

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters Two and Three a theoretical perspective as frame of reference was developed regarding the lifeworld of the black adolescent in the single parent family, as well as his guidance and counselling needs. It became evident that the network of relationships between the black adolescent in the single parent family and other people, as well as his personal, social and vocational needs, play a major role in the way he perceives himself and constitutes his lifeworld. Attention was also given to ways and means of providing guidance as well as counselling to the black adolescent in the single parent family, with in the home and school situation.

In this chapter the theoretical assumptions stated in Chapter Two concerning the above-mentioned, will be placed in empirical context. This means that an attempt will be made to obtain empirical information on the **significance of guidance** in the lifeworld of the black adolescent in the single parent family. The method of investigation, the research group, the measuring instrument and statistical techniques will be clarified.

A further objective of the empirical investigation is to explore the **educational situation** of the black adolescent in a single parent family, especially with regard to their need for

guidance. An additional objective is to establish the teachers' and parents' **knowledge and understanding** of the needs of black adolescents in a single parent family.

To come closer to the operationalisation of the theoretical frame of reference, the formulation of the following research questions seems fitting at this stage:

- How do adolescents from a single parent family experience their needs regarding personal, educational, social and career directedness in terms of the spontaneous dimension, interpersonal relationships and orientation towards adulthood?
- What is the nature of school guidance teachers' knowledge and understanding of the needs of black adolescents in the single parent family in terms of spontaneous dimension, interpersonal relationships and orientation towards adulthood?
- What is the attitude of the black single parent towards the needs of their children in terms of interpersonal relationships and career directedness?
- What role can guidance services play in black schools to assist black adolescents from single parent families in actualising their potential in terms of personal, social, educational and career directedness (vocational) needs?

The dimensions mentioned above embody educational criteria for the development of healthy black adolescents in the single parent family, as well as for guidance and counselling theory and practice. This will have impact on quality of work, the choice of career, as well as working and professional life.

## 4.2 METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research method for this study is two dimensional: A theoretical exploratory study was done in Chapter Two to understand the lifeworld of the black adolescent in the single parent family from a psychosocial perspective. Against this theoretical background, an empirical investigation is conducted. Certain assumptions are operationalised in the form of questions to gain more information on how the black adolescent in the single parent family perceives and constitutes his lifeworld. Answers to the research questions will lead to scientifically based suggestions regarding an educationally sound guidance and counselling programme for adolescent pupils from single parent families in schools.

## 4.3 THE SAMPLE

### 4.3.1 Population and subjects

For practical reasons it was decided to restrict the investigation to selected secondary schools situated within the Moretele area of the North West Province. The researcher is satisfied that this area is sufficiently representative of the broader South Africa with regard to secondary school black adolescents and the education they receive.

The pupil sample will consist of black standard 8 and standard 10 pupils of both genders. The reason why these two groups have been decided upon, is to make provision for two levels of black adolescents in the single parent family, and their development towards adulthood, as this will make comparison possible. The latter is also the reason why both

genders are involved in the investigation. The teacher sample will consist of male and female teachers.

#### 4.3.2 Sample sizes and sampling procedure

As analysis by means of descriptive and inferential statistics is anticipated, it is argued that a relatively large sample should be involved with due consideration of the practical research situation.

From all the schools in the area, three were randomly selected. From each of these schools alphabetical lists of all standard 8 and standard 10 pupils were obtained, boys and girls separately. From these lists a list of adolescents from single parent families was drawn (information about such children was obtained from guidance teachers). This was followed by the random selection of pupils from each school as follows: 10 boys and 10 girls from standard 8 and 10 boys and 10 girls from standards 10. A total of 120 was selected in this manner. It was also intended to select 30 female teachers and 30 male teachers from schools in the area, which may include teachers in the sample schools and other neighbouring schools.

### 4.4 **THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

#### 4.4.1 The choice of the instrument

The research instrument chosen for this study is a structured questionnaire. The researcher prefers a close-ended questionnaire which calls for brief answers and mere

indications (Ary, 1979: 25). The questionnaire has been chosen because of the advantage that all the respondents receive the same set of questions phrased in the same way (Sax, 1968: 214).

