

# **Gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood**

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**Gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria

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**PRETORIA  
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I would like to thank Almighty God for guiding me throughout my journey. *Yehovha I murisi wa mina* (The Lord is my Shepherd, Psalm 23:1).

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- ✚ To the two study participants, thank you for allowing me to share your story with the world.

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## ETHICS STATEMENT

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research approval. The author declares that he has observed the ethical requirements in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

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Elvis Koketso Mashaba  
April 2019

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# ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



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Faculty of Education

## RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

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- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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I, Elvis Koketso Mashaba (student number 29156816), hereby declare that all the resources consulted are in the reference list and that this study titled: *Gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood* is my original work. This dissertation has not been previously submitted by me for any degree at another university.

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Elvis Koketso Mashaba

April 2019

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## DECLARATION OF EDITING

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Elvis Koketso Mashaba's mini-dissertation, **Gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood**, was language-edited by me between August 2017 and April 2019.

It is, of course, the prerogative of the writer to accept or reject my suggested changes.



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# ABSTRACT

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## Gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood

by

**Elvis Koketso Mashaba**

Supervisor: Dr. Suzanne Bester

Degree: M. Ed. (Educational Psychology)

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore and describe how two gay male parents transitioned to parenthood. The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) theoretical model was used as the theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of the two participants in the study. The study also used an interpretivist paradigm and explorative case study design. The participants were purposely selected, and the data were generated by means of a semi-structured interview. The findings indicate that the participants experienced similar resistance from their families of origin after 'coming out' to them. The ability of one of the participants to become a parent was questioned. The participants in the study, like most couples, considered various factors such as their financial situation and their medical aid benefits before they decided to become parents. They also had to consider their pathway to parenthood, which in their case was adoption. The participants faced many challenges during the adoption process such as finding a country that allowed gay men to adopt, having limited adoption options due to changes in the law, and trying to get paternity leave. They reported that as parents they felt marginalised by the school system and also by having to deal with insensitive and uncomfortable questions from members of society about their family identity. Their children also experienced bullying at school. They were, however, able to establish a strong family and felt fulfilled in their role as parents.

### Key words

- Challenges
- Experiences
- Family Identity
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual and Others (LGBTIQA+)
- Transition
- Parenthood
- Pathway

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# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Worldwide, the number of same-sex couples who become parents is increasing (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007). The desire to become parents among same-sex couples is similar to that of heterosexual couples, which includes wanting to nurture and raise children and achieve a sense of family (Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padrón, 2010). Research comparing lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples during the transition to parenthood reveals that all these groups share similar challenges when they become parents (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007).

These challenges include sleep deprivation, reduction in time spent as a couple (O'Neill, Hamer, & Dixon, 2012), changes in the quality of the romantic relationship (Goldberg & Sayer, 2006), and increased stress levels (Lavner, Waterman, & Peplau, 2014). In addition, new parents experience challenges regarding the division of household responsibilities, working longer hours to increase income, and leaving paid employment to take care of their children (Farr & Tornello, 2016).

Although the transition to parenthood for heterosexual as well as same-sex couples presents similar challenges, same-sex couples have to negotiate additional challenges on their way to becoming parents (Farr & Tornello, 2016). These challenges include choosing a pathway to parenthood and facing discrimination and stigmatisation as their suitability to become parents is often questioned because of their sexual orientation (Farr & Tornello, 2016).

The pathways to becoming parents for same-sex couples vary (Dempsey, 2013). One option is through past heterosexual relationships where they co-parent with a heterosexual parent. Other options include adoption, fostering, co-parenting with lesbian parents, surrogacy, and donor insemination (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). Some of the challenges facing same-sex couples are deciding who will carry the child, choice of sperm donor, and whether they need a biological connection to the child (Goldberg, 2006).

Same-sex couples have to consider their financial status extra carefully before becoming parents because medical screening, donor insemination, prenatal care, preparation for birth, and legal fees can add substantially to the financial burden they have to take on (C. J. Patterson, 2000). If same-sex couples are not strong enough financially, these expenses may prevent them from becoming parents (Mitchell & Green, 2008).

