

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERSPECTIVE ON THE CATEGORY ADOLESCENCE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to the problem stated in Chapter One, it needs to be stated here that the concept *adolescence* is as old, complicated and complex as mankind. This is evident from several attempts by many psychologists and educationists who have written in an endeavour to try and fathom the meaning of the concept adolescence. On the other hand, there is general agreement that "adolescence is a period of transition when the individual changes physically and psychologically from child to an adult" (Hurlock, 1973: 2). One must, however, bear in mind that such a simplistic definition does not fathom the complexities of adolescence. One may very well ask about the meaning of "child" and "adult" contained in the above definition. Certainly vast cultural and social differences make it difficult to have a single universally acceptable definition of adolescence.

It should be pointed out that each child experiences, to a greater or lesser extent, an increasing awareness of his body, wishes, attitudes, behaviour and actions as something quite apart from others. Gammage (1971: 91) points out that Western societies appear to see adolescence as a clearly separate and definite stage in personality formation and one brought about by biological changes, notably at the onset of puberty and critically influenced by cultural expectations. In black communities some adolescents experience that, as a group, they are subjected to condemnation, criticism and general devaluation

(Mathibe, 1992: 1). Some parents are often pessimistic about the future of their adolescent children while at school some teachers often view the performance of adolescents with suspicion and believe that they will not make it in life unless they change their attitude. According to Coleman (1978: 5) this juvenile period, also known as puberty and adolescence, sometimes constitutes a crisis period. It should, however, be borne in mind that adolescence cannot always be regarded as a crisis period, but it can also be a wonderful and peaceful experience - a period in which the adolescent experiences confidence and a feeling of adequacy (Hurlock, 1973: 393).

According to Mathibe (1992: 1), for the past decade, black early adolescence in urban areas have left an indelible mark on the minds of adults all over the world. This view is also held by the renowned statesman, Robert Kennedy (Tribute Magazine, July 1985: 75) when he asserts:

*The major concern of the young adolescent centres around a search for identity, questioning societal values and distrusting adults, as well as coping with the physiological changes of growing up.*

It is therefore evident that adolescents of today seek a grip on the inner-self (Erikson, 1965: 11) and search for self-identity (Engelbrecht, 1982: 100-102). They have the following questions uppermost in their minds: "Who am I? Where am I going?".

This prevailing uncertainty of the adolescent, resulting from his essential nature, requires help and support from adults who have already solved their adolescent insecurities and can guide the adolescent towards meaningful adulthood. The black adolescent in

particular, who is often also subjected to an array of social and economic deprivation, can only actualise his life through adult education and guidance.

## 2.2 CONCISE DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT ADOLESCENT

In most cases, disagreement about the meaning of adolescence stems from different assumptions about adolescents' characteristics and scope. Theoretical differences result from the diverse educational backgrounds of the investigators and their methods of studying human development.

A stark definition of adolescence, as Hopkins (1983: 2) states, is the period between childhood and adulthood. It is a period when much personal growth takes place and it is this growth - physical, psychological and social - that gives the period its special place within the field of developmental psychology. Kaplan (1986: 27) says it is a psychological process somehow associated with puberty, a process that will vary from person to person, family to family, society to society and from one epoch, era, century, decade to the next. Thus, the study of adolescent development in contemporary society seems to increasingly require information from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, biology and education (Steinberg, 1985: 3).

According to the above discussion, there can be no single universally accepted meaning of the concept adolescence, but its meaning depends largely on the perspective from which one is investigating the concept. In this respect, Lerner and Spanier (1980: 23-24) agree when they contend that "it has been argued that no one attribute alone can define the adolescent period". They further contend that, accordingly, limitations of each view

when considered alone can be noted and conversely, assets of each, when seen in the context of a multidisciplinary life span perspective, may be specified.

Peterson and Leigh (Gullotta, Adams & Montemayor, 1990: 97) say:

*The belief that it is normal for adolescents to become "disturbed" is one of the most common themes used to characterize the years between childhood and adulthood.*

They further assert that the dramatic metaphor of "storm and stress" is often used to portray the inner physical and biological forces that are supposed to appear with the onset of puberty. This simply means that the period of adolescence is characterized by certain dramatic developments in the child, being both biological and psychological.