#### 4.4.2 Design of the questionnaire

During adolescence, the black adolescent in the single parent family experiences drastic changes in his mode of being. He experiences physical, emotional, cognitive and normative changes, which make him conscious of reality. In order to understand how the black adolescent in the single parent family perceives and constitutes his lifeworld, the questionnaire used should help him gain more insight into this world of the adolescent. The questionnaire consists of a pencil and paper test comprising items which must be answered on the questionnaire itself.

Two sets of questionnaires (Appendices One & Two) were designed as a means of answering the research questions formulated in paragraph 4.1. The questionnaire statements, which are based on the content of the literature study conducted in Chapter Two and Three, claim content validity. As the two questionnaires share the same themes, their statements are basically similar. They only differ in as much as they address different respondents, namely pupils and teachers respectively. The questionnaires consist of information about the following aspects of the black adolescent in the single parent family:

- Cognitive structure.
- Normative dimension.
- Social norm orientation.

- Relationship with parent.
- Relationship with peers.
- Relationship with teachers.
- Vocational awareness.

In the compilation of the questionnaires an attempt has been made to design statements, the answers to which will be representative of:

- The black adolescents in the single parent family's personal, social and educational needs on the one hand, and;
- School teachers' knowledge and understanding of the black adolescent in the single parent family's personal, social and educational needs on the other hand.

#### 4.4.3 Biographical data

To ensure anonymity of the respondents, no names are required for identification. Biographical data on the size of the family gives information about the living circumstances.

To gain more insight in the black adolescent in the single parent family's lifeworld, especially from sociological and educational situation, it is also important to obtain information concerning status of the parent (whether single, divorced or widowed) and the position of the child in the family.

## 4.5 **QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS REGARDING CAREER LIFE**

### 4.5.1 Background perspective

In order to make responsible conclusions regarding the perceptions of the adolescent on career life (especially in view of motivated recommendations on the improvement of existing career guidance practices), this chapter will endeavour to determine by means of a structured questionnaire, whether the perceptions of the youth correlate with reality.

The researcher wishes to thank the North West Province Education Department for permission to conduct the research at selected schools. Special thanks to the principals, teachers and pupils for their participation in the project.

### 4.5.2 Research by means of a questionnaire

#### 4.5.2.1 **The research group**

The research group contained 20 black Tswana speaking standard 8 and 10 pupils of both genders (a decision made after consultation with the Education Department). These 120 pupils represent randomly selected secondary schools in Makapanstad (the names of these schools are not identified, due to ethical considerations).

The researcher randomly selected the research group from the total available group of standard 8 and 10 pupils at particular schools and personally implemented the

questionnaire to uphold the criteria of uniform implementation (Smit, 1981: 20). De Wet et al. (1981: 152) mentions in this regard that a uniform implementation procedure is required to ensure uniform testing circumstances during different test sessions with different respondents. If each involved pupil is informed of the procedures in a uniform manner, telling them how to complete the questionnaire, this requirement will be met. Subsequently the criteria for compiling the questionnaire will be discussed.

#### 4.5.2.2 **Compiling the questionnaire** (Landman, 1980: 114-116; Landman, 1983: 1-5; Du Toit, 1985: 179-183; Gouws, 1988: 62-66)

In order to claim that the construction of the questionnaire is scientifically valid and acceptable, it is necessary to use the essences table below as a starting point in compiling the questionnaire.