Same-sex couples often experience discrimination and stigmatisation from health care professionals, friends, and relatives because of their sexual orientation (Farr & Tornello, 2016). Cases of homophobia



have been reported with some medical professionals refusing to assist couples with donor insemination (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006). Furthermore, some same-sex couples still encounter difficulties with adoption procedures due to religious and political opposition to their lifestyle (Goldberg, 2010).

Stigmatisation can have a negative effect on gay parents' perceptions of parenthood and reduce their desire to become parents (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Same-sex parents consequently need strong social support from extended family members, friends, and other same-sex parents who chose a similar pathway to parenthood (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

Research on same-sex couple parenting in the 1980s focused mainly on same-sex parents with children from previous heterosexual relationships (Barret & Robinson, 1990; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Bigner 1999; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Bozett, 1980, 1988). Later research tended to concentrate on same-sex couples becoming parents within their lesbian and gay identities (Bergman et al., 2010; Downing, Richardson, Kinkler, & Goldberg 2009; Gates et al., 2007; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Mallon, 2004; Matthews & Cramer, 2006; Norton, Hudson, & Culley, 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2006).

Research has also been done on the legal rights of same-sex couples in their particular pathways to parenthood (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Kelly & Surtees, 2013; Philips-Nootens & Lavallée, 2003; Touroni & Coyle, 2002). Research is also being conducted increasingly on same-sex parents and their children's experiences (Goldberg, Gartrell, & Gates, 2014). Some researchers have investigated the social construction of the families of same-sex parents and how it differs from that of heterosexual-headed families (Breshears, 2010; Dunne, 2000; Lev, 2006; Mallon, 2000; C. J., Patterson & Riskind, 2010; Suter, 2008).

Research that focuses specifically on how couples transition to parenthood has focused predominantly on heterosexual couples and the changes they have to navigate (Brotherson, 2007; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Keizer, Dykstra, & Poortman, 2010; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 2002; Moreno-Rosset, Arnal-Remón, Antequera-Jurado, & Ramírez-Uclés, 2016). Even though research on same-sex couples is increasing, the literature on how these couples transition to parenthood is limited (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg et al., 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Goldberg, Smith, & Kashy, 2010; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; C. J. Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004; Perry-Jenkins, Goldberg, Pierce, & Sayer, 2007).

Furthermore, most of the literature on the transition to parenthood of same-sex couples deals with lesbian mothers (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Breshears, 2010; Goldberg, 2006, 2010, Kershaw, 2000; Suter, 2008). The findings from these studies tend to be generalised to gay fathers (Bergman et al., 2010) with relatively few studies covering gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, Downing, et al.,

2012; Goldberg, Smith, et al. 2012; Goldberg et al., 2010; Mallon, 2004; C. J. Patterson, 2013; Tornello, Kruczkowski, & Patterson 2015).

Furthermore, the few studies that have been conducted on same-sex parenting are internationally based, which means that the findings cannot easily be generalised to South African gay male parents. Only a few studies have specifically examined gay male parenting and raising children in South Africa (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2014; Lubbe, 2007, 2008; Morison & Lynch, 2016). The aforementioned studies dealt with same-sex couples' pathways to parenthood, challenges that lesbian-headed families experience, and the family identity of lesbian-headed families. The transition to parenthood of gay male couples in South Africa remains a largely unexplored research area.

Similarly, research on sexuality and gender identity is based mostly on western findings on white, middle class lesbian and gay individuals. Few studies in South Africa have dealt with Africans' sexual and gender identities (Epprecht, 2013; Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Lynette, 2014; Tamale, 2011). The history of African sexuality can be found in folklore, traditional songs, dance, folk art, body markings, jewellery, names, and naming systems (Tamale, 2011). Colonialist researchers in the 19th and 20th centuries generally misrepresented African sexuality and tended to degrade it and humiliate Africans (Tamale, 2011). The language used to define sexually diverse individuals such as the term LGBTIQ+ is rooted in western colonialism and clearly excludes Africans. This was evident in a study by anthropologist Jane Kenda in 1998, where she found that Lesotho women frequently participated in woman-to-woman sexual relationships called *batsoalle* (Tamale, 2011). These women did not consider these relationships as lesbian or homosexual as many western researchers would categorise them, but rather as friendship relationships (Tamale, 2011). The findings of Reid's (2013) study on gay identity in a small township in Pietermaritzburg involving South African black men were similar. Some of the men in the study had male-to-male sexual relations even though most of them were married to women. These men engaged in male-to-male sex mainly for sexual pleasure and financial benefits and did not identify themselves as gay or bisexual. This raises concern regarding the use of western identity categories such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual in connection with African individuals.

