituasie benodig. Die lede benodig verder ook leiding in ondersteuning ten opsigte van die hanteringsmeganismes en stresfaktore rakende die stieffamilie.

Verder navorsing word aanbeveel om die stiefouers en biologiese ouers se verhouding met hulle adolessente stiefkinders te beskryf en sodoende vergelykende data vir die huidige studie te verskaf.

'n Verdere studie kan ook uitgevoer word om behoeftes van stieffamilies aan te spreek, veral voor hertroue met betrekking tot professionele ondersteuningsdieste, bevoorbeeld voorhuwelikse berading, wetlike aspekte rakende erflatings, testamente, onderhoud vir stiefkinders, aanneming en toesig oor stiefkinders.

KEY CONCEPTS

Stepparent

Stepmother

Stepfather

Stepsiblings

Stepfamily

Stepchild

Adolescent

Adolescent-stepchild

Remarriage

Relationship problems

KERNBEGRIPPE

Stiefouer

Stiefmoeder

Stiefvader

Stiefbroer / suster

Stiefgesin

Stiefkind

Jeug

Adolessente-stiefkind

Hertroue

Verhoudingsprobleme

LIST OF REFERENCES

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Permission letters

APPENDIX B: Letter of consent

APPENDIX C: List of questions

APPENDIX D: Respondents Pseudonyms (Focus Groups)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL

ORIENTATION   PAGE

CHAPTER 2:   ADOLESCENCE

CHAPTER 3:   REMARRIAGE AND STEPFAMILIES

CHAPTER 4:   EMPERICAL STUDY

CHAPTER 5:   SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Remarriage life and especially stepfamily life can become very complicated and difficult process because of the network of expanded relationships. The network includes the ex-spouses, grandparents, and relatives of the ex-spouses and stepsiblings. The remarried family can be defined as a family created by the marriage of two partners, one or both of who had been previously married and then divorced or widowed.

To further understand the above explanation Lauer and Lauer (1991:496) mention that remarried and stepfamilies there may or may not be children comprise the remarried family system. The definition also allows for the inclusion of gay couples and their children from prior marriage.

To ensure further explanation Gladding (1995:250) provides the following definition for step parenting as a term that applies to a number of different family forms. These families include those created as the result of divorce, death, abandonment, unwed pregnancy and adoption.

Lauer and Lauer (1991:471) define an adolescent as someone who is neither a child nor an adult. An adolescent is one who is expected to be giving up the role of the but who is not yet to have integrated the tasks required to assume the role of the adult. Biologically he/she is an adult but sociologically and psychologically he/she is maintained in a dependent position.

The stepfamily has the potential for helping people who have been bruised by losses to forge new relationships that will give each other the benefits of any good family that cares about all its members. Achieving this is not easy for biological families either, but

15

people who care enough to face the challenges before them can succeed (Papalia & Olds, 1986:426).

Social workers, as part of the professional service within the social welfare field, would thus strive to address this issue. There is a need to know the exact causes for the relationship problems, to work out the problem and come up with a positive solution for the betterment of the relationships within the stepfamilies.

1.2   MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT

As a social worker in a welfare agency and often confronted with many cases of children with inexplicable or uncontrollable behavior, couples for divorce counseling, marital disputes and family disruptions, it came as a challenge to unveil, understand and evaluate the casual factors of problems between stepparents and stepchildren, the rearing of the children and the effect of all these on marriages and families. Members of the church were also presented with problems in this regard and church leaders confirmed that a solution was needed. The church leaders were very open and enthusiastic when approached with the possibility to research within the context of the specific communion.

The researcher's experience is that:
- Remarried couples end up divorcing or separating
- Stepchildren run away from home
- Stepchildren become uncontrollable and commit criminal activities
- Stepchildren threaten to commit suicide or end up succeeding with their intended decisions

The research strives to explore the reason for disputes. Social workers, psychologists and therapists in the social welfare field should device means of addressing these problems within a global context and jointly deal with these problems in a sustainable manner.

According to McGoldrick & Carter (1999:417) more than 50 percent of remarriages end in divorce, assuming that the information about the very complex process of blending families is not well known or well managed. (Compare Benokraitis, 1996:490). The complexity of remarriage and new extended relationship needs to be addressed to prevent further damage to the individuals involved in the newly formed relationships. These can only be done with sufficient knowledge about the causes of difficulties in these relationships.

1.3   PROBLEM FORMULATION

Adolescents react negatively to the very terms 'stepparent' and 'stepchild' (Benokraitis, 1996: 490 and McGoldrick & Cartrer, 1999: 417). Stepparents are both less obligated and less likely than either biological or adoptive parents to be supportive in various situations requiring parent-child interactions.

According to Gladding (19956:265) a satisfying union is different for a single woman who marries a divorced man who has custody of his children versus those for a marriage between two divorced people without children. It is also different for the marriage between two divorced parents each of who has custody of their own children. The less complicated will be divorced parents without children, as they will start a family just like a never married couple.

Regarding the above statement the researcher disagrees with the idea that divorced parents both or either one with custody of his/her children will never bring out the solution or improvement of the problem. According to Benokraitis (1996:490) research focuses on the problem in these families and the potential strengths in the families are often ignored. Understanding the causes of the relationship problems should lead to intervention strategies to overcome the difficulties.

Social workers in welfare agencies are confronted with relationship problems between stepparents and adolescence and are thus expected to render services in conjunction with

other stakeholders in addressing the problem. Church leaders involved in pastoral care observe and experience problems in this regard and have to attend to it.

According to Lauer & Lauer (1991:482) a statement that the presence of stepchildren is a destabilising factor in remarriage is mentioned. It is further stated that stepfathers are likely to engage in less play, private talks and projects with children than are biological fathers. Thus children enter the stepfamily with pessimism and the expectation of problems. McGoldrick & Carter (1999:420) mention that family integration in remarried families is harder when there are adolescents. The sense of belonging takes very long, often more than five years, when there are adolescents involved. The incidence of violence and abuse is also vastly greater in stepfamilies than in traditional families.

The researchers own opinion is that stepfamilies will exist indefinitely mostly because of the escalating teenage pregnancies and the high rate of divorce. These put a lot of stress on both the stepparents and children regarding their adjustment into the new family. Legal issues are also not available for stepchildren. There are no laws to stepparent-stepchild relationships as there are no binding rules over one another; even stepparent can legally adopt the stepchild

The following aspects were thus identified as problem areas:
- Discipline of stepchildren by either a stepfather/stepmother is often as this leads to conflict.
- Stepparents and adolescent stepchildren experience relationship problems and these problems need to be addressed to prevent family disruptions.
- Stepparents see stepchildren as competitors, troublemakers and opportunists.

The study aimed at obtaining the personal views and perceptions of adolescent stepchildren concerning the causes of the relationship problems between them and their stepparents.

1.4   AIM AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDY

1.4.1 Aim

The aim for the study was to explore the casual factors of the relationship problems between stepparents and adolescent stepchildren.

1.4.2   Objectives

- To explore the problems in stepfamilies and their effects on the different systems within these families, with special reference to the adolescent child.
- By means of an empirical study with the adolescent children as respondents to determine the casual factors to the relationship problems within the families.
- By means of conclusions and recommendations to provide a base for intervention programs to address these problems.

1.5   RESEARCH QUESTION

According to De Vos (1998:115-116) research always commences with one or more questions or hypotheses. Questions are posed about the nature of real situation and are more relevant if the researcher works qualitatively. Due to the fact that this study was exploratory in nature and a qualitative research was followed, a research question was formulated according to the statement that relationship problems often exist between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents. An increase in the understanding, knowledge and objective of stepfamilies would stimulate a positive attitude towards adolescent stepchildren. Prevention of conflict and problems can be done through better understanding of the casual factors.

The following research question was formulated:

What are the causal factors for the relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren?

1.6   RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach was of qualitative nature because this type of research interprets data by giving meaning, translating them and making them understandable.

Schurink (1998:420) defines qualitative research as an approach employed to describe reality from the points of views of participants in the system studied, it is based on the assumption that actors in a system can tell the researcher / social worker about what they are doing and why.

Qualitative researchers rely heavily on participant observation methods and purposeful observation, even though they have minimal effect on the people and events being studied. The research topic was discussed within the context of social problems as a qualitative process and also warranted for qualitative investigation.

1.7   TYPE OF RESEARCH

The research utilised applied research. Hendrick, Bickman & Rog (1993:2) mention that applied research uses scientific methodology to information aimed at clarifying or confronting an immediate societal problem.

The purpose of applied research is to improve understanding of specific problems, with the intention to contribute to the solution of the problem. Casual factors are determined and variables studied with the hope of getting societal results.

The study focuses mainly on the problems affecting the adolescents in stepfamilies such as the feeling of physical, emotional and financial abandonment (Gladding, 1999:259). Family therapy is the most important aspect in the practice of social work in order to help family members work together as a team, foster inner resources, support groups and financial counseling services.

The researcher thus explored the communication patterns, discipline of stepchildren, legal issues regarding stepparent-stepchildren and financial management as possible causes for existing relationship problems.

1.8   RESEARCH DESIGN

The importance of a research design was the fact that it provides a means by which a researcher was able to adhere to the specific method in the quest for reliable knowledge (Guy, Bickman & Allen, 1987:19). Without a research design it becomes easier for bias to get in the way of the search for knowledge. The research design, therefore, is employed to keep from "straight off the straight and narrow".

The research design specifies the following:

In deciding which research design to use, several factors must be considered. According to Guy, *et al* (1987:95). These factors include:

- Who will we study?
- When will we study?
- Where will we study?
- Why will we study them?
- What is the most crucial criterion for fudging the adequacy of the design?

A research design ensures that the knowledge can be replicated. The knowledge that findings of a study can be checked and eve rechecked is an essential characteristic. The purpose of this research was thus to explore the problems existing in stepfamilies which affect the relationship between stepparents and stepchildren and therefore the exploratory design with uncovering the way things are:

The following four reasons are provided as motivation for an exploratory study to be undertaken:

- To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding
- To test the feasibility of understanding in a more compressive study

- To develop methods to be used in a more comprehensive study

- To formulate a problem for more precise investigation or for developing hypothesis

1.9   RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND STRATEGY

The researcher collected data through a focus group as a data method. Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel (1998:314) define a focus group as a number of individuals between whom a distinguishable pattern of interaction exists. The interviewing s explained as a task that signifies the presence of a trained moderator who could skillfully facilitate the discussion that takes place between all the members in the group to elicit information on the desired topic.

A focus group is also explained by Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel (1998:314) as a term that implies the discussion takes place in the group and will be limited to the specific theme under investigation. A focus group interview can be described as a purposive discussion of a specific type or related topics individuals with a similar background and common interests.

The following procedures were executed:

- Permission was requested from the Parish Priest Anglican Church, Sekhukhuneland, Limpopo Province.

- Purposive sampling was used as a method of selecting participants and situations that were most likely to provide information-rich data.

- The sample group interviews and questions were used to gather data information.

1.10   PILOT STUDY

1.10.1 Literature study

Smith (1995:22) states that: "…*the main purpose of a literature review is to enable the researcher to plan a project in a meaningful and scientifically valid manner relevant to the research theme*". Literature study also contributes towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the identified problem, background knowledge of the phenomenon under review in order to conduct a meaningful piece of research.

The representative for the department of Social Work for the Academic Information Service has done a search of the concept "stepfamilies and stepchildren". Although the concepts of remarriage and stepfamilies have been researched in depth, no research studies on the proposed research topic in the specific cultural group were found. This led to the choice of the exploratory research design as the design for the proposed study.

1.10.2 Consultation with experts

Discussion and information sharing with appropriate experts in the field of family and child welfare service and marriage and family counselors and other related organisations or agencies was done as part of the pilot study. The following were consulted:

- Mr S. Ramakgopa – Clinical psychologist at St Rita's Hospital. Children who are to appear in criminal courts are referred to him for psychometric tests and report writing.
- Mr T.Mashile – Chief Magistrate and Commissioner of Child Welfare – Nebo Magistrate Court. He attends to all children's cases and gives a final decision.
- Social Workers – Nebo district welfare offices – Southern Region – Sekhukhune District.
  a. Mrs M. Kganyago
  b. Mr. T. Sepoloane
  c. Ms E. Makobe

1.10.3 Overview of the feasibility of the study

Reasons provided by Ruben & Babbie (1993:80) regarding the feasibility of the study are the following:

- Time required to complete the study would be until December 2003. By then the investigations and report compilation were completed.
- The fiscal costs/expected costs were very minimal. That was only for typing and binding of the dissertation
- Stepfamilies and stepchildren were respondents and the sample was drawn from the members of the congregation.
- Confidentiality regarding the identities of the research subjects was highly respected, and whatever issues discussed were also confidential.
- Permission was requested from the Parish Priest – Anglican Church, for the research study.

1.10.4 Testing of the questions/measuring instrument

A pilot study involves testing the program on a small group being a sample rather than the entire population. Kinlinger (1986:111) also mentions that to ensure proper sampling, representatives should be the chief criterion. This means that the characteristics of the sample are similar to those of the population from which it is selected.