The following procedure was followed in constructing the questionnaire:

FEATURES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THE YOUTH'S PERCEPTION ON CAREER LIFE
<p><b>1. Choice of question</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Question selection</li> <li>■ Question interest</li> <li>■ Question enthusiasm</li> <li>■ Question scrutiny</li> </ul>	<p>Questions of which the answers will be meaningful in solving the research problem, are selected.</p> <p>Questions are selected that should stimulate the curiosity of respondents.</p> <p>Priority is given to questions which will create enthusiasm among respondents, in order to motivate them.</p> <p>A thorough study of the research field is undertaken to highlight essences which may be formulated as questions.</p>	<p>Meaningful questions have been selected, for example questions that are related to the adolescent's perception on career life.</p>



<p><b>2. Question formulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Question phrasing</li> <li>■ Question meaning</li> <li>■ Question exactness</li> </ul>	<p>Essences are written as questions in a comprehensible manner.</p> <p>The respondents must understand the meaning of each word in the question.</p> <p>The meaning of each word in the question must be simple and unambiguous.</p>	<p>An effort was made to formulate questions in such a manner that they may not be incorrectly interpreted by standard 8 and 10 pupils.</p>
<p><b>3. Question reduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Question enlightenment</li> <li>■ Question concretisation</li> <li>■ Question specialisation</li> <li>■ Question clarification</li> <li>■ Question rationalisation</li> </ul>	<p>Each question (if possible) is subdivided into further, shorter questions.</p> <p>Each questions must be related to something that actually constitutes a problem.</p> <p>Each question should be focused on a single aspect of the research field.</p> <p>All possible signs of prejudice are removed from the questions.</p> <p>Questions are rewritten in terms of perceptions.</p>	<p>Each question in the questionnaire is reduced in such a manner that it asks the standard 8 and 10 pupils exactly and clearly what it is supposed to ask regarding their perceptions on career life.</p>
<p><b>4. Question classification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Question ordering</li> <li>■ Question purpose</li> </ul>	<p>Related questions are grouped together.</p> <p>Do the questions assist the researcher to clearly pursue the research objectives?</p>	<p>Related questions are grouped together in the questionnaire.</p>
<p><b>5. Question evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Question phenomenology</li> <li>■ Question testing</li> </ul>	<p>Will each question pass the test of phenomenological processing?</p> <p>How does each question rate as meaningful after the pretest?</p>	<p>Each question in the questionnaire has been evaluated phenomenologically.</p>
<p><b>6. Question structuring</b></p>	<p>Questions are structured to facilitate logical, systematic, unambiguous and motivated answers.</p>	<p>The questions are logical and well structured.</p>
<p><b>7. Application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Selection of respondents</li> </ul>	<p>Sampling techniques are used to randomly select respondents who may have the required information, and who will be willing to share this information.</p>	

## **Layout and structure**

The questionnaire in the present study was structured according to the above procedure in order to evaluate the perceptions of the adolescent regarding career life. In this manner existing career guidance practices may be investigated.

### 4.5.3 Interpretation of the questionnaire

#### 4.5.3.1 **Introduction**

According to Smit (1981: 1) each scientific field endeavours to unravel a specific, more or less defined segment of the "Umwelt". This knowledge cannot be obtained in a disorderly an unsystematic manner. It is clear that information obtained from the completed questionnaires must be described in order to draw conclusions (Hannah & Oosthuizen, 1984: 34). A method which lends itself fully to the exposition and interpretation of such information, is statistics, which is described by Kerlinger (Smit, 1983: 202) as follows:

*Statistics is the theory, discipline and method which may be applied for studying the quantitative data obtained from sampling observation, with the purpose of firstly studying the causes of variation in certain phenomena, secondly to determine whether hypothetical relations between phenomena should be accepted or rejected, and thirdly to make reliable observations and draw valid conclusions.*

The statistical methods to be used will depend on the *measuring scale* which will be applied. In the present study interval measuring will be used, which includes intelligence

measuring, achievement measuring and most of the educational measuring tests (De Wet, 1981: 130). A characteristic of this type of measuring is that, although there is a zero point, it is only of significance within the measuring scale. It cannot be deducted that a pupil who selects no correct answers in fact knows nothing at all. Likewise, it cannot be deducted that a respondent who answers 20 out of the 40 questions correctly, knows twice as much as that one who only has 10 correct answers out of 40. The intervals are thus equal according to the measurement instrument, but not necessarily equal with regard to the capabilities being measured. The following additional calculations are possible with the interval measuring scale (De Wet, 1981: 131):

- Calculation of the norm.
- Calculation of the standard deviation.
- Calculation of the correlation coefficient.
- Various statistical analyses, including among other, the chi-square test.