My motivation for embarking on the present study arose from working with families from same-sexparenting households during my Master's degree training as a student psychologist and also from my keen interest in family studies. During my interaction with same-sex families, I saw the need for information on effective support structures for gay male-parented families. The current poor support structures can be attributed to a lack of knowledge and the many social and institutional barriers in society today (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The number of same-sex couples who become parents is increasing across the world. Because most of the research on the subject is internationally based, a gap exists in the research on and knowledge of how

gay males transition to parenthood in South Africa. This study hopes to contribute to filling this research and knowledge gap.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore and describe how the gay male parents in the study transitioned to parenthood. For the purposes of the study, transition to parenthood was defined as the “period of time from the preconception parenthood decision through the first months after birth of the baby during which parents define their parental roles and adjust to parenthood” (Manning, 2006, p. 496).

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **1.4.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study was guided by the following primary research question:

What were the experiences of two gay male parents in their transition to parenthood?

#### **1.4.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- How did the gay male parents in this study come to the decision to be parents?
- What pathway to parenthood did the gay male parents in this study choose and why?
- What experiences of parenthood did the gay male parents in this study have?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

To date, only a limited number of studies in South Africa have examined how gay male parents transition to parenthood (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2014; Lubbe, 2007; Morison & Lynch, 2016). The present study attempted to fill this knowledge gap by focusing specifically on such a transition. The study will inform our understanding of the specific lived experiences of the two parents in the study such as the challenges they faced and may also contribute to further research.

The study has significance for our broader society in that only recently have the legal rights of same-sex couples to become parents been acknowledged. The study hopes to inform society about the challenges faced by same-sex couples in their transition to parenthood.

The study also has significance for me personally. Interacting with the participants in the study has given me knowledge that I will need when working with same-sex couples as an educational psychologist in future and has answered many of the questions I had about how gay male parents in South Africa transition to parenthood.

## **1.6 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study followed an interpretivist paradigmatic approach, that is, an approach that focuses on participants' subjective experiences and meanings (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). A qualitative methodological paradigm was used as a means of understanding human experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I considered a qualitative approach appropriate as the aim of the research was to explore gay male parents' experiences in their transition to parenthood.

An exploratory case study design was followed, and the data were collected by means of a semi-structured, face-to-face interview with the gay male parents. At the time of the study, the gay male parents were in a committed relationship and raising children in South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants on the basis of certain desired characteristics (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), and the data were captured by means of an audio recording. The interview was then transcribed verbatim for the data analysis process.

Thematic inductive analysis was used to analyse the data, and strict ethical standards for conducting research were adhered to with regard to confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Lastly, I adopted the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects as spelt out by Shenton (2004). The research methodology, ethical guidelines, and quality criteria are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was conducted in terms of family stress and coping theory (McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, & Fromer, 1995) and leant heavily on the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) theoretical model, which highlights the connection between family stress theory and the family resilience perspective (J. M. Patterson, 1988).

The FAAR model has four constructs: family demands, family capabilities, family meanings, and family adjustment or adaptation (J. M. Patterson, 2002). Family demands include normative and non-normative stressors, ongoing family strains, and daily hassles. Family capabilities include tangible and psychosocial resources and coping behaviours. Family meanings involve the extent to which family members can protect their families, and family adaptation refers to family willingness to change prior values and beliefs (J. M. Patterson, 2002). The theoretical model is discussed further in Chapter 2.

## **1.8 ASSUMPTIONS**

The study was based on the assumption that the participants in the study would be open and frank about how they transitioned to parenthood. Transitioning to parenthood is a unique and personal experience for gay male parents. The process of transitioning to parenthood is stressful and includes factors such as financial considerations, positive and/or negative changes, parental skills, and social support. The

experiences of parenthood are determined by a couple's personalities, their own experience of raising children, and their views on parenthood.

## **1.9 DELIMITATIONS**

The study was delimited to the experiences of two gay male parents, and the data collection was delimited to one semi-structured interview, a research diary, and field notes. A further delimiting factor was the methodology that allowed the use of a small sample.