In this study one group of adolescents from the Anglican Church – Sekhukhuneland Parish was selected as a focus group. The questions formulated for utilisation in the focus group were asked in this group to evaluate the value thereof.

1.11   DESCRIPTION OF THE UNIVERSE, THE SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHODS

The term population refers to a specified aggregation of study elements from which a sample is actually selected (Rubin & Babbie, 1993:224). The population in this respect

would be all adolescents in stepfamilies being stepchildren in the Sekhukhuneland area, Limpopo Province. Adolescents were chosen, as it would not be feasible to study all the stepchildren in stepfamilies. Grinnell (1981:240) defines a sample as a small portion of the total set of objects, events, or persons that together comprise the subjects of the study. For further explanation in order to make inferences about the total population itself from which it was chosen.

The sample consisted of twenty-four adolescents-stepchildren from the congregation of the Anglican Church Sekhukhuneland Parish. Three focus groups consisting of eight members each were formed. Purposive sampling was chosen as a sampling technique because it is he least complex, most basic and best-known form of a non-probability sampling methods in social research.

Purposive sampling is also called judgement sampling. The researcher used her own judgement about which respondents to choose and only those who met purpose of the study (Bailey, 1978:94). Alternatively, the researcher selected a subgroup that, on the basis of available information, would be judged to be representative of the total population. The one advantage of purposive sampling was that the researcher would use her research skills to choose the respondents. Explaining this sampling method further the research chose as follows:

- Twenty-four adolescent- stepchildren
- Aged between 14 to 21 years
- Both sexes
- Experiencing relationship problems in their stepfamilies
- Members of the Anglican Church Sekhukhuneland Parish

To proceed with the discussion, Bailey (1978:82) defines a sample as a subset or portion of the total population. In the same token, Polansky (1977:75) defines sample as when some rather than all subjects of the population are selected for study. To illustrate the above, instead of selecting all adolescents having stepfamily-relationship problems, only those who had their problems between 2000-2003 were selected. A sample therefore may

be any group of subjects selected from the population of adolescents experiencing step-parental problems, but including less than all the subjects.

1.12   ETHICAL ISSUES

No formal research activities were started without the approval of the Ethical Committee. Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. The questions formulated for utilisation in recommendations.

According to Strydom (1998:23-35) the following ethical guidelines were followed and incorporated in this study as follows:

- **Harm to experimental subjects**

No harm to experimental subjects was done. Respondents had the opportunity to talk about their situation in the stepfamily. If any discomfort were experienced, either the church officials (priests) and/or the social workers in the specific area would follow it up. Everything possible was done to ensure that skilled professionals would follow up subjects and their families if and when sensitive issues were raised that led to renewed problems.

- **Informed consent**

Respondents were informed of the exact nature of the proposed research. The possible positive outcome of the results, namely the opportunity to develop programs to address the causes of relationship problems was emphasised. All respondents signed the letter of informed consent (attached as appendix B). In the case of respondents under the age of 18 years, the parent/guardian was asked to give consent. All the respondents knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The necessary consent to conduct the research in the Anglican Church Sekhukhuneland Parish was obtained.

- **Deception of subjects**

Respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and no deception was inflicted. No information was withheld o incorrect information given.

- **Violation of privacy**

All information regarding the respondents was handled confidentially. No other individual had access to the data obtained through the focus groups. The data was written anonymously in the dissertation. Whenever follow-up intervention with the rest of the family was needed, the consent of respondents would be obtained.

- **Competence of the researcher**

The researcher is a qualified social worker at the council for social work and qualified in conducting research. The theoretical content of the MA (SW) Play therapy course has been completed.

1.13   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.13.1 Stepfamily

A stepfamily is a household in which there is an adult couple and at least one of the partners has a child from a previous marriage (Benokraitis, 1996:488)

Stepfamilies are not considered as "normal" families, expectations and relationship are more ambiguous and complex and children are members of two households and experience problems regarding guideline and schedules (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996:419).

Step parenting is also defined as a number of different family forms, as a result of divorce, death, abandonment, unwed pregnancy and adoption (Gladding, 1995:250).

A stepfamily is thus formed when two people get married for the second/third time to and includes a child or children from either one or both partner's previous relationship/s.

1.13.2 Adolescent

Papalia and Olds (1986:310) mention that adolescents are children in the span of years between childhood and adulthood. This span begins at about age twelve and ends in the late teens or early twenties. Adolescence begins in biology and ends up in culture.

According to Piaget (1972:326) adolescents are in the cognitive stage of formal operations or abstract thought. To ensure understanding Erik Erikson (1968:341) describes adolescents as people who experience a crisis of finding out "who I really am".

The researchers own point of view when defining an adolescent with his/her behavior is that the adolescent stage begins at about 12 till 20 years of age and focuses on the forming of an own identity. Their behavior in relation to the stepparent relationship is problematic because of the establishment of adult identity, the development of the sense of self, as well as erratic and unpredictable behavior resulting from their consideration of own feelings and beliefs. Adolescents can rather loose their parent's relationship to that of own peers for emotional support. The relationship with their stepparents is always difficult to be established of all the factors mentioned above.

1.14   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The problem and limitations, which were identified in this study, are as follows:
- Little information was found on adolescent stepchildren in Social Work Literature and most literature was only on stepchildren not adolescents specifically.
- It was also difficult to find literature that was applicable to the black South African context of stepparenting. Numerous amounts of international literature was found but South African literature on adolescent and stepparenting is limited.

- Only twenty-four adolescent children were used as a focus group and it was a limited number considering the number of adolescent stepchildren in communities.

- The interpretation of the empirical findings became difficult and took longer period because of the researcher's uncertainty as to how to analyse the information.

- The researcher wants to specify that there was a shortcoming of cultural aspects in the research process. It is important to emphasise that the acceptance/assimilation of stepchildren varies from culture to culture. For the purpose of this study culture did not play a significant role requirements for a mini-dissertation of the Department of Social Work: University of Pretoria. It could not be included even though only black adolescent stepchildren formed the focus group.

1.15   CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1 consists of the general introduction with regards to the investigation. The following important aspects receive attention; general introduction, motivational for the choice of study, problem formulation, sampling and aim of the study. Question formulation, research methodology, pilot study and definitions of main concepts with regard to the study are also discussed.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature study investigating the adolescence stage, the nature of adolescence, adolescent development, identity formation and adolescent stepchildren.

Chapter 3 focuses on remarriage and stepfamilies. The nature of remarriage, the nature of the stepfamily, characteristics of stepfamilies, adolescent child's relationship with stepparents and other stepfamily members and their aggressive behavior, adjustment and discipline of the adolescent child in the stepfamily.

Chapter 4 discusses the empirical details and findings of the study.

Chapter 5 focuses on the conclusion and recommendations concerning the study.

CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENCE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Having surveyed relevant literature, the following issues were found to be critical to the discussion of the nature of adolescence and the development tasks of the phase. The main question normally asked when one enters the phase of adolescence is "Who am I?" The theme of the question is the search for identity, being the awareness of own abilities, beliefs, attitudes and history that make an individual unique. This question first emerges in infancy as babies learn that they are separate from their mothers, and then separate from the other people and objects in their environment. It again continues to accompany developments as children learn the boundaries of self, end much of their egocentric thinking and develop their personalities (Thom in Louw 1991:377)

Adolescence is considered an ideal stage for the unfolding of the drama of the quest for selfhood (Adams, Montemayor and Gullota, 1996:145). The physical, cognitive and social/emotional start to converge and the body assumes the proportions of adulthood. The ability to think abstractly and to see the world differently, to also look critically at the past, present and the future also emerges. The drive towards social and emotional maturity begins by developing an identity with many different sectors – a sexual identity, a vocational identity and an ideological identity.

The main focus in the following chapter will be on an adolescent child separating from the family, forming an own identity and his/her relationship with significant others.

2.2   NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE

According to Sprinthall and Collins in Lauer and Lauer (1995:25), G. Stanley Hall was the first to position the period of 'adolescence'. Influenced by Darwin's theory of

evolution, he saw his period as a stage of development. He felt it was important for society to focus on adolescence. He saw it as a period of "storm and stress", but believed that the adolescent could work through this and emerge as a better human being. The view of Hall that adolescence is a unique stage of growth led to further theoretical development of this unstudied period of development.

Theorists, Crockett and Crouter (1995:152) state that adolescence is a period of development, an age span, a discrete developmental stage, a social cultural phenomenon and a way of life or a state of mind. Adolescence is seen primarily as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. They are the children between the stages of twelve or the late teens or early twenties.

Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991:45) mention that the cultural anthropological approach suggests that there is a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. The period is short and includes an initiation or rite of passage ceremony. An adolescent is one who is expected to be giving up the role of the child but who is not yet expected to have integrated the tasks required to assume the role of the adult. Biologically he or she is an adult, but sociologically and psychologically he or she is maintained in a dependent condition. Further mention is the recognition of adolescence as a discrete period of development that came about as a result of cultural and societal conditions. Adolescence looks both outside themselves, at people and events, and inside themselves at their feelings and beliefs. Their behavior often becomes erratic and unpredictable. Thus it is suggested that adolescence as a developmental phase is a cultural construct.

There were rites of passage in non-industrialised societies to signal change from a lower status in a society to a higher status. Adolescence is also considered to be a difficult and stressful time where in a short period of time the individual is expected to act as a dominant adult having taught the opposite during childhood. This links to Kurt Lewin's description of the adolescents is an attempt to define themselves so that they no longer feel as if they exist on the margin of childhood and margin of adulthood.

According to Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996:150) an adolescent can be described as being in the genital stage of mature adult sexuality. This stage is biologically determined and occurs when sexual urges are no longer repressed as during latency. Intellectualisation and asceticism are factors whereby adolescents look both outside themselves, at people and events, and inside themselves at their feelings and beliefs. Their behavior becomes erratic and unpredictable.

In a further description of adolescence biological perspective, (Adams, Montemayor and Gullota 1996:105) agree that the period of adolescence now extends over a large number of years. They divide the period into three stages. The first covers early adolescence (10-14 years of age), which they suggest is a time of profound physical social change, as well as of increasing social interaction with members of the opposite e sex. There is an increase in hormone activity owing to the stimulation of androgens and estrogens. This is coupled with a growth spurt, which leaves the adolescent feeling ungainly and embarrassed. The middle stage of adolescence (15-17 years of age) is seen as a period of delayed entry into adulthood, which may occur because of tertiary studies. Elliot and Feldman (1990:2004) suggest that adolescence is a distinct developmental stage, and that it is maintained through compulsory education, child labour laws and a separate juvenile justice system.

2.3   ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

2.3.1   THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

This section will focus on the physical, social and psychosexual development that occurs during adolescence, as well as the role of peers and parents in adolescent development.

A psychological output will be detailed. As children grow up they present a realisation of the "self" that develops into an inner-self, which develops when the adolescent stage begin. A psychological self begins to emerge that continues to change during adolescence

(Adams, Montemayor and Gullota, 1996:152). Adolescents begin to put forth a psychological description of them. This is done because they develop a more self-reflective ability that allows them to turn inwards and see their own private attributes. It puts a lot of pressure on all areas of development during the stage. Identity developments is considered a major development phase. According to Crockett and Silbereisen (2000:98) self-description in adolescence represent abstractions of the self. With the development of formal operational thought, adolescents need to be able to see accurately how others perceive them.

The phase of adolescence is viewed as a time of storm and stress, marked by vacillating contradictory emotions (Louw, van Ede and Louw, 1998:381). The researcher's own point of view when defining adolescence is that it begins at about age twelve till about twenty years of age and focuses on the forming of an own identity. Their behaviour in relation to the relationship with others is problematic because of the establishment of adult identity development, the sense of self, erratic and unpredictable behaviour because of their consideration of own feelings and beliefs. Adolescence can rather loose their parent's relationship to that of own peer for emotional support.

Ganong and Coleman (1994:92) detail the adolescence developmental stage as an authority stage, which is discovered when a child is able to say 'No' because of the built-in biological stand and rejects matters imposed. The second is the interpretative stage whereby a child is able to define good and bad parenting and may also reject the world interpreted to him or her. This stage is discovered during the school age period, which is called the latency period. The third and last one is the interdependent stage, which begins before puberty. Parent's views are rejected and the adolescents, even though immature, want to be treated as adults because they seek independence.

2.3.2 PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE

The physical changes that the individual experiences at the start of adolescence visibly mark the start of a change or transition in status and is mainly linked to the physiological changes of the stage.

The changes are described as seeing flat-chested little girls' development to full-grown young women. Scrawny little boys become broad-shouldered mustached young men. These changes are also described as pubescence and puberty. Pubescence is described as the stage of physiological growth marked by the maturation of reproductive functions and the primary sex organs. Pubescence is measured to last for about two years and ends in puberty, the point of which an individual is sexually mature and able to reproduce (Louw, van Ede and Louw, 1998:385)

Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996:158) further identifies three transitions the adolescent goes through namely:

- The physical transformation of puberty: Adolescents become sexually mature. Fell reproductive capacity is reached and the desire to engage in sexual activity increases.
- Adolescents gradually assume more adult rights and responsibilities, and come to be treated as "grown-ups" by others and therefore finally attain social maturity.
- The third stage concerns adolescence sense of identity. Identity is based in part on the reaction of others and undergoes changes that parallel the physical social transitions.