Subsequently it will be endeavoured to structure the information in such a manner that the phenomenon of the adolescent's perception on career life is clearly exposed.

#### 4.5.4 Interpretation of questionnaire data

The Education Act of 1967 (Act 39 of 1967 amended in Act 73 of 1969) determines that education should be provided according to the capability, aptitude and interest of each pupil and the needs of the country, and bearing in mind the aforesaid, that suitable guidance must be provided to each pupil (Pistorius, 1971: 354, 363-365).

The above statement implies that each pupil at the schools selected for this research receives guidance according to the same syllabus contents. For this reason the different schools and genders are regarded as a homogeneous group, which are subjected as a whole to the same criteria. For the purpose of this study a comparison is made between adolescents who revealed that they have certain problems making a career choice, and those who indicated that they have indeed made an accountable choice of career. It is postulated that there is a significant difference between the responses of the two respective groups on the questionnaire, on the basis of their differentiated statements.

It is therefore necessary to analyse each question separately to identify and describe basic features. The data are analysed according to different categories. Adolescents who have already made a career choice are indicated as certain, the others as uncertain. The numbers are indicated as percentages, approximated to one tenth of the integer.

#### **4.6 RATIONALE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

##### **4.6.1 The dimensions and their related questions**

The dimensions discussed in the previous chapters are applicable here. These dimensions with their related questions and statements will be presented here together with the questions and statements that represent the divisions. Mention should be made that only questions or statements from Questionnaire A (for pupils - Appendix One) will appear because those of Questionnaire B (for teachers - Appendix Two) resemble those of Questionnaire A. This procedure will be followed even in the next chapter. Some of the questions and statements are taken or adapted from those of Dreyer (1980: 123-149) and from Sedibe (1991: 63-66) and a few from Mathibe (1992: 98-106). The divisions serve

as a rationale for the questions and statements related to them. It must be kept in mind, however, that the divisions are interrelated, which means that statements could fit more than one dimension or division for the operational research purpose. However, no question or statement will be related to more than one dimension. Any overlapping will however receive attention in the discussion of results (Chapters Five and Six).

The questions asked in the questionnaires are based on assumptions as stated in the literature review. Attention is focused on the relationships of the black adolescent in the single parent family with parents, teachers and peers in the constitution of a lifeworld and how guidance can assist the adolescent in this respect.

Reference to the subject's response to certain aspects will be referred to in the text by means of citing the card number (C) assigned to each range of 80 responses during the statistical calculation; and the variable number (V) in the questionnaire, for example (C1: V10) will refer to card number 1, variable number 10 and question 13 (see Appendices One & Two).

Because the black adolescent in the single parent family finds himself in a period of rapid change - physically, socially and otherwise, the following aspects are included in the questionnaires:

#### **4.6.1.1 The cognitive structure**

For any child to learn effectively, he has to experience love, understanding and trust. Sonnekus (1968: 25) refers to the child as someone who wants to be a person in his own right. It is especially during adolescence that identity formation takes place, involving

intense cognitive development (CI: V29; CI: V30). The transition from concrete operation to formal operations according to Piaget, involves rational and abstract thinking. The black adolescent in the single parent family, it is assumed, is able to perform a variety of mental operations on hypothetical prepositions (Engelbrecht, 1982: 80). It should however be noted that, as Freeman (1993:157) puts it:

*There is a growing anxiety in South Africa regarding the capacity of the present generation of black township youth to play a constructive social and political role in South Africa.*

He further contends that the reason for this concern is:

*As with all black people in South Africa, township youth have suffered the indignity and dehumanization of apartheid. Many have lived in poor and sometimes impoverished conditions and have endured high levels of crime (1993: 157).*

The above statements are also true with regard to the adolescent in the single parent family whose cognitive development is often hampered by the social conditions under which he lives (C1: V48).