For both the adolescents and their parents, adolescence is a time of excitement and anxiety, of happiness and troubles, of discoveries and bewilderment, of breaks with the past and yet of continuous childhood. Learner and Galambos (1984: 1) state that adolescence can be a confusing time, both for the adolescent experiencing this phase of life and for the people who are observing the adolescent's progression through this phase.

### 2.3 THEORIES ON ADOLESCENCE

Through systematic studies, controlled observation and experimental research, numerous theories have been advanced to explain the phenomenon of adolescence. Two major theories have been offered to account for the psychological characterisation of the

adolescent. Both these theories concur in viewing the period as a stressful time, thus necessitating the need for guidance.

### 2.3.1 The psychoanalytic perspective

Erikson, a follower of Freud, wrote extensively about identity-seeking in adolescence and defined identity in terms of self-perception, upon which one bases one's behaviour (Hopkins, 1983: 11). In Lloyd (1985: 221) Erikson claims that the upsurge of instinctive forces which occur during puberty, results in traumatic disturbances of the psychic balance, which in turn leads to aggression, ambivalence and non-conformity.

Blos (1967: 8) regards adolescence as the second individuation process which has a parallel with the first that occurs in the pre-school child. In view of the above statement, it can be assumed that "regression to earlier childhood behaviour and feelings" is necessary to enable the adolescent to establish close emotional family attachments.

Erikson further uses the term identity (ego-identity) which includes the self-concept as well as other determinants of personality. He remarks that:

*We deal with a process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities (Erikson, 1965: 22).*

Jacobs and Vrey (1982: 19) agree with this view and state that identity is multi-faceted since so many facets of the self can be distinguished, such as family role identity, family identity, self-identity.

According to Erikson (1965: 87) identity formation begins with the onset of life, but it is during adolescence that a new concept of the self should be formed which incorporates the biological and social changes. He remarks about establishing identity that one can only explore it by establishing its "indispensability in various contexts" (1965: 9) such as parent-child relationship, group membership, love relationship, vocational choice and drug abuse (1965: 288).

According to Erikson (1965: 261) these social contexts put pressure on the adolescent as he is busy facing his major task of determining who he is and where he is going. A so-called identity crisis is then generated. To overcome this crisis, the adolescent should consolidate all knowledge he has gained about his various self-images into a personal identity that shows continuity and awareness between his past and his future (Erikson, 1971: 63). Success in forming his identity at this stage becomes closely related to the adolescent's formulating a purpose in his life. It is indeed a search for meaning encompassing his future life roles. Failure to form his identity implies identity diffusion which leads to among others, problems of intimacy in interpersonal relationships, diffusion of time perspective and diffusion of concentration and competitiveness (Jacobs & Vrey, 1982: 36-37).

### 2.3.2 The psychosocial constructs of social competency in adolescence

This approach claims that stress emanates from the adolescent's position in society as a marginal person - neither child nor adult - coping with the role conflict and role transition in a world full of conflicting values and pressures (Lloyd, 1985: 221).

According to Bloom (Gullotta et al., 1990: 11) it may be a good thing that most adolescents don't read the literature on adolescence or they might turn around and go back to childhood because the list of tasks assigned by theorists and practitioners to this developmental period is lengthy.

Adapting Havighurst's (1972) daunting list of specific tasks and Erikson's (1980) panoramic poetry on psychosocial crisis, as well as some elements from other theorists (particularly Ausubel & Sullivan, 1970; Sikzentmihalyr & Larson, 1984), all are presented as configural views of adolescent development by Bloom (Gullotta et al., 1990: 11-17) as will be later outlined in this section. Bloom (Gullotta et al., 1990: 11-17) however, contends that this configuration of nested components includes the person, the relevant primary and secondary group and the social-cultural and physical environmental contexts in a given historical time frame.