To further explain these stages, developmentalists have indicated the existence of what is known as a secular trend, whereby an individual reaches adult height and sexual maturity earlier than they used to. The explanation provided is higher standards of living, healthier well-nourished and well-cared for children, and earlier maturing and bigger growth. Opposite to these factors are the children in less developed countries reach puberty later and girls even start menstruation at the ages of 15 to 18 years of age.

Another trend mentioned is the adolescence growth spurt, whereby a sharp increase in height and weight occurs in girls of nine to fourteen years and boys at ages ten to sixteen years. At the end of this a young person reaches sexual maturity. Menarche, being the most notable and obviously physiological and skeletal developments. Boys start to experience sperms in their urine. Girls develop breasts. This includes the broadening of the shoulders in boys, voice changes, skin changes and the growth of body hair in both sexes. These changes influence self-concepts and personalities.

Louw, van Ede and Louw (1998:391) also agree with these notions by further explaining that this trend is also known as the "secular trend" with changes in ecological, environmental, family, health and nutritional factors. This encourages sexual behaviours at an earlier age then before. They also suggest that the more liberal attitudes of today's adolescents as well as the increasing influence of the mass media are the result of rapid social change. Mass media is more liberal and open about issues such as abortion, rape, extra-marital intercourse, and pre-marital intercourse, homosexuality, birth control and education.

According to Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996: 159) parents often underestimate the importance of their children having a partner, overestimate their children's physical attractiveness to others whilst being unwilling to stop seeing their children as innocent pre-sexual beings. It is further mentioned that basic attitudes and knowledge about sex are acquired from peers and their approval is highly desirable.

Adolescents have the developmental task to form a sexual identity. This task is not an easy one due to peer influence and post-modem trends of free choices. Parental guidance and monitoring are necessary.

2.3.3   SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENTS IN ADOLESCENCE

2.3.3.1 Aspects that influence social and personal development

The theoretical perspective on adolescence and the adolescent rebellion, the relationship with parents and peers, the search for identity and lastly the adolescent strength, being getting to know oneself on the threshold of love and life's work and participation in the broader society, will be discussed extensively.

The influence of social and personality developmental in adolescence is characterised by many factors playing a major role during this stage, like the cultural influences, family structures, and socio-economic factors. The way a culture handles the physical changes of adolescence determines the nature of the transition and how some adolescents handle the stage. Some cultures are more influential because of urbanisation, industrialisation and greater geographical mobility in Western Societies that cause the shrinkage of the extended family to the nuclear family formation. The nuclear families are geographically isolated from their relatives since they live in cities, towns and rural districts. This results in lack of supportive roles from and relatives.

Parents often find themselves confused by conflicting advice from other parents and from articles in the media. Parents fail to bring up their own children the way they were treated as adolescents. Adolescents are thus going through their developmental tasks without a clear frame of reference provided by their parents. To counteract these negative factors, good social and personality development of an adolescent is determined not by fixed norms, customs and role prescriptions but rather by the friendly relationships they have built up in communicating with their parents (Louw, van Ede and Louw, 1998:416).

Further studies conducted revealed that most adolescents are not deeply disturbed and that they are going through the transition smoothly, handling it with varying degrees of grace and ease. One aspect of support during the transition is their growing involvement

with other young people (Crockett and Sillbereisen, 2000:100). The National Institute of Mental Health states, while adolescence can be a trying period for both the people who are going through it and the people who are living with it, it need not be a battleground. Both parents and young people make special efforts to understand each other.

In addressing the relationship between adolescents and others and also the development of a personal identity, Krantz (1994: 76) and Sprinthall and Collins (1995:20) explain that in development two spheres or stages are being experienced namely the personal sphere, where the adolescent will commit to ideas and philosophies and social sphere which is in relation to others. These ideas will be fully detailed when addressing the adolescent's separation from family and forming an own identity.

2.3.3.2   Separating from family

As described in the previous context, one of the developmental tasks of an adolescent is to move out or separate from family. According to Crockett and Silbereisen (2000:170) an adolescent assume more independence, decision-making authority and freedom to move in and out of the family system. Zinn and Eitzen (1993:391) are also of the same opinion that amongst the developing an individual identity. Spending time with friends away from home and arguing over parental restrictions are ways of safely testing the turbid waters of adulthood.

In order to expand more fully on these ideas, Louw, van Ede and Louw (1998:430) explain that adolescents need to separate from the family, give up the childhood identification of little boy or girl and establish an individual identity. Separation individuation is normal and healthy, but it is often painful as parents feel that they and their values are being rejected. Research also indicates that parent-adolescent conflict generally pertains to daily routing events rather than key value issues. Collins and Russell (1991: 372) point out that the conflict does not seem to be too much, although parents and adolescents report more or it.

Amberts (1995:231) shares the same sentiment and points that the rejection is temporary, partial or superficial as teenage values are closer to those of their parents than is commonly believed. Parents also report that conflict between them and adolescents involve indulgence in violence, drugs usage, sexual activity, unplanned pregnancies as well as emotional and learning problems. In addition the recent unfavorable employment situation of young adults often forces a prolonged dependency on parents, well beyond the wishes of both young and parents.

The absence of discussions of topics related to sex and drugs occur which lead to arguments and fights and parents are slightly angered or disappointed and frustrated. Another explanation provided by Demo (2000:115) is that parents and adolescents spend very little time together, often not more than one hour per day of direct interaction. Also that there may be a wide variety of situations that adolescents experience and parents never know about, thus reducing the potential of conflict. Adolescence try to carry on with as much of their lives as possible without their parents' knowledge because most parents are employed and some parents even work very long hours.

Louw (1991:131) and Noller, *et al* (1994:235) agree that adolescents experience less conflict with their fathers than with their mothers partly because interact more with them concerning the basics of their daily lives. The household division of labour based on gender roles places mothers at a disadvantage over fathers in this respect. However, the indication is that adolescents are also closer to their mothers than to their fathers.

Conger (1991:446), Carter and McGoldrick (1999:415) agree that parent-adolescent conflict has more negative results in families that are less warm and supportive, unlike in families with an establishment pattern of warm and supportive interactions. Gecas and Seff (1990:943) point out that adolescence may indeed be a time of storm and stress in modern times and also the most financially demanding period for parents. Adolescents who are part-time employed spend less quality time with their parents and this leads to low parental control. The money earned may be spent on unnecessary items, such as drugs and alcohol and end up affecting their school grades negatively.

To summarize this developmental task of adolescence, Rossi and Rossi (1990:272) point out that some fifty years ago there was no television, but for now medium is considered to be a prime agent of socialization. In contrast religion was the most powerful influence for all-religious groups and social classes. Aspects such as politeness, obedience, and conformity were part of child-rearing practices by parents but have since been overtaken by peers and school.

Gecas and Seff (1990:23) agree that television may influence adolescent values and affect their self-esteem as they compare themselves to their idols, which are rich, attractive, popular and physically well developed while remaining slim. The childhood dynamics by families, especially by parents are no more valued. The peer group and the media have the biggest influence on adolescents in modern times.

Moving out of separating from family should be considered as normal and healthy even though painful, frustrating and disappointing for parents. An adolescent's desire to form own identity is considered risky by parents because some end up indulging in drugs, alcohol and premature sex activities, unplanned pregnancies, emotional and learning problems. Regardless of all these warm and supportive family interactions can reduce the negative results which parents are worried about.

2.3.3.3   Forming identity

Erik Erikson, psychoanalyst and the founder of the only major theory of normal human development and also on how society influences the developing personality (Theory of psychosocial development), is considered a valuable source (Carter and McGoldrick, 1999: 9). Erikson points out that the fifth stage of psychosocial crisis involves identity versus role confusion and the important task during this stage is the search for identity.

To further elaborate on this concept, Erikson in Louw (1991:305) points out that development takes place through eight stages, which are characterised by development

tasks and crises. Each of the stages has two opposing poles. The solution of each stage does not lie simply in choosing the positive pole but rather in a synthesis of two opposing poles. When the crisis of one stage has been successfully resolved, this facilitates the solution of the next crisis.

In Erikson's view (Louw, 1991:305) an important task of adolescence is the search for identity, the quest to find "who I really am". This quest is often not fully resolved in adolescence but is a theme that individuals return to for the rest of their lives.

Peer influence, often organized into cliques and crowds, plays a large part in adolescent development. Even with all the difficulties of establishing a personal, sexual, social and vocational identity, adolescence is typically an interesting, exciting and positive threshold to adulthood. From a psychological point of view, adolescence ends when the individual is reasonably certain of his identity, is emotional independent, has developed an own value system and is capable of establishing adult love relationships and friendship. The individual has to comply with certain cultural prescribed norms before he may be considered as having left adolescence and having entered adulthood (Louw: 1991:304). These norms differ from community to community and could include passing through a traditional initiation school, and physical maturation such as the occurrence of menstruation in girls and voice change and beard in boys.

Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996:162) described and adolescence as a child-adult who observes other people as models for his actions. As the children grow up their parents serve as role models, as do siblings, teachers and other individuals that are important to them. The process of learning is continuous, and current behaviour is a product of both past experiences and social environmental conditions.

According to Crockett and Silbereisen (2000: 165) the sense of identity, which develops during adolescence means that an adolescent has made a commitment to a vocational goal, and to a political ideology. They describe four statuses that the adolescent may encounter in achieving identity, namely:

- **Identity Foreclosure**

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

- **Identity Moratorium**

In this status, the adolescent engages in a variety of identity experiments, trying on different roles, beliefs and behaviours as part of the process of evolving a personally satisfying achievement status. Some adolescents drift into the status of identity diffusion.

- **Identity Diffusion**

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

- **Identity Achievement**

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

Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996: 164) also state that both identity achievement and identity foreclosure a resolution of the identity crisis constitute, while identity diffusion does not to a solution of the identity crisis lead. Identity moratorium is a trial and error status, from where the child may move to achievement or drift to identity diffusion.

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

The sudden changes in their bodies bewilder young people and make them question who they have been and who they are becoming. As teenagers continue to question and puzzle over their greatest preoccupation, their life's work, they are in danger of becoming confused. This confusion can show itself by the individual taking an excessively long time to settle on a career. Falling in love is seen as an attempt to define identity. By becoming intimate with other and sharing thoughts and feelings, the adolescent offers up his or her own identity, sees it reflected in the loved one, and is better able to clarify the self.

According to Erikson in Louw (1991:306) an adolescent needs to solve the crisis of this stage by developing a sense of identity, otherwise role confusion will be experienced. The sense of identity consists of three elements, namely the individuals certainly about his social and personal identity. In order to solve this identity crisis, the adolescent is likely to experiment with various possibilities, which could include smoking and drinking, sexual intercourse, and stealing. The way in which the child has support influences these experimentations.

There are gender differences in the forming of an identity in adolescence. Sigmund Freud, founder of the psychosexual theory, explains some male and females differences with the statement, " Biological is destiny". Some psychologists have added to this notion that "Socialization is destiny". Whatever reason provided, the conclusion is that there are differences between sexes in the struggle to define identity. It was also discovered that women define themselves on their responsibilities, and their ability to care for others as well as themselves. They achieve identity less through competitive striving and more through co-operative effort (Louw, 1991:386).

Adams, Montemayor and Gullota (1996:167) point out that stability of identity is so important for women that its just as adoptive for them to achieve this identity early in life without too much effort on their own part as it is for them to struggle to forge their own identity. They attribute the findings to society's pressure on women to carry on

43

social values. Women do not wait to develop intimacy until after they have achieved identity because for them identity and intimacy develop together.

Part of the differences in male and female patterns may be due to different parental treatment of the sexes, since several studies have found different child-rearing patterns to be associated with different identity statuses. During adolescence the parent-child relationship undergoes a major change as young people accelerate the drive to become individuals.

The next chapter will address the adolescent child's interaction and relationship within a stepfamily especially with stepfamily members such as stepparents, stepsiblings, and step grandparents.

2.4   SUMMARY

2.4.1   Nature of adolescence

The adolescence stage is considered as the start of a change of a change or transition in status between childhood and adulthood. It comprises of rapid physical growth, physiological changes, intellectual attainment of formal operations, and egocentrism manifestation. The stage starts at the age of twelve and ends at the age of twenty-one, but is considered a major transitional and problematic stage in human life.

2.4.2   Adolescent development

Physical, social and psychological and sexual development are the characteristics to mark adolescence development. The role of peers, parents, society and the media's influence put more effect on an adolescent's development as a sense of self-realisation, that develops into an inner-self and more self -reflectiveness is attained. The adolescents need to see how others perceive them. Adult identity development focuses on own feelings and beliefs and turn adolescents into an argumentative individual, finding fault

44

with authority figures, being self-conscious, self-centered and apparent hypocrisy, but finally they attain social maturity.

The physical development transforms an adolescent to become sexually mature, reach full reproductive capacity and the desire to engage in sexual activity is also increased. Intimate relationships with the opposite sex are observed.