#### **4.6.1.2 The normative dimension**

Adolescence is a stage that brings a shift from moral realism to moral relativism (Jerslid, 1963: 42). Adolescents are characteristically optimistic about their personal futures and

lives, though cynical and sceptical about the rest of the world (Rice, 1990: 8). This is also applicable to the black adolescent in the single parent family.

During adolescence, moral judgement is always revealed in a given situation comprising a number of contributory factors such as:

- The concept of self-awareness.
- The role played by others.
- The relationship with others.

In both questionnaires an assessment is being made whether the black adolescent in the single parent family shows any discrepancy between his stated moral principles and his actual behaviour (C1: V22).

As Ramphela (1992) states, South Africa is largely in a state of:

*... social disintegration and to prevent further decline and to construct society positively, action is urgently needed at policy and grass-roots level. At present political groups are in the process of developing policies which it is believed will lead to a safer, more productive society (Freeman, 1993: 157).*

The black adolescent in the single parent family wants to assert his independence from the adult authority (C1: V27), partly to convince members of the peer group that he is as important as other people are (C1: V39).

Moral education in homes which are disrupted by death, divorce or desertion, leave a mark on the black adolescent's lifeworld, hence some of such adolescents who grew up in single parent families are sometimes prone to delinquency and abuse drugs as well as consume alcohol (C1: V72).

#### 4.6.1.3 **The social norm orientation**

According to Freeman (1993: 157) it is difficult to have a definite picture of psychological problems, and social maladaptation is difficult to measure. However, Freeman (1993: 157) gives the following statistics concerning a recent study by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), in which it is found that:

*5% of South African youth were, in their terminology, "lost", 27% marginalised, and 43% were found to be "at risk" (Everett & Orkin, 1993).*

These figures, it is assumed, were slightly higher in the African population alone (Freeman, 1993: 157). Though the accuracy of measuring mental health empirically may be questioned (Miller & Swartz, 1992), it is certain that a large number of township youth have been detrimentally psychologically affected by various forms of Apartheid and violence. Though psychological and social consequences are overt for many, for the adolescent in the single parent family included in this study, the effects may only become apparent in the long term.

Staker en Moosa (1992: 142) write:

*These traumas will undoubtedly break the spirit of many and will force others into the development of adaptational patterns which will facilitate their survival in the short term but which will limit their development in the long term.*

The following questions in both questionnaires are related to the above statement in relation to the black adolescent in the single parent family:

- Question 7: Would you like to take up any career as long as it is a highly paid one? (C1: V52)
- Question 51: If someone were to give a series of talks on marriage, divorce, single parenting and relationships with the opposite sex, would you like to attend these? (C1: V54)

#### 4.6.2 Relationship with parent

The following dimensions need to be explored.

- A need for open communication which is essential in order to alleviate conflicting perceptions and feelings between black single parents and their adolescent children (C1: V37; C1: V39; C1: V37; C1: V34; C1: V35).
- A need for adequate assistance with the school work of their children by single parents to avoid their children from experiencing learning problems (C1: V36).

- As a learning and becoming being, the black adolescent in the single parent family needs aid and guidance of parents (C1: V12; C1: V15; C1: V20; C1: V31; C1: V33). This is necessary because parents have already paved the way to adulthood. It is therefore important to explore how the black adolescent in the single parent family perceives his lifeworld against the background of his family situation, hence the following questions:
  - With whom do you stay? (C1: V7)
  - What is the marital status of your parent with whom you stay? (C1: V8)
  - Of the children in the family you are? (C1: V9)

#### 4.6.3 Relationships with peers

When seeking detachment from the parent as being part of his development phenomenon, the black adolescent in general often adheres to the ideas and standards of his friends (C1: V48; C1: V49; C1: V50). The black adolescent in the single parent family's relationship with peers could have a great influence on the perception and constitution of a lifeworld (C1: V24). The black adolescent in the single parent family's ability to socialise with the peer group can be deluded from his ability to:

- Prefer to discuss personal problems with friends (Question 15 - C1: 18).
- Get on well with most pupils at school (Question 44 - C1: V47).
- Like to know how to make and keep friends (Question 45 - C1: 48).
- Conform to norms and follow friends most of the time (Question 46 - C1: 49).