#### 2.3.2.1 **Personal factors**

##### ■ **Changing physical body**

Here the developmental tasks are related to a changing physical body. These changes include biological changes such as development in bone structure, the onset of puberty as well as the changed meaning given to physical constants, such as the colour of skin and one's biological gender. Other developmental tasks in this respect include the actions one can take with regard to one's body such as nutritional habits, activities related to physical fitness, the augmentation of one's physique and sleeping patterns to replenish energy (Gullotta et al., 1990: 11-12).

■ **The developing cognitive structure**

Another aspect of adolescent development is evident in the development of cognitive structures. According to Gullotta et al. (1990: 12):

*Overall, cognitive structure refers to intelligence in the broadest sense, including specific pieces of information [both knowledge in the academic sense and 'street smarts' in the pragmatic sense] and the development of logical processing [Piaget] and problem-solving skills in general.*

It also includes the exercise of memory and one's inner imaginative life.

Whether or not it is appropriate to place the global Erikson concept of psychosocial identity under cognitive development, is unclear. Erikson (1965: 40) purports that:

*... the accrued confidence the inner sameness and continuity gathered over the past years of development are matched by the sameness and continuity in one's meaning for others, as evidenced in the tangible promise of careers and life styles.*

He further clarifies psychosocial identity as detecting an ideological seeking after an "inner coherence and a durable set of values." Such confidences and inner coherence probably belong to more than the pure cognitive realm, but this is not clear.

Gullotta et al. (1990: 12) cite Hirsch (1987) as saying that the concept of cultural literacy probably reflects the cognitive realm most completely, but his usage literacy is related to



adult performance (Gullotta et al., 1990: 12). In fact, the absorption of cultural literacy probably reaches its highest level for better or worse during the adolescent years because of universal public education (Gullotta et al., 1990: 12).

From the above statements it may be assumed that adolescence incorporates a recognition of change in all spheres: biological, psychological and social. Furthermore, adolescence is recognised in terms of culture. Kovach (1983: 9) states that it is generally described in terms of "rapid, multidimensional change." Thus the recognition of change in adolescence is especially notable in the view of adults throughout the ages.

The black adolescent in the single parent family is no exception to the above assertions. The black adolescent, like adolescents the world over, is often faced with a great task of coping with rapid change in the physical, sexual, psychological and cognitive structure. It is during these changes that he needs the support and guidance of the understanding adult. Ignorance on the part of the parent (which is sometimes the case with some single parents), of what happens during this stage of the child's development, will prove a disaster indeed.

#### ■ **The expanding affective structure**

The black adolescent's parents in general and single parents in particular, must be educated in contemporary life styles. Life styles are changing continuously. The black single parent must keep up with the revolution in life style. There is a tendency on the part of the black parents in general, and black single parents in particular, to cling to the past life styles in speech, dress, play and general conduct. They expect their children to also uphold these traditional behaviour patterns. This is a grave mistake and must be

avoided at all cost to enable the developing adolescent to explore his own world and feelings.

Adolescence is also the time of legendary urgency in sexual feelings as relevant hormones become active, and at the same time social contexts provide opportunities for exploring one's own and others' bodies (Gullotta et al., 1990: 12). In addition, affective structures include the expansion of feelings for others beyond egocentrism of earlier childhood and adolescence (Elkind in Gullotta et al., 1990) to the potential altruism of later childhood and adolescence (Mussen & Eisenberg in Gullotta et al., 1990: 12).

#### ■ **The behavioral repertoire**

Growing physical strength and agility combined with new social opportunities and obligations, mean that the adolescents may express themselves in less than well-coordinated ways that are new to themselves and possibly surprising to their significant others. On the other hand as Gullotta et al. (1990: 13) contend, some new behaviours in the adolescent's repertoire may lead to a decrease in competence such as when he or she learns both to drive and to drink. There is nothing to guarantee that developments related to competency are uniformly positive and progressive.

In as far as the black adolescent from a single parent family is concerned, new behaviours are not easily noticeable because of lack of exposure. This often leads to a decrease in competence because such an adolescent learns many things at the same time. His development is often negative and retrogressive in nature due to the family environment.