2.4.3 Identity formation

An adolescent is viewed as psychologically matured when he is reasonably certain of his identity, is emotionally independent of his parents, has developed his own value system and is capable of establishing adult love relationships, to comply with culturally prescribed norms, and makes a commitment to a vocational goal, political and personal ideology. These are ways of safely testing the turbid waters of adulthood.

CHAPTER THREE

REMARRIAGE AND STEPFAMILIES

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In depth research studies on remarriage and stepfamilies were conducted but there appear to be insufficient information regarding the relationship problems between the stepfamily members especially adolescence stepchildren and their stepparents.

The present chapter looks at the characteristics of remarriage and stepfamilies. Remarriage as its own separate entity, considering the changes in roles and status entered into. Stepfamilies on its own comprising of several family members referred to ad the "Thin Kin", as characterised by factors such as living arrangements, relationship patterns, role definition and discipline.

Researchers such as Lauer and Lauer (1991:440); Lamanna and Riedman (1994: 606) and Gladding (1995: 249) report on important aspects pertaining to remarriage and stepfamilies. Although this study recognises the importance of their explanations, extensive emphasis will be on how common remarriage is, its factors, agreements and legal issues pertaining to the remarriage agreement.

Attention will be given to the definition of stepfamilies, the characteristics and the diversity and complexity of stepfamilies as well as intensive exploration into the matter experienced by those within the units.

3.2   REMARRIAGE

3.2.1   THE NATURE OF REMARRIAGE

Remarriage can be defined as a family created by marriage of two partners, one or both who had been previously married and then divorced or widowed (Gladding, 1995:250). These families include those created as the result of divorces, death, abandonment, unwed pregnancy, adoption and the practicing of polygamy. The high rate of the abovementioned factors contributes greatly to the remarriage life patterns. A further shortcoming of the literature on remarriage is that, even though there are research studies conducted describing and explaining the influential factors on remarriage, little efforts in writing a remarriage contract has been done.

Lack of knowledge might be a contributing factor. Lauer and Lauer (1991:496) provide more understanding and explanation namely that in a remarried family there may or may be children from prior marriage who visit or reside with them. The adult couple and the children comprise the remarried family system. This definition also allows for the inclusion of gay couples and their children from prior marriage.

3.2.2   FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO REMARRIAGE

Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991:14) state that in African communities men are allowed to enter into a polygamous marriage, which forms part of remarriage, only to prove their wealth or to increase their kinship. In most cases women get married to older men, with other wives, whereby children and the extended family members already exist. African women do not feel oppressed by arrangement regard it positively as part of their culture and also feel honoured to be married.

Another attempt to explain why women still prefer to be remarried is outlined by Juroe and Juroe (1993: 3):

- The substantial rise in the number of births occurring to unmarried mothers as a ratio of births to all mothers.

- The associated rise in the number of post-birth marriages among never married women who have born at least one child out-of-wedlock.

- The great increase in the proportion of divorce women with children, who remarry.

Remarriage in the African traditional system not only involves the husband and wife-to-be. It also involves their respective families, being their children and extended family members. Not only are the families involved, but also the ancestors of the respective families. Remarriage is also meant to cement the legal and ritual relationship and the legitimating of the marriage in a legal and traditional way (Kanyongo-Male and Oyango, 1991:14).

The researchers own opinion is that there are still some individuals, families and institutions such as churches that are against the remarriage. Women as compared to men are usually discouraged to enter into remarriage after the death of a spouse. Reason are fear of the ill treatment of children by the stepfather and of being disloyal to the in-laws because the children will then belong to their newly established family.

3.2.3   PREPARING FOR REMARRIAGE

A personal remarriage agreement is suggested for individuals intending to get remarried. According to Lamanna and Riedman (1994:604) the reasons for the statement are as follows:

- To address problems involved in remarriage
- To prepare themselves emotionally for the marriage and to work out past failures.
- To share negative feelings emotionally about one-self in order to feel secure and comfortable.
- To open up 'a can of worms' to air and resolve differences.
- To discuss expectations-not to have unrealistic expectations.

Legal issues pertaining to the remarriage agreement are the following:

- To decide on the inheritance regarding money and property whether to go to a spouse or children.

- Obligation of a stepfather to support stepchildren.

- Adoption of the children by their stepfather or step mother because the biological parent may resent the idea, whilst children above fourteen years give own consent.

- Custody of a stepchild in the event of death or divorce from the child's parent is very crucial.

Lamanna and Rieman, (1994:604) mention that the base of these agreements might have come with the pre-counseling of the couple not to have high expectations of what marriage would bring. The aim is to minimise conflicts and further members are involved. Juroe and Juroe (1993:9) explain that lack of education about stepfamily development is largely responsible for unresolved tension in remarriage.

3.2.4   THE SUCCESS OF STEPFAMILIES

Carter and McGoldrick (1999:417) also state that more than fifty percent of remarriages end in divorce assuming that the information about the very complex process of blending is not well known or well managed (Benokraitis, 1996:490). The complexity of remarriage and new extended relationships need to be addressed to prevent further damage to the individuals involved in the newly formed relationship. Ganong and Coleman (1994:92) also refer to complex stepfamilies as those whereby both stepparents have own stepchildren and mutual children.

The word stepfamily is considered a negative label and has affective attachments (Espinoza and Newman in Benokraitis, 1996:492). The stepfamily is referred to as blended, reconstituted, remarried, extended, second, merged, combined and reorganised. Both professionals and the general public use the labels but authors prefer to avoid using prefix "step" to avoid its negativity. According to Lamanna and Reidman (1994:21) many stepfamily members seek terms to describe themselves that are non-judgmental

even though there are not suitable substitutes for stepmother, stepson, and so on. Some families avid the prefix step and refer to each other as 'mother' and 'son', "Jim's sociological mother" or "Jim's fathers wife" or "Jim's other mother". Juroe and Juroe (1983:165) own suggestion for an accurate, non-prejorative word for stepmother is "mother-by-marriage".

Trying to avoid the "step" term is going to be difficult, lengthy and confusing because the stated substitutes are already having more negative affective attachments than the worse 'step'; stepfamilies want to be seen by others as 'normal families' and are advised to remain 'in the closet' in order to avoid being stereotyped by others and to prevent and consequent negative reactions (Lamanna and Riedmann, 1991:101).

Further probing for clearer understanding and explanations about the diversity and complexity of stepfamilies will be attended to in the next section.

3.3   THE NATURE OF THE STEPFAMILY

A stepfamily can be defined as a unit whereby people who have been bruised by losses try to forget new relationships that will give each other the benefits of any good family that cares about all its members. Achieving this aim is not easy for biological families either, but people who care enough to face challenges before them can succeed (Papalia and Olds: 426).

In view of the above definition, the researcher disagrees with the idea that divorced parents both or either one with custody of his/her children will never bring out the solution or improvement of the problem. According to Benokkraitis (1996: 490) research focuses on the problem in these families and the potential strengths in the families are often ignored. Understanding the causes of the relationship problems should lead to intervention strategies to overcome the difficulties. Stepfamilies are not considered as 'normal' families (Thompson and Rudolph, 1996:419). Expectations and relationships are more ambiguous and problems regarding guidelines and schedules are experienced.

To further explain the complexity and diversity on the formation of a stepfamily, Benokraitis (1996:488) is of the idea that a stepfamily is a household in which there is an adult couple and at least one of the partners has a child from a previous marriage. Thus, a stepfamily is formed when two peoples get married for the second/third time and includes a child or children from either one or both partners' previous relationship/s.

According to Lauer and Lauer (1991:482) the presence of stepchildren in remarriage is a destabilising factor. It is stated that stepfathers are likely to engage in less play, private talks and projects with children than are biological fathers. Thus children enter the stepfamily with pessimism and the expectations of problems. Carter and McGoldrick (1999:420) also mention that family integration in remarried families is harder when there are adolescents. The sense of belonging takes very long, often more than five years, when there are adolescents involved. The incidence of violence and abuse is also vastly in stepfamilies than in traditional families.

Stepfamilies are diverse and complex, considering the fact that remarriage with or without children from part of a stepfamily unit. The reason behind this is that there are extended family members for each partner who also are part of the "Thin Kin". A stepfamily, which includes children from either one of the partners or both, forms a much different or complicated unit.

Gladding (1995: 265) agrees that a satisfying union will only be attained whereby a woman marries a divorced man who has custody of his children versus those of a marriage between two divorced people without children. The union will be much different and complicated for the marriage between two divorced parents of who has custody of their own children. The less complicated will be divorced parents without children, as they will start a family like the never married couple.

The researchers own opinion is that stepfamilies will exist indefinitely mostly because of the escalating teenage pregnancies and the high rate of divorce. These put a lot of stress on both the stepparents and children regarding their adjustment into the new family. Legal issues are also not available for stepchildren. There are no laws to stepparents-

stepchild relationships as there are no binding rules over one another, even for a stepparent to legally adopt the stepchild (Department of Health and Welfare – Nebo Welfare Office case studies, 1995:2002).

According to Juroe and Juroe (1993:9), there is no 'instant love' between stepchildren and stepparents and in situations where a stepparent, particularly a stepmother, is taking a primary responsibility for stepchildren trouble can be expected. Although data do not support speculations that stepfamily life is afflicted by problems created by the presence of too many parents (Kurdek and Fine, 1991:44). Furthermore, there is also some preliminary evidence that when tension emerge over stepparenting issues, they are more common for children with stepmothers than for children with stepfathers. The presence of stepchildren may pose unusually difficult adjustments not normally found in first marriages. Ambert (1997:36) also agrees by saying that family members have not grown up together and a blood bond does not exist. Therefore, there may be a greater potential for household sexual activity or a more stressful reaction formation to the impulse.

Although stepfamilies are perceived as psoriatic, unstable, stressful and disruptive, according to Ganong and Coleman (1994:93), the relationship might be very close to very distant depending on the set-ups. Relationship problems will depend on whether the stepparents have own stepchildren and mutual children, whether a stepparent is residential or non-residential and also if the stepfamily formation is a result of divorce or death (Lamanna and Riedmann, 1994:597).

There also appears to be an indication that the diversity and complexity of the stepfamily is perpetuated by its characteristics. This indicates that the roles in family relationships may not only be pinpointed but there might be uncertainty as how they are introduced and defined. Relationship problems may bring out feelings of insecurity for those who intend entering the union.

3.4   CHARACTERISTICS OF STEPFAMILIES

The stepfamily has been under pressure as result of authors and researchers as a result of questions asked about its sustainability and being problems-free. Efforts by its members to make it proper, true and effective for others to also view it as being significant and valued is a great task. The researcher also found that the attitudes held by members towards the stepfamily's unification were complex.

3.4.1   STEPMOTHERS

3.4.1.1   SEMI RESIDENTIAL STEPMOTHERS OR PART-TIME RESIDENTIAL STEPMOTHERS

Ganong and Coleman (1994:92) define her as a stepmother staying with stepchildren half the week and another week they are with their biological mother. Also a residential stepmother is the one who stays with the stepchildren always, or who stays one stepchild and the other stepchild visits occasionally.

3.4.1.2   THE WEEKEND STEPMOTHER OR PART-TIME STEPMOTHER

The step mothering occurs only during weekend when the stepchildren visit as they are staying with their biological parent or custodian parent during the week. The weekend or part-time stepmother may try to establish a loving relationship with her husband's children only to be openly rejected, or she may feel left out by the father's ongoing relationship with his offspring (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:600)

3.4.1.3   THE STEPMOTHER TRAP

Another problem experienced by a stepmother as explained is when an individual feel that she has no control over her life. But trying to be perfect by fulfilling what one think

people expect can lead to failure and untold guilt, (Juroe and Juroe, 1993:29) puts it "because of frustration caused by death or divorce children become extremely defensive, suspicious, they often reject offers from those who may make the friendliest gestures to reach out to them.

Teens tend to be impatient, self-centered, argumentative, disruptive, suspicious and resentful towards a new parent and verbally critical of stepparents goals, values or personal characteristics (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:597). Another attempt to explain reasons for these behaviours by teens towards stepmothers is mentioned by Juroe and Juroe (1993:9) that sometime a stepmother is hostile toward her husband's children. Sometimes the children fear her as a competitor and become jealous of her relationship with their father. The stepmother does intrude and she does threaten children's fantasies of their natural parents reuniting. Juroe and Juroe (1993:3) feel that as a result of this a trap set for the stepmother. The children can be experts to test and test in order to see how far they can ago as well as to discover for themselves the level of acceptance and they may expect from the new parent.

Adding to this problem is the fact that high expectations are not only held by the world in general but by such groups as the church, relatives, welfare agencies and counselors. The stepparent is to act like the real parent (Juroe and Juroe, 1993:4). It is extremely difficult to prepare for the step parenting experience. Everyone was shown how to be fathers and mothers by parents, but no one was ever told how to be a stepparent. More people are left to sink or swim on their own, as more people will become stepparents (Satir in Juroe and Juroe, 1993:10). The National Survey of a Child Health (year unknown: 342) agreed and made a conclusion that stepmothers will always experience problems such as rejection, isolation and exclusion for the reasons that following divorce, men more then women tend towards looking for a 'replacement mother' to continue the work the biological mother did. This is set up for failure and frustration and stepmother will be living under stressful situations forever because they are standing on the ruin of someone else's life and paying for her mistakes.