#### 4.6.4 Relationships with teachers

The black adolescent's relationships with teachers often reveals that the adolescent is in need of an understanding adult with whom he can discuss his personal problems (C1: V42). The black adolescent in the single parent family needs a great deal of encouragement from teachers to continue and persist with his education (C1: V41). The black adolescent likes to have more individual attention from teachers (C1: V45), often confides in teachers and gets on well with most of them (C1: V46).

#### 4.6.5 Vocational awareness

Whether the majority of black adolescents in general and those from single parent families in particular will manage to develop positive personal identities which contribute to social and economic growth, despite past and present inhibitions, will depend on a number of social, economic and psychological shifts (Freeman, 1993: 162).

Despite the above, the black adolescent in the single parent family would like to receive adequate vocational guidance at school (C1: V43). The black adolescent in the single parent family also would like to take up any career one day as long as it is a highly paid one (C1: V52). He is confronted with the problem of which career to follow (C1: 57; C1: 58). What is also important here is that the black adolescent in the single parent family depends much on the information he gets at school concerning future plans (C1: V59). He also would like to learn what he is going to do later in life (C1: V60), and is also concerned about the subjects he is doing at school (C1: V61). As Freeman (1993: 162) puts it:

*If you feel that they do not have a meaningful future, many more than at present are likely to gravitate to the margins of society. This will, in turn, further undermine the ability of any social policy to reach positive fruition.*

In view of the above, the black adolescent in the single parent family should remain constantly aware of the type of careers that will be available for him.

#### 4.7 ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Procedure to be followed with pupils:

The overall administration, distribution and supervision of the questionnaire is mainly the personal responsibility of the researcher. Where necessary and expedient, selected teachers will be used as proctors to assist with the distribution and collection of questionnaires. However, in all important aspects, the researcher will take complete responsibility for the administration of the questionnaire.

At every seating, the first thing to be done is to put pupils at ease. This is done by explaining to them the objective of the research and giving them assurance of the confidentiality in the treatment of their responses and the value thereof. This procedure is meant to establish rapport. After this, instructions will be read out and pupils will be allowed to ask questions. Examples will be done to ensure that everybody understands what is expected before proceeding with the actual questionnaire.

#### 4.7.1 Reasons for administration procedure

The purpose of the questionnaire for teachers is to find out what teachers think the needs of the adolescent in the single parent family are, and how to meet these needs.

The questionnaire with the same number of questions containing the same information will be distributed to male and female teachers of the sample schools and other schools if necessary, to meet the required number of teachers needed for this research. As in the case of pupils, teachers will firstly be briefed about the importance of the questionnaire and be told that they are free to complete it or not. It will also be explained that at a later stage feedback will be given to schools about the outcome of their responses to the questionnaire.

#### 4.7.2 Pilot research

A pilot study is conducted in order to determine whether the items of the questionnaire possess the desired qualities of measurement and discrimination or not (Tuckman, 1978: 225).

In this study one high school in the same area was selected for the pilot research (this school is easily accessible and does not form part of the research sample). Twenty standard 8 pupils (10 girls and 10 boys) and twenty standard 10 pupils (10 girls and 10 boys) were asked to complete the questionnaire. Both female and male teachers of the same school were also asked to complete the questionnaire for teachers. Both pupils and teachers were then asked to report any ambiguous or unclear questions and statements



if any. The necessary, minor adjustments were made - thus the present questionnaire was finalised on the basis of the improvements on the original one.

#### 4.8 **SYNTHESIS**

The research design as outlined in this chapter reveals that this study is exploratory in nature. In order to guard the anticipated results, care should be taken in the administration of the questionnaire to avoid unnecessary spoiled papers, since the data will be analysed by computer. In the next chapter, a detailed analysis of data will be made, to be followed by the results and the findings of the information obtained from the responses.

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