### 2.3.2.2 Interpersonal factors

#### ■ Changing relationships within the family

Adolescence, as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, requires the change from child-parent relationship to young adult-parent relationship. This may not be an easy change for either the adolescent or the parents. Provision of guidance in a school situation can, however, minimise the problems that may be encountered in this respect. According to Gullotta et al. (1990: 13) this change has been conceptualised in many ways, such as Ausubel's desatellitisation/resatellitisation, which emphasises the systematic properties of relating - first belonging to the family system and then to a peer system, with all the requisite roles and rules. In their opinion, a more appropriate term would be extrasatellitisation, referring to the fact that the adolescent does not so much lose one system as gain another.

It should also be noted that other important relationships in the family are the relationships with siblings. For example, older siblings might model the use of drugs, smoking and sexual activities for their younger siblings, intentionally or not.

It should be stressed that adolescents themselves should also learn to deal with the transitions their parents and grandparents may be going through at this same time, such as "midlife crisis" and the issues of retirement, ill-health or death.

The increasing importance of peer groups has been viewed as entailing a reduction of parental influence, but evidence suggests that long-term influence of the parents over major issues persists (Gullotta et al., 1990: 14).

The black adolescents in the single parent family may not be exposed to a family relationship like those who are living with both parents. They may not be observant to notice any change in the behaviour of the single parent, because they are not in the position to compare it with that of the other parent. The relationships within the single parent family may be totally different, because sometimes the single parent may be so committed by other family problems that there is no time to orientate the growing adolescent about the normal changes in life.

■ **Changing relationship with peers**

The general trend is towards the increasing importance of peer relationships, which provide vital intimate feedback to the adolescent in times of rapid personal and social change. According to Dreyer (1980: 75) the adolescent in traditional Zulu society was forced by customs to associate with his peer group only. Santrock (1981: 260) feels that being committed to cliques, clubs, organisations and teams often exerts powerful control over the lives of adolescents. As a result of this influence, group identity often overrides personal identity.

In Western culture, as Offer, Ostroy and Howard (1981: 122) state, the expectations of many adults are that peers will have a stronger influence on their children during adolescence than their own peers have on the adults themselves. This trend entails several facets that should be distinguished. In the first instance, there is the change from same-sex grouping (which occurs initially in response to differential rates of sexual maturity by which girls are one or two years ahead of boys), to mixed-sex groupings. Then there may be a change in pairing off from the same sex partner to the opposite sex friend and ultimately to opposite sex intimates (Gullotta et al., 1990: 14).

The function of peer group (or peer groups, because individuals belong to multiple groups that may or may not all share the same values), differs by gender. It would seem that boys receive pressure for sexual activity from their male peers and girls are more influenced by an immediate partner with regard to engaging in sex.

The influences of the peer group and pressure the peers exert on the adolescent are more noticeable in as far as the black adolescent from a single parent family is concerned. The black adolescent who grows up in a single parent family is more often than not inclined to learn from peers than from the parent, because the absence of the other parent deprives him/her of a role model. If such an adolescent is a girl living with a father, she is going to learn things pertaining to womanhood from other girls - and the same will apply to boys living with the mother only. Such a state of affairs could also have an impact on the black adolescent's career directedness, which may suffer due to economic hardships and lack of role models.

In addition to the above, the black adolescent in the single parent family may also experience problems regarding relationships with peers, resulting from inadequate relationships with parents of both gender. These inadequate relationships will probably also reflect in their relationships with the opposite sex. Boys living with fathers only may be reluctant to mix freely with girls, as may be the case with girls living with mothers.

### **2.3.2.3 Social relationships**

Adolescence is marked by an increased social awareness. It should be remembered, however, that every individual is a member of a particular community. As Sedibe (1991: 12) states:

*Man is essentially a social being and therefore has to live according to certain principles if he wishes to have good relations with his fellow man.*

Sedibe (1991) further contends that failure to attain this will have detrimental effects on both the individual and the community. It should therefore be noted that there are several types of significant others in the life of the adolescent. Accordingly a distinction can be drawn between primary group others, such as parents and peers, and people who are representative of secondary groups such as high school teachers and bosses (Gullotta et al., 1990: 15).