3.4.1.4   STEPMOTHERS AS WICKED CREATURES

According to (Juroe and Juroe, 1993: 29) the core study of the problem in a stepfamily is that, there are too many people in a second marriage. In life in a biological family is like playing a game of chess, life in a stepfamily is like playing games of chess simultaneously. Juroe and Juroe 91993:9) support Maddox that a stepmother becomes the pivotal issue or battleground in the stepfamily, because the home seems always to revolve around the mother figure no matter who she may be. A stepmother can be a better cook, housekeeper and friend than the real mother. She may even believe she has much more to offer than the natural mother. But the key issue is not her ability bit what the children want. Another attempt to explain to explain the step-mothering role as a stressor is to describe the behaviour displayed by teens. They tend to be important, self-centered, argumentative, distrustful, suspicious and resentful towards new goals, values or personal characteristics (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:597). According to Lamanna and Riedman (1994:597) the following guidelines on how to avoid the wicked stepmother can be followed:

- Father to talk and discipline his daughter.
- Develop a bind with the stepdaughter, taking outings together.
- Forge a special relationship but not come between the daughter and natural parents.
- As the bond grows the stepmother may gradually and quite naturally acquire the status of an authority figure, which can also discipline.

The stepmother unlike thee stepfather may keep healthier communication that will enhance and encourage better relationship and responsibility within the stepfamily unit. In return the stepfather may from time to time keep realistic relationship that would create a respectful environment to achieve goals and objectives towards the stepfamily household.

3.4.2   STEPFATHERING

The step-fathering role is viewed as very problematic for young men who has been used to helping his mother with family responsibilities will possible resent another man around the house. Such an intrusion makes adaptation to change very difficult because it upsets the balance of the home (Juroe and Juroe, 1993: 6). However, the feeling of loss over the break-up of the original family unit are often increased when a stepparents enters the scene in that the security of togetherness is lost forever. A boy finds it very difficult to accept that his mother has a relationship with other than his own father and Visher and Visher (in Juroe and Juroe, 1993:216).

To further expand more fully on the issue, the role expected from a stepfather, the relationship amongst family members and their attitudes towards him will be discussed. Men who decide to marry a woman with children come to their new responsibilities with varied emotions and might have both positive and negative reactions ranging from admiration to fight to contempt (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:600). The point that is made here is that the new husband fathers may feel out of place not only because of his different background but also because he has a different perspective on family life. Juroe and Juroe (1993:29) who share the same sentiment, mentions that a stepfather entering a family headed by a single mother feel excluded or isolated because the mother and children share a common history and a different perspective on family life. Considering the attitudes and expectations by the mother and children towards a stepfather might be deviating especially to newcomers who assume the traditional male role may draw complaints that he is not contributing enough (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:602). This last bone of contention is part of another source of potential conflicts the 'hidden agenda'.

The hidden agenda is one of the first difficulties a stepfather encounters. The mother and children may have expectations that a stepfather should fulfill but not give a clear picture of what those expectations are. The stepfather may have hidden agendas of his own. He may see his stepchildren as unruly and decide they need discipline. If the new stepfather

does not measure up to the family hidden agenda or if his own agenda conflicts with theirs he may quickly be branded as unsatisfactory (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:602). In trying to explain the whole situation Satir and Maddox (in Juroe and Juroe 1993:11) agree that to understand why children behave the way they do, it is important to realise that they are very likely to angry and miserable until things settle down and become more aware of the intentions of both parents. Children need to test and test in order to see how far they can go as well as to discover for themselves the level of acceptance and love they can go as well as to from new parent. While they test, they will naturally create many problems. Young adult children may be mature enough to think of a new addition to the family primarily as their mother's husband rather than as a stepfather. Noller, Denies and Callan, 1994:160) mention that stepfathers can show their love and commitment by officially adopting their stepchildren.

For adolescents who may rarely see their biological father, adoption may strengthen their attachment to their new father. Adolescents acquire the stepfather's surname and the biological father has no legal obligation for the adolescents' welfare. Stepfathers are using adoption as a coping strategy when they can no longer cope with reminders about biological fathers.

Failure of stepparents to adopt their stepchildren show lack of commitment, because if the stepparents die without a Will, stepchildren will not inherit anything and if there is a Will but stating "my children" the count will assume it exclude stepchildren (Booth and Dunn 1994:335). Furthermore it is stated that if this assumption accurately reflects the feelings of stepfamily members and little evidence exists one way or the other then it is an inescapable conclusion that stepfamilies are seriously weak organisations whose roles lack substance (Booth and Dunn, 1994:35)

.

3.5   ADOLESCENT CHILD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STEPPARENTS
**   AND OTHER STEPFAMILY MEMBERS**

3.5.1   THE NATURE OF THIS RELATIONSHIP

Despite all the research studies done significant and relevant questions remain unanswered. Issues such as causal factors of relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents were unfounded. The scope on this chapter and study is to address those issues as the study concentrate on relationship within the stepfamily unit.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1992:164) highlight that a stepfamily adjustment to the new stepfamily can be more stressful for all members. An explanation is that adolescence is a time when autonomy and separation from the family are expected as part of normal development. The need for autonomy comes at a time when the adult members of the new stepfamily may ask for or imply that demonstrations of commitment to the new unit are essential.

Booth and Dunn (1994:248) contend that adolescents adjust more easily from separation and divorce than adjusting in a remarried family. They require the freedom to move in and out of many aspects of family life as they move towards greater individuation and peer culture involvement. The experience of being an adolescent in a remarried family is different from the experiences of being an adolescent in a nuclear family.

Ganong and Coleman (1994:92) also view the relationship within remarried families as a most problematic and stressful relationship. Stepchildren within remarried households are a destabilising influence and a major contributor to greater divorce rates among couples with stepchildren.

According to Noller, Denies and Callan (1994:160) adolescents react differently to the divorce of their parents. Adjustment depends upon personality, cooping capacity, level of socio-emotional maturity and the nature of post-divorce relationship between parents.

Amberts (1997:248) agree that the double single phase and then the remarriage of one or both parents may cause the adolescent to take on inappropriate roles and responsibilities. Loyal bonds, chronic sorrow for the loss of nuclear family and abandonment fear are often issues. The remarried family has to integrate the adolescent as an adolescent and not as child or adult.

However, Booth and Dunn (1994:130) agree by mentioning that, it is far easier for younger children to adapt to new mothers or fathers than it is for adolescents. An adolescent bonded with the one parent he lived with because of undivided attention. With a new parent on the horizon, the adolescent grieves the loss of this special bond instead of seeing the benefits of gaining another parent.

Kurdek and Fine (1991:273) agrees by mentioning that young children who have lived with a custodial parent are likely to become assimilated within a few years into a family which now included a stepparent but those who are adolescents are unlikely to do so. Many older children want to live with their 'other' parent during adolescence and providing the parent and new partner accept this, often settle down reasonably wee in such a stepfamily, whose expectations may match their own emerging adulthood.

Ganong and Coleman (1994:243) agrees by mentioning that young children who have lived with a custodial parent are likely to become assimilated within a few years into a family which non includes a stepparent but those who are adolescents are unlikely t do so. Many older children want to live with their 'other' parent during adolescence and providing the parent and new partner accept this, often settle down reasonably well in such a stepfamily whose expectations may match their own emerging adulthood.

The emotional climate of the home may be more important factor than divorce or death in regard to child behaviour problems particularly aggression (Wallerstein, 1992:156)

3.5.2   REASONS FOR THE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

According to Lamanna and Riedman (1994:597) the reason for the difficulty in stepparent-child relation lies in children's lack of desire to see them work. Children often harbour fantasies that their original parents will reunite. Even after some years adolescent children still strongly disapprove of their parents' divorce. They believe that sabotaging the new relationship can help make their natural parents to remarry. In case of widowhood, children have idealised almost sacred memories of the parent who died and may not want another to take his or her place. As a result, stepchildren can prove hostile adversaries especially adolescents.

Lamanna and Riedmann (1994:597) and Peterson (1995:300) agree that lies with the no custodial parent creates a triangle effect that make a spouse's prior marriage seem 'more real' than the second union. Again loyalty to the biological parent also creates stress for an adolescent. He or she can feel quilt about giving affection to a new parent. The affection acknowledges there is no hope of the biological parents reuniting. Children, upset after visit with the new custodial parent were required to make a major adjustment that made life difficult for everyone else. Natural parents sometimes feel caught between loyalties the biological child and the desire to please their partner. To add to their disappointment, often adolescents will shout in anger and pain, "I want to go back to real mom and dad".

Another contribution made by Cargan (1991:130) is that kisses and hugs between the new partners are looked upon as disloyal to the natural parent. Most of the children have seen their parent as a sexual then being a new man or in their parents' bed, they know the couple is sexually active behind the locked door. Lauer and Lauer (1991:265) posits that those adolescent children, "coming of age" sexually and who may be embarrassed or confused by the demonstration of affection and sexuality between their parent and stepparent. They strong emotional bond and consistent routine, which existed during the single parent phase following divorce, can be distributed by remarriage. Often, the parent child relationship operates in such a way that the stepparent feels excluded.

In the search of Noller, Denies and Callan (1994:233) adolescents learned to live in their families though day to day events like choice of food, study exceptions, abuse of television, required chores and space for recreation. Then the stepparent brings new expectations and change, which can be upsetting for example the master bedroom suddenly, becomes off limits and bedtime comes earlier. Such change can appear as an infringement in personal right. Zinn and Eitzen (1993:281) states that giving up the privacy of the one's own room on the status of being the oldest or younger child bun a family can be as stressful as coping with a new parent. Having stepsibling forces children to re-evaluate themselves. Children in blended families are asked to all of a sudden share their rooms, toys and clothes. Teenagers often have more difficulty than children adapting to a blended family.

However adolescent stepchildren may have considerably more family power than either parent in every decision-making. "It is possible that the disruptive influence of adolescents on remarriage is elated to the poison". Perhaps active contracts with the non-custodial parent gave in adolescent the option of an alternative home. Those adolescents with alternative resource did have more power (Lamanna and Riedmann, 1994:595)

According to Peterson (1995:300) a successful stepfamily formation is the quality of the relationship between stepparent and stepchildren and the second one is strong couple's bond. Choice to get married to each other includes responsibility and the children never made a choice. So it is for parents to make an environment that works for everyone.

Support the above statement Noller, Denies and Callan (1994:160) state that there is estimation that about one in every six under eighteen years of age stepchild. They further mention that adolescents have less regard for their stepfathers and vice versa.

Hutter (1997:250) also reports that expression of words from a stepparent to an adolescent like "Oh, you are just like your father/mother" always has a negative connotation because the biological parent may not be able to recognise any positive aspect of the other parent. The adolescent may develop a negative sense because of the

multiple identification leading to identity confusion, especially if parental figures operate counter to each other and thrust different values and points of view.

Hutter (1997:248) contends that adolescence may project anger, frustration to wards a stepparent because of the disruption nuclear family. The stepparent may feel more threatened by the adolescent's expression of anger because their relationship has only just begun. The sexual atmosphere in the remarried household is heightened. The closer the remarriage is to the onset of adolescence, the greater the likelihood for mutual sexual attraction between stepparent and step adolescent and stepsiblings. Members have not grown up together and a blood bond does not exist. Therefore, there may be a greater potential for household sexual activity or a more stressful reaction formation to the impulse. Booth and Dunn (1994) also support Rossi and Rossi (1990:248) by saying, a child is more likely to be abused by a stepparent than by the biological father.

Parents wonder if the apparently rebellious adolescent who stays away from the house and who doesn't participate in planned family activities is trying to sabotage the new family. According to Zinn and Eitzen (1993:281) often the problem is not the child's attitude but a conflict between the stage of development of the child and that of the new stepfamily. Adolescent child's behaviours that would draw little attention in a traditional family, when misunderstanding or dealt with poorly, they can escalate into conflicts that last well into adulthood.

To add to all these predicaments, adolescent stepchildren experience problems in what to call their stepparents- whether Mom or Dad and are stopped from doing so by the knowledge understood that the real parent would view this as supreme disloyalty. According to Ganong and Coleman (1994:390) the no custodial parent also contributes negatively to the relationship by comments such as "I am just waiting to hear my son call my ex-husband's new wife mother, that will be the ultimate violation". The child's inner feeling response, in frustration will also mention that: "Jane seem really nice, but if I like her, Mom will be hurt".

The advice provided by Ganong and Coleman (1994:401) is that children in stepfamilies must be assured that it is not what you call a person, but how you feel about someone, that is important.

3.5.3   ADJUSTMENT IN THE STEPFAMILY

The effect of divorce on child's original parents and the death of one parent affect the child's self-esteem and can be explained with reference to Maslow's (1970) theory. A child who hungers for affection and recognition by his/her family is seldom to strive with great intensity to satisfy his/her goals. A child needs to experience a sense of belonging and without it self-esteem and self-actualisation will not be attained. In accordance with Adler's theory these children feel inferior and achieve a sense of superiority, they need support and encouragement from their stepparents.