The study was also delimited to the FAAR theoretical model, which was used to better understand the gay male parents' experiences in their transition to parenthood and to guide the interview questions and data analysis.

## **1.10 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

The concepts used in the study are explained below.

### **1.10.1 LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX, QUEER, ASEXUAL AND OTHERS (LGBTIQA+)**

The term LGBTIQA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and other individuals (Victor, Nel, Lynch, & Mbatha, 2014). The LGB refers to sexual orientation, the T to gender identity, the I to biological variants, the Q to a queer identified person, the A to asexual, and + to other non-conforming minorities (Victor et al., 2014). The terms lesbian and gay refer to individuals who are attracted to members of the same sex, while bisexual refers to individuals who are attracted to members of both sexes (Moleiro & Pinto, 2015). LGBTIQA+ individuals are grouped together because they experience similar challenges such as marginalisation, exclusion, discrimination, and victimisation in a heteronormative and heterosexist society (Victor et al., 2014). Other factors taken into consideration in the definition are the influence of gender, socioeconomic class, ability, and spirituality (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). However, the term LGBTIQA+ is not used universally, and there is also little consensus on its precise meaning (Dempsey, 2013).

South Africa has a history of colonialism, apartheid, and dominance over Africans. It is therefore necessary to question categories such as LGBTIQA+ in African settings as they may not reflect how sexually and gender diverse African people see themselves in South Africa (Reygan & Lynette, 2014). Msibi (2012) says that defining sexually and gender diverse minorities is problematical as labelling individuals as lesbian, gay, or transgender associates them with their sexual practices or constructed gender identification. Msibi (2012) refers to sexually and gender diverse minorities as queer rather than using LGBTIQA+ categories. Queer theory acknowledges that self-identification can shift, can be fluid, and is a complex activity (Msibi, 2012). Morris (2000) adds that the term queer does not force any individual to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual but refers rather to individuals who feel marginalised by society. Queer acknowledges individuals

as sexual beings whose sexuality is fluid and multifaceted depending on space, time, and context (Gamson & Moon, 2004).

Many sexually and gender diverse acts in South Africa occur in terms of African culture (Epprecht, 2013; Mkasi, 2016; Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006). Some African cultures require individuals to become sangomas if they experience an ancestral calling. Sangoma training can be associated with same-sex sexual activity depending on the sexual gratification required by the ancestor (Epprecht, 2013; Mkasi, 2016; Morgan & Reid, 2003; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006). Ancestors are spirits that sometimes need to reside within a living being. They may seek sexual satisfaction, which can be achieved only through the physical being of the chosen African individual (Epprecht, 2013; Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006). A female sangoma may have the calling of a male ancestor who may seek females as his lovers, and a male sangoma may have the calling of a female ancestor who may choose men as her lovers (Epprecht, 2013; Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006). This will require training and discipline in the choosing of lovers. Furthermore, it is not unusual for a male sangoma to behave like a woman or for a female sangoma to behave like a man. Spirits may be able to take over the spiritual body of the sangoma and cross gender boundaries (Mkasi, 2016). Africans thus experience sexuality and gender diversity differently to westerners, and the use of the term LGBTIQ+ by academics may therefore be unfamiliar in African communities (Reygan & Lynette, 2014).

In this study, I adopted Victor et al.'s (2014) definition of LGBTIQ+ as a group of people who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and other non-conforming minorities. The definition acknowledges that LGBTIQ+ individuals experience similar challenges such as marginalisation, exclusion, discrimination, and victimisation in a heteronormative and heterosexist society as reported in research findings.

### **1.10.2 TRANSITIONING TO PARENTHOOD**

The Children's Act of South Africa (Act No. 38 of 2005) (The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2006) states that a person defined as a parent of a child can be any person who has parental responsibilities and rights over the child, which can include the grandparents, brothers, uncles, or cousins of the child or any other person the child has a psychological and emotional relationship with. This definition indicates that parenthood in South Africa includes parents who are biological or non-biological relatives such as extended family members who are involved in caring responsibilities and building a psychological and emotional attachment with a child irrespective of legal parental rights. Transitioning to parenthood refers to a period of change for couples (Price, McKenry, & Murphy, 2000). The change occurs with the arrival of a child into the family, which is the key element in the transition to parenthood (Cowan & Cowan, 2000). Parenthood is considered a mental state, a stage of life, a personal choice, and a psychological and biological transition (Swain, 2011). Transitioning to parenthood involves periods of adjustment where the lifestyle of the couple

is modified from one stage to another (Moreno-Rosset et al., 2016). In this study, the transition to parenthood refers to the changes that occurred in a gay male couple with the arrival of a new child.