■ **Changing relationship with socially significant others in the education arena**

An adolescent may form specialised relationships with multiple teachers in junior and senior high school, in contrast to the diffuse relationship with the grade school teacher, who may have a primary group relationship with the young child. For college bound students, high school teachers become important as aids to realise their adult career options through advanced college education. At the other end of the high school continuum, teachers become veritable jailers for high school students who want to drop out of schools (Matriello in Gullotta et al., 1990: 15).

■ **Changing relationship with socially significant others in the employment arena**

Perhaps the most significant new social relationship for the adolescent is that with the employer, an adult usually completely separate from family or friends, who employs the youth based on his or her competence in performing required services. Possibly of equal

weight are the social relationships between the adolescent and co-workers, a new type of peer with frequency and proximity of interactions, like friends at school but in a different type of relationship. The new employee is on the low end of the status hierarchy even though all similar workers are theoretically on the same level. As Gullotta et al. (1990: 18) put it, the adolescent employee frequently needs to learn job skills, formal rules and informal mores (which may be foreign to the teenager's previous experiences in getting along with peers), in order to produce profitable outcomes for the employer.

■ **Changing relationships with socially significant others in the civic arena**

It should be noted from the onset that, although adolescents have always been citizens and have probably been involved in relevant activities such as obeying state laws and the like, their activities become more noticed and their responsibilities grow significantly during the teenage years. As an example, they may become taxpayers or involved in paperwork needed to apply for tax refund during this period of time. Adolescents may also become involved with voting, obtaining a driver's licence or licences for fire arms and the like. All these activities have correlate duties and privileges; all directly involve the individual and his or her state.

Although juvenile criminal justice procedures and penalties may be less harsh than with adult offenders, they can be very significant in the lives of youths who come up against them. As an example, Gullotta et al. (1990: 16) cite cases of youths put in jail for first time drinking and driving offenses, who commit suicide because they lack the maturity to effectively handle the stress. Such incidents emphasise the importance of guidance in orientating the youth to cope with problems of personal and social nature. A criminal record does in fact impose significant limitations on the youth in terms of future job

searching. In addition, youths are disproportionately represented as perpetrators in many types of crimes.

#### 2.3.2.4 Intercultural changes

- **The changing status of the adolescent in his or her culture or subculture**

Though cultures differ in how they handle the socialisation of infants, children and adolescents in terms of harshness or permissiveness (and in terms of the transitions between the stages), all cultures require their members to contribute to the continuity and development of the distinctive life style pattern. In every society norms are standards of propriety or impropriety in behaviour. They prescribe what is expected of an individual and also give details of what he may do in a given society. Norms can be regarded as the very fabric of each culture which they characterise (Sedibe, 1991: 32).

Gullotta et al. (1990: 16), on the other hand, contend that:

*The expectation, support and sanctions delivered by representatives of one's culture may differ by sex as well as age, but everyone must learn the larger value patterns of that group and which attitudes are consonant with them.*

They further indicate that cultural rituals define when children become adults in the eyes of the culture, for example with the bar or bar mitzvah or the weekly communion. This recognition confirms a limited adult status to youth in contemporary society as compared with earlier times.



Peer groups may also have similar entrance requirements such as a youth rite of passage, serving roughly the same functions as the adult-initiated forms but with a less pro-social orientation.

In a nutshell, it would seem that these rituals are devices to force the adolescents to consider their place in the social order - what new roles they will take and what route they will follow. Religious and civic rituals connect the individual and the larger human group in time (history of our kind), place (our land, our turf), and existential concept (the meaning of life and one's place in it).

#### ■ **The changing use of mass media**

The modern mass media (radio, television and print media) have enormous influence on all receivers, especially children and youth. This influence is cognitive as well as affective: its meanings are social as well as personal. The media convey lies as well as truths, and the audiences have to sort out which is which to the best of their ability. As example may be stated the events prior to the first non-racial elections in South Africa that were held on 26, 27 and 28 April 1994, where newspapers were preaching that people should stockpile because a crisis was imminent. Adolescents may therefore be interpreting mass media in ways not wholly intended by commercial developers or parents. Alan Bloom (1988) as cited by Gullotta et al. (1990: 17) for example, hypothesises that mass media music performs a quasi-sexual function for the mass youth who gyrate to its rhythmic pulsations while sexual innuendos freely pass across censored boundaries that the youth themselves cannot easily traverse.