According to Carl Rogers' (Louw, 1991:306) theory, healthy personality development occur when the child receives love and affirmation from significant others, in order to attain self-actualisation. Without positive regard from the stepfamily, the child may not develop his/her potential as a human being and this may negatively affect his/her psychological well being (Louw, 1991:306). Wallerstein and Kelly (1992: 258) also states that children, who feel rejection because of divorce or death in the family, may depict themselves as unloved. Suggestions provided by Peterson (1995:302) for adolescent children to adjust in blended families and relate well with stepparents are as follows:

1. Preparing children for the remarriage. Explore their feelings long before the marriage takes place. Listen to their fears and anxieties. Make provisions for them to be part of the actual remarriage ceremony.
2. Assure them they are not being disloyal in loving a stepparent and will not loose the love of their natural parent.
3. Allow adolescent children space in the new family, time to adjust even if it takes years.

4. Recognise that mood swings are normal adolescent behaviour and would occur if natural parents lived together. Adolescents struggle between dependence and independence as normal part of their development.

5. Openly discuss and budget together with adolescents including the use of the car, assurance, dating behaviour, allowances, plans for college and amounts of money available.

6. Create an atmosphere of healthy sexual attitudes, set limits on dress, such as wearing a robe when walking about the house.

7. Agree on discipline and discuss differences about disciplinary actions in private rather than in front of the children.

8. Encourage contact with the parent living in another home by phone calls, letters or visits.

In summarising the adjustment problems of the stepchildren in stepfamilies, Lauer and Lauer (1991:20) point out that stepparents both less obligated and less likely than their biological, adoptive parents to be supportive in various situations requiring parent-child interaction. The further mention that stepfathers are less likely to engage in less play, private talks and projects with children that are biological fathers. Stepparents feel ore inadequate in maintaining close physical and emotional contact with stepchildren than do biological fathers with their own children. Again stepfathers with both stepchildren and own children in the same household and a happy relationship with partner feel "father like" and having a good family relationship.

Stepchildren also enter the stepfamily with pessimism and the expectation of problems because they have learned to think of it as negative. Whatever their age, stepchildren can resent a stepparent coming into the family (Kurdek and Fine, 1991:565). There in turn could be observed from adult children of those how deceased parents. Stepchildren also report less support, control and punishment from stepfathers, than children from biological fathers.

3.5.4   DISCIPLINE IN THE STEPFAMILY HOUSEHOLD

Since stepfathers consider themselves as inadequate in maintaining close physical and emotional contact with stepchildren, discipline is also a problematic are and situation can be disruptive to the marriage. Children may resent discipline from stepfather and the mother may disagree with the husband about discipline. Resistance for discipline may include lack of trust or confidence that the new family work, and displaced angrier at the missing biological parent (Pererson, 1995: 305). A further suggestion is that the ideal type of discipline is the democratic approach because children need a home where the atmosphere is relaxed and consistent. Children are encouraged to think, contribute and co-operate. Parents are approachable, reasonable and respected. Tools for democratic parenting include incentives, setting consequences for misbehaviour, negotiation, requesting and conflict resolution.

Robinson (1991:273) also agree by mentioning that the stepfamily has to negotiate and negotiate the household rules, being crowding, feeling and the role of the stepparent that neither completes with nor surplus that of the natural parent. The parent and stepparent should relate the child as a friendly adult when at a level, which is age and stage appropriate.

3.5.5   MOM CAUGHT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND KIDS

According to Peterson (1995:302) if the stepfather is overly harsh, the teen and preteens will no doubt challenge him. The adolescent will indeed stress the weak points of any marriage. The mother should be willing to take a step back and look at her own behaviour too, back her husband up when children get our of line with the agreements and require the father to back the mother up regarding the communication quid lines create together.

Discipline can be a tricky aspect of both the children's and the parent's hidden agenda (Lamanna and Riedman, 1994:603). The following problems stated are regarded as casual factors:

1. There being two parents to establish house and rules and to influence children's behaviour, they may not agree on some aspects.

2. The second problem can be the holdover influence of the biological parent. For the stepparent there might seem to be three parents instead of two, especially if the non-custodian parent sees the children regularly and if the biological parent is wielding more influence than the stepparent.

3. A third one can be the development of children's responsibility and participate in decision making in single families. The children may be unwilling to go back to being 'children' that are dependant on and subject to adult direction. The new parent may view them as spoiled and undisciplined rather than mature.

4. Financial burdens-supporting children of first marriage and stepchildren.

5. Negative feelings of the children, who often do not want the family to 'work'.

Teenagers about thirteen to twenty one years living in stepfamilies were also considered to be having their own ideas regarding the discipline, relationship and behaviour (Peterson, 1995:306).

3.5.6   STEPCHILDREN'S FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR STEPPARENTS

- I needed my stepmother and I did not think was going to replace my mother.
- I will never love stepmother like my real mother.
- I cannot express gratitude towards my stepmother.
- I cannot adjust to the new laid down rule, unless if they should be more gradual (Department of Health and Welfare – Nebo Office's statistics 1995-2002)

SUMMARY

Remarriage, which result in the formation of a stepfamily unit, emanates from divorce or loss of a partner. The unit comprises of many family members being stepparents, stepchildren, stepsiblings, step-grandparents and natural parents. Many problems are experienced in this unit because of lack of children's preparation for the new set-up, uappreciation of the new stepparent, favouritism of children, competition between stepparent and natural parents. Different age groups in children especially adolescents add to the existing conflicts because of their developmental stage and their behaviour is considered to be influenced or just wishing to disrupt the remarriage not to work. Stepparents are to supportive to each other and to their children and allow adjustment and acceptance especially in the first few years.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

For chapters two and three a literature study was conducted to explain the relevant topic of the research study. The emphasis was placed on the relationship between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents

A pilot study was conducted with a focus group and the formulated questions proved to be clear and understandable. These questions were then asked the respondents in three different focus groups. The researcher also carried out structured observations.

The respondents were selected from the Anglican Church in the Sekhukhuneland Parish and the focus groups took place at different conductive settings. Each focus group lasted approximately one and half-hours. Twenty-four respondents between the ages of fourteen to twenty were in the focus groups. Eleven were female and thirteen were males.

The following five questions were formulated according to the literature review:

1. How were you informed or prepared about the "to be established" new family?
2. How is your relationship with your family members?
3. How is discipline practiced in the family?
4. Is your family situation affecting you and how?
5. How and when do you discuss family concerns/issues?

The qualitative research approach was appropriate for the study as the researcher's aim was to explore the relationship problems between stepparents and adolescent stepchildren ad personally experienced by the adolescent children.

The research question to be answered was formulated as follows:

- What are the causal factors for the relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents?

The qualitative study provided the researcher with an understanding of the relationship problems that adolescent stepchildren and stepparents have and the results will be presented in the empirical study. As a result, the researcher will be able to answer the research question formulated in this study.

4.2   PROCESS OF QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (1998:142-165) and De Vos (2003:340) believes that the process of data analysis and interpretation can best be presented as a spiral image – a data analysis spiral. The researcher moves in analytical circles rather then using a fixed approach. For the purpose of this study Creswell's spriral image will be applied and the researcher will pursue the steps as follows:

CRESSWELL'S SPIRAL IMAGE

Collecting and recovering data

⇩

Managing data

⇩

Reading, memorising

⇩

Describing, classifying, interpreting

⇩

Representing, visualing
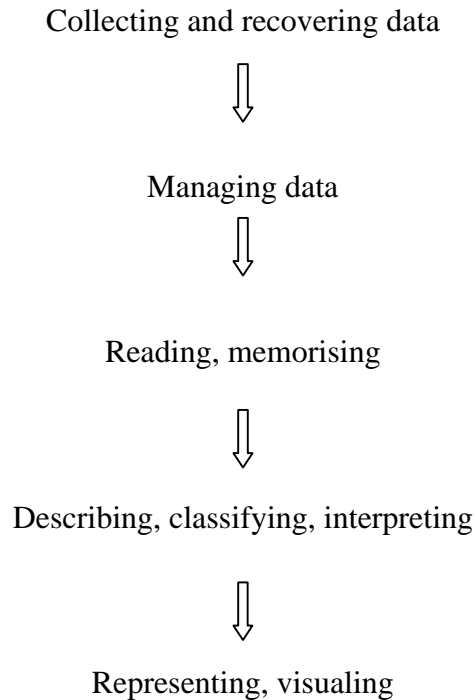
4.2.1   Data collection and recording: the twofold approach

De Vos (2002:340) states that the researchers should plan for recording data in a systematic manner that is appropriated and will facilitate analysis, before data collection commence. Data analysis as a qualitative inquiry involves a twofold approach. The first aspect involves data analysis at the research site during data collection. The second aspect involved data analysis away from the site following a period of data collection.

For the purpose of this study the researcher gathered data from adolescent stepchildren who experienced relationship problems in their stepfamilies in three focus groups. The researcher selected the adolescent children according to the following sample criteria:

- Twenty-four adolescent stepchildren

- Aged between 14 and 21 years

- Both sexes

- Experiencing relationship problems in their stepfamilies between 2000-2003

- Members of the Anglican Church Sekhukhuneland Parish

- The second aspect of data analysis away from the site involved listening to the tape recordings and organising data in themes

4.2.2   Managing data

According to De Vos (2002:343) this is the first step in data analysis away from site. As the first loop in the spiral, it begins the process properly. The researcher organised data into five categories according to the responses from the questions as follows:

1. Inform or preparedness about the 'to be established' new family.
2. Relationship wit family members
3. Discipline practice in the family
4. Family situation towards the stepchild
5. Discussion of family concerns/issues

4.2.3   Reading and writing memos

De Vos (2002:343) explains that after the organisation and conversation of the data, researchers continue analysis by getting a feeling for the whole database. Creswell (1998) quotes Agar (1980) in De Vos (2002:343) as follows: "Immerse yourself in the detail, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts". De Vos (2002:343) states that during the process, the researcher can list on note cards the data available, perform the minor editing necessary to make field notes retrievable and generally 'clean up' what seems overwhelming and unmanageable.

4.2.4   Describing, classifying and interpreting

De Vos (2002:343) states that in this loop of the spiral, category information represents the heart of qualitative data analysis. Classifying means taking the text or qualitative information apart and looking for categories, themes or dimension or information. Interpretation involves making sense of data, the 'lesson learned'. The researcher used the examined content of the taped to identify main themes and related themes to make sense of the data.

4.2.5   Representing and visualising

De Vos (2002:344) state that in the final phase of the spiral researchers present the data, a packaging of what was found. Direct quotations from the tape recordings will be given and the researcher will represent the main theme and related themes that were extracted from the quotations in boxes.

4.3   The data collection method that was used in this study was through focus groups. A personal account of how the relationship problems have been influenced will be given. Respondents from twenty-four adolescent stepchildren that fit the sample criteria of the study were gathered. Quotations or phrases were deduced from the tapes and main themes and related themes were extracted and identified from the quotations.

4.3.1   Theme 1

QUESTION 1: How were you informed about "the to be established new family"?

The following were extracted from the focus groups:

- "I was never informed about the to be established new family. I just found my stepmother at home doing the house chores, and was never introduced to me".

- "My elder brother and I were just taken to my stepmothers home and were told she was going to be our new mother".

- "My two younger sisters and I were called into the house one day and informed that the man sitting there was going to be our father".

- "I was never informed nor introduced to my stepfather. I just saw him visit and making rules around the house".

- "My stepmother was introduced to me and that she was married to my father".

Main theme: Adolescent stepchildren experience emotional abandonment.
They feel like outsiders.

Sub themes: * lack of emotional support by parents

* Lack of knowledge to integrate adolescents not as children and
not yet as adults

Feelings related to problems: adolescents stepchildren feel totally left out and emotionally abandoned about not being informed nor prepared about the to be established new family. The researcher discovered that, not to be informed about the to be established new family affected the adolescent stepchildren greatly 'emotionally'. They feel that they are less important in their family units and should just see things happening.

A feeling of emotional abandonment is felt. The researcher also found out that hatred and anger is eminent and a feeling that they were no longer being loved, especially by the biological parents, was clearly expressed.

According to Robinson (1991:146) parent-adolescent conflict has more negative result in families that are less warm and supportive, unlike in families with an established pattern of warm and supportive interactions. Children need to be told, provided with explanations that are direct, honest and consistent with their age and understanding.

Twenty out of twenty four adolescent stepchildren were never prepared for the remarriage. Their feelings, fears and anxieties were never explored or even listened to before the marriage took place. Neither was provision made for them to be part of the actual marriage ceremony. "I just saw this other women at my home, doing household chores", and "I was introduced to this man that he was going to be my father " henceforth.

4.3.2   Theme 2

QUESTION: How is your relationship with your family members?

- "I never communicate with my stepmother nor my biological father, as they have chased me away from my home".

- "My stepmother is always quiet, does not communicate with me, she seem like a loner or outsider in the family".