### **1.10.3 PATHWAYS TO PARENTHOOD**

Pathways to parenthood refers to the decisions parents make regarding the route(s) they will take in their journey to becoming parents (C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). The present study focused on the pathways that the same-sex parents in the study chose in their transition to parenthood. One of the pathways that same-sex parents can choose is to have children that are derived from a heterosexual relationship (through co-parenting with the heterosexual parent from a past relationship or divorce). Other pathways involve same-sex couples having children within their gay identities (C. J. Patterson, 2006). This includes adoption, fostering, co-parenting, and surrogacy or donor insemination (Mallon, 2004; Morison & Lynch, 2016). Some gay males in South Africa may choose to become parents through social fathering, which entails becoming involved in a child's life even if they are not biologically related to the child (Morison & Lynch, 2016; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Most same-sex couples choose the two pathways of adoption and surrogacy (Doss & Rhoades, 2017). In this study, I adopted the definition of C. J. Patterson and Riskind (2010), which defines pathways to parenthood as decisions parents make regarding the route(s) they will take in their journey to becoming parents.

### **1.11 SUMMARY**

This chapter introduced the research topic and provided an overview of the study. I first discussed the introduction and rationale for the study as well as the purpose of the study as part of the topic of transitioning to parenthood. I then discussed the primary and secondary research questions as well as the research design and methodology employed in the study. Finally, I clarified the key concepts used in the study.

Chapter 2 deals with the literature on gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood, pathways to parenthood, decision-making factors, and the experiences of gay male parents in the process. I then discuss the lack of information in South Africa on gay male parents' transitioning to parenthood as well as the theoretical framework of the study.

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## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter 1, couples irrespective of their gender and sexual identities face similar challenges and changes in the transition to parenthood. In this chapter, I will not elaborate further on the general challenges that all parents face when becoming parents; instead, I will focus on the literature on the unique experiences of gay male parents when they transition to parenthood. This chapter commences with a review of how early developmental experiences, the expectations of society, and interpersonal experiences influence gay males' decision to become parents.

This chapter then reviews the pathways to parenthood for gay males and the challenges they face during this process. The chapter also discusses the challenges same-sex parents encounter in society and their positive experiences as parents.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study was informed by the Family Adjustment and Adaptation (FAAR) theoretical model. The theoretical model helped me understand how gay male parents experience stressors, the challenges they encounter on their journey to become parents, and how they overcome these challenges.

### 2.2 TRANSITIONING TO PARENTHOOD

According to Glazer (2014), one should first consider the challenges lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals face during their developmental years, in society, and in their interpersonal relationships as these experiences have profound implications for their later decision to become parents. When children are born, the societal expectation is that they will have a heterosexual identity and that they will show the gender stereotypical behaviour expected of children from a specific gender group (Chodorow, 1992; Little et al., 2012). These societal expectations create one of the first challenges LGB children have to overcome. These children must first identify their own sexual identity on their own before they can deal with the expectations of their families of origin and society (Glazer, 2014). However such young children may struggle to identify or name these feelings, which may result in their distancing themselves from their desires and feelings (Glazer, 2014; Little et al., 2012).

The process of identifying a sexual identity is different for every LGB individual (Pereira, 2014). For some LGB individuals, the process of accepting a sexual identity occurs in stages, starting with learning to label their own sexual feelings (Brown, 1995). For Elizur and Mintzer (2001), the process involves defining their sexual feelings, then accepting their sexual identity, and finally disclosing their sexual identity to their family



of origin and society. As stated earlier, LGB individuals must first be aware of having a different sexual identity from a heteronormative society. They will then be able to recognise and identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual and further accept their sexual identity, which involves integrating their sexual identity within their personality (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001).

