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

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To my little friends, Light and Dripping

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

To Carl and Ady

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

To my beloved family

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

To my mother

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ABSTRACT

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

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

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

SUMMARY

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

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

In this study, I had two aims, namely,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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