- "I am not staying with my stepmother and my father because she does not like me and always accuses me of stealing her belongings as a result we do not communicate with one another".

- "My stepfather is not staying with us, he only visits once a month as suck we do not have anything to communicate about".

- "I do not have anything to communicate with my stepfather as he is always distanced and quiet. My mother is a mediator if there is something that we need from each other".

- "It is as if my stepfather is not existing in my life. We don't like each other as such we hardly communicate".

- "My stepfather is a breadwinner for the family, but if I need something I tell my mother and she will ask on my behalf".

- "I spend most of the time with my peers and only go home for a short time in order to avoid communicating with my stepfamily members".

- "I don't like my stepmother and I will never communicate with her. She does not like me either".

- "My stepmother and step-siblings are not friendly to me as a result we don't share any mutual relationship like talking, playing, planning together".

Main theme: **Adolescent stepchildren experience emotional abandonment due to lack of communication with their stepparents**

Related themes: * Anger and frustration for feeling abandoned and isolated

* Stepparents favouritism of stepsiblings to stepchildren

* The guilt feeling of being disloyal to a natural parent by staying with the stepparents builds up anger which affects communications.

Communication related problems: adolescent stepchildren, who experience communication breakdown between them and their stepparents feel abandonment, unloved, angry and frustrated. The researcher found that the forced relationship between stepchildren and stepparents is a causal factor of the uniformed and unpreparedness of the to be established new family.

Assuring stepchildren that they are not being disloyal in loving a stepparent and also allowing them space in the new family and time to adjust will made the relationship much better.

According to Peterson (1995:295) the emotional climate of the home may be a more important factor than divorce in regard to a child's aggressive behaviour. A successful stepfamily formation is the quality of the relationship between stepparent and stepchildren and the second one is a strong couple's bond.

4.3.3   Theme 3

QUESTION: How is discipline practised in the family?

The following quotations were extracted from the focus group:

- "I do not remember a word of advice or caution from my stepfather as a result he wont even think of disciplining me".

- "My stepfather never communicate with me. If I did something wrong he complains to my mother for her to discipline me".
- "I an not staying with my stepmother and father as such I never get any discipline from them. My maternal grandparents do discipline me by shouting at me if I do something wrong".

- "My stepmother is sometimes nice and sits down with me for some advice. If I did something wrong".

- "My stepmother was not fair to me because I was always unlike my stepsiblings even though we did the same mistakes, that is why I moved out of my home to stay with paternal grandparents".

- "My stepmother only visits us once a month for a day or two and as such we do not spend much time together and it is not easy for him to see my mistakes".

Main theme: Undemocratic and non-discipline of stepchildren

Related themes: * Relationship problems

                          * Lack of household rules

                          * Undemocratic approach of discipline

Discipline related problems: The stepfamily has to negotiate and negotiate the household rules and the role of the stepparents that neither competes with nor substitute that of the natural parent when setting new rules. The parent and stepparent should relate to the stepchild as a friendly adult – using a stage and age, which is appropriate (Robinson, 1991:273). The researcher found that there is no democratic approach of discipline in stepfamilies because the adolescent mentioned that the atmosphere at their homes is not relaxed and consistent. Stepparents are not approachable. Secondly, it was found that the stepchildren's behaviours are properly shaped because of lack of democratic parenting tools such as incentives, setting consequences for misbehaviour, negotiations, and conflict resolution. Parents should agree on discipline and discuss differences in private rather than in front of the children.

4.3.4   Theme 4

QUESTION: Is your family situation affecting you and how?

The following quotations were extracted from the focus groups:

- " I wish my stepfather could feel welcomed and comfortable during my presence and feel free to communicate with me."

- " I will feel happy if my stepmother and father can treat me as their child and provide for my needs."

- " My stepfather provide for my needs but needs but never communicate with me. My mother is always a mediator between us."

- " I wish my father can be open and tell me the whereabouts of my biological mother It worries me a lot not knowing how my mother looks like. I wish to meet her one day."

- "My father turned against my stepmother and as a result I suffer because of their conflicts and my father does not longer visit nor cater for my needs."

- "My stepfather is the breadwinner but spend less time with the family, does not communicate with me and I wish to know him better."

- "I do not have a home as I have been chased away by my stepmother and my father n never commended. I so much wish to know him better."

- "My stepmother is only nicer to me when my father is around. I so much wish she could feel comfortable and open to me everytime and take me as her child."

> **Main theme:** **Fells hopeless and wants to resolve the problems.**

Related themes: * Frustration about emotional and physical abandonment

* Lack of trust, suspicion and resentful

*Lack of understanding of the development stages of an adolescent child

Adolscent stepchildren's eagerness to resolve problems: Ganong and Coleman (1994:230) emphasised that stepparents and parents should recognise that mood swings are normal adolescent behaviour and would occur even if natural parents lived together. Adolescents struggle between dependence and independence as a normal part of their development. The researcher found that the adolescent stepchildren are in a difficult situation because their stepparents and biological parents do not trust them, resent them and are suspicious of them. Stepchildren are willing to be accommodated and welcomed in the newly established stepfamily network.

4.3.5   Theme 5

QUESTION: How and when do you discuss family concerns\issues?

The following were extracted from the focus groups:

- "We do not have any specific time to discuss family issues/concerns as a family. We just talk to one another in passing."

- "We only discuss issues, especially those concerning me when only I did something wrong. It is then that I will be called to account."

- "I am only called if I did something wrong and I get a hiding and then everything is over."

> **Main theme:** **Stepparents regard family meetings and communication as not important. Adolescents want it to be important.**

Related themes: * Lack of insight regarding the importance of family meetings

*Poor family interactions

Denial of free expressions of feelings: Sharing a residence creates more opportunities to interact and to develop a close relationship and children need to voice their concern (Robinson, 1991:193). The researcher found that sadness and anger lead to stress and children should not be made to make choices. Open communication and discussions should be allowed.

Further emphasis on this is that stepfamilies should openly discuss and budget together with adolescents including the use of the car, dating behaviour, and allowances, plans for college and amounts of money available (Kurdek and Fine, 1991:131).

4.4   THE USE OF RECORDED RESPONSES TO GAIN INSIGHT ON THE MAIN THEMES IDENTIFIED

4.4.1   The value of recorded responses to this study

The personal responses received during this study gave the researcher some insight into the adolescent stepchildren's personal experience. This was very important because of the aim of the study to know the causal factors of problems in stepfamilies.

Strydom and Delport (2002:323) present a meaningful version of the usefulness and value of personal responses, which can be briefly summarised as follows:

- Personal responses serve as a touchstone for the evaluation of theories, hypothesis and assumptions.

- They enable the researcher to probe into the phenomenological heart of a human phenomenon.

- They complement objectivity with subjectivity in the research process.

- Personal responses provide the researcher with a holistic and total perspective of a person in the context of his total life.

- Personal responses add to the sensitising of concepts, theory development and verification.

The researcher found this summary useful as a guideline to extract meaning from the adolescent stepchildren responses.

The personal responses gave the researcher insight into the human phenomenon and complemented the objectivity of the study. The respondents' point of views were derived from the personal responses and consequently main themes were identified. The main themes indicated that relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents influence the home break-ups in remarriages.

4.4.2   The relationship between various stepfamily and similar themes identified in the personal responses.

The researcher became aware of the diversity of the various relationship problems but it was discovered that there was a sense of similarity between the influence of the three focus groups of relationship problems on adolescent stepchildren and stepparents.

After themes were identified from the adolescent stepchildren it can be emphasised that there is definitely a sense of similarity within the three focus groups regarding relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents.

Finally the researcher states that from the above four themes that were identified it became clear that relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents affect all stepfamily members.

The researcher found that there is definitely an important similarity between relationship problems and the influence these have on the stepfamily network.

4.5   Summary

In this study responses from twenty-four respondents were included. The findings of the empirical study revealed the following information:

- Adolescent stepchildren between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one experience relationship problems with their stepparents.

- Most adolescent stepchildren are never informed nor prepared about the to be established new family.

- It is indisputable from the results that adolescent stepchildren feel abandoned because of demising loyalty bonds, chronic sorrow for the loss of nuclear family.

- Limited family interactions, limited parental support inability to freely express emotions, lead to the project of negative feelings.

- It is clear that adolescent stepchildren do not relate well with their stepparents because of the inability to integrate an adolescent as an adolescent not as a child or adult.

- Feelings of anger and frustration were evident from the study because of lack of material support from parents.

- Most adolescent stepchildren are greatly affected by the family situation but are eager to solve the disputes.

- The inability of adolescent stepchildren to interact or visit their biological parents affects them greatly.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIOS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The chapter of the research report is formulated as follows:

In chapter one the general introduction with regards to the investigation was described thoroughly. The motivation for the choice of study, problem formulation, sampling methods of the research question was supplied.

In chapter two the nature of adolescence was investigated. The physical psychosexual, social and personality development of an adolescent were investigated. The whole notions of the adolescent's separation from family and of own identity forming identity were also emphasised.

In chapter three remarriage and stepfamilies were discussed as well as the nature of and characteristics of remarriage, stepfamilies, step-mothering and step-fathering. The adolescent child's relationship with stepparents and other members and reasons for aggressive behaviour were also investigated.

In chapter four empirical details and findings of the study with regard to how adolescent stepchildren experience relationship problems were discussed. The main themes and related themes were identified from the tape recordings in the focus group and the researcher analysed the information.

In chapter five a summary, conclusion and recommendation will be provided concerning the preceding chapters of this study. The aim, objectives and research question will be tested this chapter.

5.2   CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

5.2.1   Summary

Remarriage life, especially stepfamily life, resulting from divorce, death, abandonment, unwed pregnancy and adoption and also comprising of the network of expanded relationships such ex-spouses, grandparents and relatives of one the ex-spouses and stepsiblings were investigated. The research focuses mainly on the adolescent-children in this setting, as they are ones undergoing a complicated stage.

The main aim of this study was to explore the casual factors of the relationship problems between stepparent and adolescent stepchildren. A qualitative research method was suitable for this particular study and therefore a research question was formulated as follows:

What are causal factors for the relationship problem between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents?

The data collection method that was used was the focus group with tape-recording information retrieval. The responses were recorded on audio-tape. The focus groups have assisted in having an understanding regarding the causal factors of relationship problem between stepchildren and stepparents. The non-probability sampling method together within purposive sampling was utilised.

5.2.2   Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the introduction of the study:

- Unattended relationship problems can lead to remarriages ending in divorce because of its complexity and new extended relationships. A need thus exists to address and prevent further damage to the individuals involved in the newly formed relationships.

- A qualitative method was ideal for this study, as it provides the reader with an understanding of causal factors of relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents as experienced by them personally.

- Focus groups with tape recordings were used as data collection method. They proved to be ideal collection methods and unobstructive methods.

- The sampling method was guided by criteria and gave the researcher guidance as to how to select the respondents purposively.

5.2.3   Recommendations

In the light of the aforementioned conclusions the following recommendations are thus made:

The following recommendations are made in light of the aforementioned conclusion:

- The criteria for selecting the sample have to be set to include all languages to make sample more representative of all cultural groupings.
- The study was concluded to explore the causal factors of relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents. It serves as the basis for further in-depth study on the subject of relationship problem within a stepfamily unit.

5.3   CHAPTER 2: ADOLESCENCE

5.3.1   Summary

Adolescence is a time when autonomy and separation are expected as part of normal development and it at the same time comes when the stepfamily expects a demonstration of commitment to the new family unit. The adolescents need the freedom to move in out of many aspects of family life as they move towards greater individuality. Lack of parental support and the inability to express their emotions lead to the projection of negative feelings and the avoidal of negative emotions.

Adolescent stepchildren need professional and parental support to cope with the stressors of having stepparents and stepfamily members. The purpose of this study included these relationships to give the reader a better idea of what is meant by relationship problems, and how they can cause remarriage break-ups.

5.3.2   Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from chapter two that focuses on the context of the adolescent phase:

- Adolescent stepchildren need to voice their feelings regarding their feelings and the stepparents and custodian parents need professional advice on the matter.
- They receive greater support from their peers if the new family cannot be supportive and welcoming even though they still have an emotional attachment to their families.
- Limited family interaction with parental support and their inability to freely express emotions lead to problematic relationships.

5.3.3   Recommendations

In the light of the abovementioned conclusions the following recommendations are made:

- Little is known about the writing on the remarriage contract.
- Adolescent stepchildren should be informed about the to-be-established new family prior to the formality of marriage.

5.4   CHAPTER 3: REMARRIAGE AND STEPFAMILIES

5.4.1   Summary

The understanding gathered from the three focus groups was that natural parents did not consider the importance of informing the children about the to-be formed stepfamily. They still regarded the adolescent stepchild as a child and not as a person transiting to an adult. Discussions or family meetings are held without an adolescent child being invited as a result his/her emotional feelings are not considered.

5.4.2   Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from Chapter three, which focuses on remarriage and stepfamilies formations.