Children who experience homosexual or bisexual feelings may experience identity confusion and may think there is something wrong with them or that they are inadequate (American Psychological Association, 2015; Butler, 1995; Little et al., 2012). For example, a young lesbian girl may feel less feminine because she likes other girls while, similarly, a young gay boy may feel less masculine because he likes other boys (Butler, 1995; Little et al., 2012). In an attempt to fit into society, they may create a false impression of who they are, which may lead to internal conflict and societal isolation (Glazer, 2014). Societal expectations may influence how LGB children view parenthood and may affect their early fantasies about getting married or having a family (Glazer, 2014).

In their adolescent years, some LGB individuals may be able to identify their homosexual or bisexual feelings and may start to express these feelings (American Psychological Association, 2015; Glazer, 2014). This is often called 'coming out', which involves a process of personal changes that may lead to the recognition of one's sexual orientation (Butler, 1995; Davies, 1996; Victor et al., 2014). In his studies on sexuality among Africans, Epprecht (2013) found that most of the LGB participants indicated that their sexual feelings for the same sex were present from early childhood. The early experiences of the participants as children included having feelings for other boys or girls. This often led to feelings of alienation as they considered themselves different to "normal" children (Epprecht, 2013). The feelings of being different occurred before puberty and before any sexual experiences. Most of the African individuals in the studies were from a young age unable to identify these feelings or had words to describe them (Epprecht, 2013). Some of the participants reported that they had sexual encounters with members of the same sex or had same-sex fantasies and only later in life were able to find words to describe their sexual desires. Knowledge of these words gave them confidence and self-esteem (Epprecht, 2013).

Adolescent LGB individuals wanting to "come out" at this stage are at risk of losing societal privileges, such as showing affection towards their same-sex partners in public (Crespi, 1995), a testimony to societal discrimination against LGB individuals (Lubbe, 2007; Weinstein, 2001) "Coming out" in South Africa is accompanied by the risk of rape for lesbian women, accusations of witchcraft, physical violence, discrimination, victimisation, and marginalisation by a heteronormative and heterosexist society (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Reygan & Steyn, 2017). LGB individuals therefore have to consider the above factors before deciding to "come out" (Reygan & Steyn, 2017).

Some adolescent LGB individuals may continue concealing who they are for fear of humiliation or rejection due to societal disapproval of same-sex relationships or gender identity (Glazer, 2014). Such individuals may feel the need to suppress their feelings, desires, and wishes regarding dating a same-sex partner

(Glazer, 2014). This may result in their avoiding activities such as school dances, where the emphasis is on heterosexual behaviour. This may delay the onset of dating, having romantic relationships, and getting to know people they may want to commit to in a lasting relationship (Glazer, 2014).

For those LGBTIQ+ individuals who are open about their sexual identity, there comes a time when they may want to form loving relationships with or get married to their partners and seek parenthood (Glazer, 2014). For some LGBTIQ+ individuals, the experiences of “coming out” may have affected them negatively (Crespi, 2001), resulting in their wanting to remain childless (Crespi, 2001; Mallon, 2004). This may lead to conflict in their same-sex relationship where one partner seeks parenthood while the other partner does not (Glazer, 2014). The same-sex couple will have to work through their different expectations and decide whether parenthood is desired by both partners or by only one partner. For the transition to parenthood to be successful, the same-sex couple must agree about having a child (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Glazer, 2014).

Studies suggest that gay male couples have different reasons for seeking parenthood (Bergman et al., 2010; Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Poulos, 2011; Rothmann, 2011; Shernoff, 1996). In their qualitative study among 35 gay male couples on their motivations and reasons for pursuing parenthood, Goldberg et al. (2012) found that the couples sought parenthood because they believed it would be psychologically and personally rewarding to be parents. For some of the gay men in the study, positive experiences in their family of origin influenced their decision to seek parenthood so that they could provide the same experiences for their children (Goldberg et al., 2012; Mallon, 2004). Other reasons mentioned in the study included the gay male couples viewing parenthood as part of human life (Goldberg et al., 2012).