### 2.3.2.5 The ecological dimension - the individual and his or her physical environment and times

#### ■ The changing physical world of the adolescent

A modern youth lives in a world that is remarkably smaller than that of his or her immediate or distant ancestor. Not only has modern transportation enabled youths to move about more rapidly and to greater distances, but modern communication has changed radically and these technological innovations of our time occur so rapidly that some commentators raise questions about the effects of change itself on the adaptation capacities of human beings (Toffler in Gullotta et al., 1990: 17). It would seem that teenagers bear the brunt of these changes as they force brave new worlds without the benefit of their elders' wisdom. Through guidance perhaps they may be assisted to adapt to these demanding changes.

The above approach claims that all stress emanates from the adolescent's position in society as a marginal person - neither child nor adult - coping with role conflict and role transition in a world full of conflicting values and pressures (Lloyd, 1985: 221). The mass media make great play with any sensational incident involving juvenile delinquency, and all other young people associated with that group are implicated. It cannot be assumed that, in the black community all adolescents involve themselves in hooliganism, drug abuse and so forth. Nevertheless, black adolescents in general have been labelled as the "lost generation". This is in agreement with the focal theory of Coleman (1978: 176) that:

- A few adolescents conform to the conventional picture of maladjustment.
- The different issues do arise at different periods during adolescence.

This focal theory explains how guidance can assist adolescents in coping with adjustment to change at any stage of their development.

## 2.4 THE LIFEWORLD OF THE ADOLESCENT

According to Dreyer (1980: 42) the life of a child is constituted by forming relationships with man, objects, oneself, ideas and deity.

*The child's lifeworld is not merely his geographical world, but also the totality of network of his meaningful relationships (Keniston, 1960: 100).*

The manner in which the black adolescent perceives his lifeworld is largely dependent on the influence of these relationships. The question at hand is, do these relationships influence the adolescent's perception and constitution of life in a meaningful way?

The aim of this section is to give an exposition of the lifeworld of the adolescent, as typically found in Western societies. The black adolescent will, however, be referred to more specifically. The content presented will be extrapolated where applicable.

### 2.4.1 Perception

Perceiving entails aspects such as knowing, facts, creations, thinking and propositions. The manner in which the black adolescent perceives his lifeworld, virtually means how he understands and sees himself, this world, the different relationships and deity. According to Sonnekus (1984: 63) perceiving is the intentional act of the total person in communication with reality.

#### 2.4.2 Peer group

One of the major influences in the adolescent's life comes from the peer group. Wattenberg (1973: 1993) refers to a peer group as people who have almost the same age and the same status.

In the black community, most adolescents struggle to emancipate from their parents. They often transfer their dependence on the peer group, whose values are sometimes in conflict with those of their parents. Learner and Galambos (1984: 126) say that for several reasons, it is often easier for younger people to conform to their peer-group norms than to adult norms. Adolescents in the peer group have the same type of clothing, haircut, language and life style. They learn competition, co-operating, social skills, values and purposes. This "virtually means that the peer group provides the adolescent with the opportunity to reduce the frustrations of adolescence and they also stabilize the transition period" (Ausubel, 1954: 384). The influence of the peer group will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

#### 2.4.3 The spontaneous dimension

The spontaneous dimension in the growth of the adolescent reveals itself in various ways. The cognitive life which particularly shows strong growth during adolescence, plays a role in the development of the spontaneous dimension (Garbers, Wiid, Myburgh, Van Biljon & Fourie, 1983: 3). These authors also refer to writers like Okun and Sasfy, Van Biljon, Piaget, Peterson and Kellan when they contend that the spontaneous discovery of the self and the associated self-awareness, as well as the formation of a concept of the self and self-knowledge, are made possible especially by the adolescent's greater cognitive

suppleness, extension of his intellectual abilities, increasing stronger focus on formal thought processes and his ability towards abstract and objective thinking about himself within social context.

According to Garbers et al. (1983: 4-12) the spontaneous dimension manifests itself in different ways, which they outline as follows:

- Coming to terms with the self or self-awareness.
- Establishing of an identity.
- Relationship with the family, school and society.
- Body-awareness.