- In general the natural parents of the adolescent stepchildren are responsible for informing and preparing the children about the to-be formed stepfamily.
- Family meetings are very important, as they will facilitate free expression of feelings and emotions. Both the natural parents and stepparents need guidance, adequate and accurate information regarding the formation of a stepfamily and professional support regarding issues as pre-marital counseling.

5.4.3   Recommendations

In the light of the abovement conclusion the following recommendations are made:

- Professionals need to focus on the needs of adolescent stepchildren with regards to their feelings about stepparents and belonging to a stepfamily.
- Adolescents need guidance on coping capabilities with the stressors of witnessing their parents or parents' death and then having a stepparent without being informed.
- Stepchildren support groups should be formed to provide support as well models of coping with the situation.

5.5   CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.5.1   Summary

For the purpose of this study Creswell's spiral image was applied and the researcher followed the steps as follows: Collecting and recovering data, managing the data, describing, classifying and interpreting the content of the recorded data, representing and visualising the quotations of the adolescent stepchildren experience in stepfamilies.

Direct quotations from the recorded data from the focus groups were given and the researcher presented the main themes and related themes as extracted from the quotations.

5.5.2   Conclusion

The following conclusion were drawn from Chapter four, which on the empirical findings of the study:

- Adolescent stepchildren between the age of 14 and 21 are faced with relationship problems with their stepparents.
- The results of this revealed that there is a correlation problems with the entire stepfamily network.
- The adolescent stepchildren experience emotional abandonment and they feel like outsiders.
- Adolescent stepchildren experience emotional abandonment due to lack of communication with their stepparents.
- Stepparents (generally) do not realise the importance of communication and family meetings in moulding the adolescents.

5.5.3   Recommendations

- Family therapy on how to cope with the relationship problem within a stepfamily network must be prioritised in the future.
- Programs and skills on how to cope with the stressors should be implemented.
- Adolescent stepchildren's emotional feelings should be taken seriously for them to cope with the new established family.
- Play therapy techniques can be used to help adolescent stepchildren to project their anger and frustrations caused by their relationship problems and to bring them in contact with the here and now which is a basic principle of Gestalt therapy.
- The combination of play therapy, family therapy and group work is recommended for adolescent stepchildren and their families where they can feel safe in agroup therapy environment and discuss the different aspects of their relationship problem before serious break-up occur.

- Negotiating and writing the remarriage contract and the preparation and informing of the adolescent stepchildren about the to be established new family are highly essential

5.6   TESTING OF AIM AND OBJECTIVES

5.6.1   Aim

The aim of the study was to explore the causal factors of relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren and stepparents.

The aim of this study was met by means of a thorough exploration of adolescent stepchildren relationship problems with their stepparents. Through the focus groups and the analysis of the responses of adolescent stepchildren, main themes were extracted. As a result of this analysis insight was gained on the various problems. It was found that there is a correlation of causal factors not only from the stepparents but from the entire stepfamily network because of the unequal treatment between stepsiblings and stepchildren and the behaviour influence from the natural grandparents and step-grandparents.

5.6.2   Objectives

5.6.2.1   Objective 1

The first objective was to explore the problems in stepfamilies and their effects on the different systems within these families, with special reference to the adolescent child.

This objective was met by means of a thorough literature study on the subject. Information was gathered through various literature sources to build a base about various relationship problems within a stepfamily network with special reference to adolescent

stepchildren. Aspects identified, as problem areas are discipline of stepchildren, material support and lack of emotional expression.

5.6.2.2 Objective 2

The second objective was to do an empirical study with the adolescent children as respondents to determine the casual factors for the relationship problems within the families.

This objective was met by means of a thorough empirical study. Focus was done and data collective from adolescent respondents selected according to the criteria that were set for selecting the sample. One hundred and twenty one responses were analysed and five main themes were extracted through the process of analysis.

5.6.2.3 Objective 3

The third objective was to provide a base for intervention programs to address these problems by the Welfare stakeholders and Welfare Department regarding the remarriage contracts, counseling sessions for the partners and especially the adolescent children for the to be formed stepfamily unit.

This objective was met by means of making conclusions and recommendations of the literature and the empirical study (Chapter 2-4). The recommendations are suitable with regards to applied research was done on.

5.7   ANSWERING OF RESEARCH QUESTION

5.7.1   Research question

The following research question was formulated:

What are causal factors for the relationship problems between adolescent stepchildren?

The research question has been answered through this study. Five themes and related themes were extracted from the tape recordings of the adolescent stepchildren that indicated that there was a correction of problems within the stepfamily network. Furthermore this study indicates the way in which stepfamily relationship problems influence the break-ups of remarriage.

5.8   CONCLUDING STATEMENT

From this study it becomes evident that there is a need to investigate adolescent stepchildren who succeeded in staying with their stepparents and stepsiblings until early adulthood, in order for the results to be compared with the results of this study.

The stepparents emotional feelings towards stepchildren can be investigated.

In conclusion the researcher would like to emphasise that professional support services are essential especially on pre-marital counseling, personal remarriage agreements, legal issues pertaining to inheritance and wills, maintenance of stepchildren, adoption and custody of stepchildren by their stepfathers or stepmothers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, G.R., Montemayor, R. & Gullota, T.R. 1992. **Adolescence Identity formation**
Newbury Park, CALIF: Sage.

- 1990. **From Childhood to Adolescence.** Newbury Park, CALIF: Sage.
- 1996. **Psychosocial development during adolescence.** Thousand Oaks,
  C.A. Sage.

Agar, M. 1980. **Getting better quality staff. Methodological competition in**
an interdisciplinary niche. Urban life, 9 : 34 – 50.

Amberts, Anne-Marie. 1997. **Parents, Children and Adolescents: Interactive Relationship and**
Development in context. New York : The Haworth Press.

Babbie, E & Mouton, J. 2001. **The practice of social research.** Cape Town. Oxford University Press.

Bailey, K.D. 1978. **Methods of social research.**   New York : Free Press.

Benokraitis, N.V. 1996. **Marriages and Families. Changes, choices and constraints.** Second edition.
New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Booth, A.A. & Dunn, J. 1994. **Step families. Who benefits? Who does not?** Have UK: Pennsylvania
State University Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cargang L. 1991. **Marriage and families-changing relationships.** Harper Collins Publishers.

Carter, B. and McGodrick,M. 1999. **Overview: The expanded family life cycle. Individual, family and**
social perspective. In Carter, B. and McGoldrick, M. (Eds.) **The expanded family life cycle. Individual,**
family and social perspectives. Third edition. Boston: Allys & Bacon.

Carter, B & McGoldrick, M. (Eds) 1999. **The expanded family life cycle. Individual, family and social**
perspectives. Third edition. Boston : Allyn & Bacon.

Conger, J.J. 1991. **Adolescence and Youth, Psychological development in a changing world.** 4th Ed.
New York: Harper Collins.

Creswell, J.W. 1998. **Qualitative inquiry and research design : choosing among five traditions.** Thousand Oaks : sage.

Crocket, L.J. & Crouter A.C. 1995. **Pathways through adolescence:**
Individual Development in relation to Social Context. Mahwah: Erlbaum

Crocket, L.J. & Silbereisen R.K. 2000. **Negotiating adolescence in terms of social change.** Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press.

Demo, D.H. 2000. **Handbook of Family Diversity:** New York Oxford
University Press.

" Department of Health and Welfare – Nebo Welfare Office's statistics"
(1999 – 2002).

De Vos, A.S. (Ed.) 1998. **Research as grass roots: A primer for the caring professions.** Pretoria: Van Schaik.

De Vos, A.S. 1998. **Conceptualisation and operationalisation.** In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. **Research at grass roots : A primer for the caring professions.** Pretoria : Van Schaik.

De Vos, A.S. 2002. **Quantitative data analysis and interpretation.** In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport C.S.L. **Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions.** Second edition. Pretoria : Van Schaik publishers.

Erikson, E.H. 1968. **Identity : Youth and Crisis.** New York : Norton.

Forehand, R., Long,N. & Gene, B. 1980. **Divorce and marital conflict:**
Relationship to Adolescent competence and adjustment in Early Adolescence.
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 256-269.

Ganong, L.H. & Coleman, M. 1994. **Effects of remarriage on children : A review of the empirical literature – Family Relations.**

Gecas, S., & Seff, M.A. 1990. **Families and adolescents – A review of the emperical literature – Family Relations.**

Gladding, S.T. Family Therapy : **History, theory and practice.** Ohio : Prentice – Hall.

Grinnel, R.M. 1981. **Social work research and evaluation.** Illinois : F.E. Peacock Publishers.

Guy, R.F. Bickman, L & Allen, D.E. 1987. **Social research methods. Puzzles and solutions.** Boston : Allyn & Bacon.

Hendrick T.E., Bickman, L. & Rog, D.J. 1993. **Applied research design. A practical guide.** London : Sage.

Hutter, M. 1997. **The family experience : A reader in cultural diversity.** Second edition : New Jersey : Rowan College.

Juroe,D.J. & Juroe, B.B. 1983. **Successful Stepparenting:** Fleming H. Revell Company.

Kayongo-Male, D. & Onyango, P. 1991. **The sociology of the African family.** New York London : Longman Inc.

Kelinger, F.N. 1986. **Foundations of behavioural research.** Japan : CBS Publishing.

Kurdek and Fine. 1991. **Cognitive Correlates of satisfaction for mother and stepfather families. Journal – of marriage and the family – 53 : 565 – 572.**

Lamanna, Mary-Ann and Riedman, A. 1994. **Remarriage.** Sage : Beverly Hills CA.

Lauer, R.H. and Lauer, J.C. 1991. **Marriage and family The Quest for intimacy.** 3rd Ed, Brown and Benchmark.

Louw, D.A. 1991. **Human Development:** Pretoria Kagiso Tertiary Publishers.

Louw, D.A., Van Ede, D.M. and Louw, A.E. 1998. **Human Development.** 2nd Ed. Pretoria : Kagiso.

Magane, M.S. 2000. **Father's absence : Psychological Experience of Black Rural Adolescents** M.A. (S.W) (Play Therapy) dissertation. Pretoria : University of Pretoria.

Mc Goldrick, M. & Carter, B. 1999. **Remarried families.** In Carter, B. & McGoldrick, M. (Eds) 1999. **The expanded family life cycle. Individual, family and social perspectives.** Third edition. Boston : Allyn & Bacon.

Miller, L. 1993. **Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage – current population Report.** Washington D.C : Government Print Office.

Mruk, C. 1995**. Self esteem – research, theory and practice.** New York : Sprinter Publishing – Company.

Noller, P.J.A, Denies, B. & Callan, V.J. 1994. **A longitudinal study of conflict in early marriages, Journal-of Social and Personal Relationships.** 233-252.

Papalia, D.E & Olds, S.W. 1986. **Human Development.** Third edition. USA : McGraw Hill.

Peterson, J. 1995. **Marital Disruption, Relationships and behaviour problems in children, Journal of marriage And the family,** 295 – 307.

Piaget, J. 1972. **Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood.** Human development, New York : Harcourt, Brace and World.

Polansky, N.A. 1977. **Social Work research.** Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

Robinson, M. 1991. **Family transformation through divorce and remarriage-**
A systematic approach. New Jersey : Prentice-Hall.

Rossi, A. Rossi, P.H. 1990. **Relations Across the Life Course of Human Bonding – Parent Child.** New York : Aldine de Gruyter.

Ruben, A. & Babbie, E. 1993. **Research methods for Social Work.** Second edition. Pacific Groves: Brook/Cole.

Schurink, E.M. 1998. **The methodology of unstructured face-to-face interviews.** In De Vos, A.S. (Ed.) 1998. **Research at grass roots: A primer for the caring professions.** Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Schurink, W.J., Schurink, E.M. & Poggenpoel, M. 1998. **Focus group interviewing and audio-visual methodology in qualitative research.** In De Vos,A.S. (Ed.) 1998. **Research at grass roots: A primer for the caring professions.** Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Smith, H.W. 1995. **Strategies of social research.   The methodological imagination.** New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Steinmetz, S.K., Clavan, S., Stein, K.F. 1990 . **Marriage and family Realities-Historical   and Contemporary Perspective.** New York : Harper And Ron Publishers.

Strydom, H. 1998. Ethical aspects of research in the caring professions. In De Vos, A.S. (Ed.) 1998. **Research at grass roots: A primer for the caring professions.** Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Strydom,H. & Delport, C.S.L. 2000a. **Information collection: document Study and secondary analysis.** In de Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche,C.B. & Delport,C.S.L. **Research at Grass Roots. For the social sciences and Human service professions.** 2nd Ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Strydom, H. & Venter, L.2002**. Sampling and sampling methods.** In De Vos, .A.S. Strydom, H. Fouche, C.b. & Delport, C.S.L. **Research at Grass Roots. For the Social Sciences and human service professions.** 2nd Ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Thompson, C.L. & Rudolph, L.B. 1996. **Counselling children.** Fourth edition. California : Brooks/Cole.

Wallerstein, J. & Kelly, J.B. 1992. **The effects of parental divorce: The Experiences of the child in Later Latency.** American Journal of Orthopsychiatry p256-269.

Zinn, M.B. & Eitzen, D.S. 1993. **Diversity in families.** 3rd Ed. New York: Harper Collins College.