#### 2.4.4 The relationship dimension

Man lives not in a vacuum but with objects and other people. Each and every person is born into a particular family before coming to school. The adolescent is also a member of a particular society or community. His relationships with his family, the school and the society are very important in his development. His interpersonal relationships are in fact co-determined by the norms of the society in which he finds himself. Schmidt (Garbers et al., 1983: 12) contends that the adolescent is led according to the norms within a specific cultural context towards the establishment of his own identity. In the next chapters the adolescent's relationships with his family, the school and society will be discussed in depth.

#### 2.4.5 Orientation towards adulthood

An analysis of the phenomenon *education*, reveals that its ultimate aim is to assist or guide the growing child who is not yet an adult, to attain adulthood. In educating him, the adult consciously and systematically gives way for the child to achieve adult status. The child, and the adolescent in particular, has to be oriented towards adulthood in order to live his own independent life, to follow his own career and know how to spend his free time.

##### 2.4.5.1 **Independent view of life**

As he grows the adolescent yearns for independence and he has his personal view of life. Because he wants to learn a number of things in life, he feels that he must take an active part in many activities. Participating provides the volatile adolescent pupil with the opportunity for self-expression, self-testing and the unfolding of his personality (Mohanoë, 1983: 62).

Self-participation evokes the desire for exploration and self-determination which are adult attributes. These activities help the adolescent to realise right from the beginning of his adult life that he can only be what he wants to be through his own determined efforts, by pulling up his bootstraps so that he can live his own life the way he wants to. The adolescent should be granted opportunities of experiencing things himself at this crucial stage (Sedibe, 1991: 31).

It should, however, be emphasised that it is not always possible nor desirable for adolescents to experience everything themselves, contrary to their explorative and

adventurous nature. They can certainly learn much from the experiences of others, even indirectly.

#### 2.4.5.2 Vocational independence

Today's adolescent is very much aware of vocational independence. In contrast with the traditional practice, where the father's occupation was transferred to his children, the adolescent wishes to select his own occupation. Adolescents plan earnestly for their future occupations and learn to cherish particular vocational aspirations.

For Garbers et al. (1983: 18-19) career directedness is very important in the development of the child towards meaningful adulthood. The search for identity is thus closely related to vocational choice, which is in turn related to and affected by socio-economic status, sex, parental attitudes schooling and personality. Lindhard (1974: 3) stresses the point that a career is not only a means of living but also a way of life.

In the light of the above discussion it is important to note that one of the major problems that face the adolescent is that to him, the adult world is associated with work, and therefore he must have direction about the type of work he is going to do. It could be assumed that the black adolescent from a single parent family needs more guidance in order to cope with the problem of indecision in this respect.

### 2.4.5.3 **Spending of free time**

There are many ways of spending free time, but the way in which every adolescent spends his free time depends on the influence of the family and the school, and the interests of the adolescent himself.

Lindhard and Africa (1982: 78) indicate that free time or leisure time is time of doing something different from one's work, and as such should not be wasted. The planning of leisure time will depend to a certain extent on the amount of total time a person has at his disposal. The manner in which the adolescent spends his free time also depends on his self-identity and will clearly indicate the way in which he structures his lifeworld. Guidance will play an important role in the life of the adolescent in the single parent family to assist him in structuring the profitable use of leisure time.

## 2.5 **SYNTHESIS**

In this chapter a literature review was undertaken to investigate how the adolescent perceives and constitutes his lifeworld. The study was based on existing literature, with a view to establish a fundamental theoretical basis for this research. Attention was given to concise definitions of the concept adolescence as well as theories on adolescence, namely the psychoanalytic perspective and psychosocial constructs of social competency in adolescence. Furthermore, the lifeworld of the adolescent in relation to his own perception, peer group, relationship dimension and orientation towards adulthood, were highlighted. Some of the problems relating to the above were discussed.





In the following chapter emphasis will be placed on the provision of guidance to the adolescent in general and in a single parent family in particular. This discussion will concentrate on personal guidance, social guidance, educational guidance and career guidance as well as meeting the needs of the adolescent in the single parent family.

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