Some gay male couples want to have children because they have the same desire to nurture and raise children as do heterosexual couples (Bergman et al., 2010; Poulos, 2011). Other gay male couples want children because they believe children will bring joy and happiness into their lives (Rothmann, 2011). They want to be loving parents and provide a positive upbringing for their children (Shernoff, 1996). A gay male couple’s decision to raise a child is influenced also by the availability of social support and the required financial capability (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

When same-sex couples decide to have children, they are faced with the challenges (see above) of how to achieve this goal (Farr & Tornello, 2016). The choice of an appropriate pathway can be influenced by the social or religious beliefs of their friends and relatives (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Choosing to become a parent is influenced also by the financial costs associated with the process (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Gay males have to consider issues such the cost of adoption and surrogacy, which many South Africans may not be able to afford thus influencing their decision to become parents (Morison & Lynch, 2016). In the next section, I will discuss the different pathways to parenthood that are available to same-sex couples.

## **2.3 PATHWAYS TO PARENTHOOD**

There are different pathways to parenthood in South Africa such as heterosexual nuclear families, same-sex families, single-parented families, kinship families, polygamous families, grandparent-led families, child-parented families, and migrant families (Amoateng & Heaton, 2007; Makiwane, Nduna, & Khalema, 2016). In this study, the pathways to parenthood were those that are available to gay male parents. Same-sex couples can consider different pathways to parenthood in order to have children (Dempsey, 2013). This includes having children from their past heterosexual relationships or marriages; through surrogacy, adoption, and foster care; and having blended families with a lesbian couple (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Gianino, 2008; Mallon, 2004; Morison & Lynch, 2016; Stacey, 2006). In this section, I discuss these pathways and the challenges gay male parents may encounter when they choose a specific pathway.

### **2.3.1 PAST HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Some gay males who fear “coming out” into society enter into heterosexual relationships or marriages (C. J. Patterson et al., 2004). These gay males may end up having children within these heterosexual relationships and marriages, and then later “come out” as gay when they have accepted their sexual identities (Barrett & Robinson, 1990; Bigner, 1999; C. J. Patterson, 2006). After “coming out” as gay, most gay males divorce or split up with their heterosexual partners and start dating other gay males (Barrett & Robinson, 1990; Bigner, 1999; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Bozett, 1981; C. J. Patterson, 2006).

Research on gay male parents’ pathway to parenthood indicates that most gay male parents conceived children in their past heterosexual relationships (Barrett & Robinson, 1990; Bigner, 1999; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Bozett, 1981; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010; C. J. Patterson & Tornello, 2010). In their study on pathways to parenthood for gay male couples, C. J. Patterson and Tornello (2010) found that of the 102 gay fathers, 74% reported having had children in the context of heterosexual relationships.

Gay males who had children in past heterosexual relationships may have to incorporate their prior existing identities as fathers with their developing gay identities (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Bigner & Bozett, 1989; Bozett, 1988). Many gay male fathers struggle with this transition (Bozett, 1981; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Brinamen and Mitchell (2008) maintain that gay males go through six stages in order to integrate their gay identities with their parental identity. The first stage involves abandoning their heterosexual parent identity as part of accepting their new gay identity. The second stage involves increased confidence and self-awareness regarding their sexual identity. The third stage involves recognising and acknowledging the resilience of gay families. The fourth stage involves seeking other gay fathers who can be role models and mentors. The fifth stage involves recognising their strengths as gay fathers. The last stage involves expressing their identity as gay fathers within society (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008).

For some gay male parents, co-parenting with their former heterosexual partners may end in legal battles for the custody of the children (C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). They may encounter discrimination and stigmatisation by legal professionals in the process of obtaining custody of their children (C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010) as a result of societal assumptions regarding LGBTIQ+ parents (Lambert, 2005; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). A detailed discussion on such assumptions and misconceptions is included in Section 2.4. Due to these beliefs, very few gay male parents succeed in obtaining full custody of their children (Bigner & Bozett, 1989; Bozett, 1988; C. J. Patterson, 2006). This may result in most children of divorced or separated gay males and lesbian women ending up living with their heterosexual parents (C. J. Patterson, 2006; Riggs & Due, 2014).

Another challenge that gay males encounter is the adjustment to being a stepparent. Lynch (2005) found that gay male stepparents often struggle with adjusting to being new parents to their partners' children. This transition may be filled with conflict and competition between the children and the stepparents. Conflict may also arise if the children do not accept their parents' homosexual identity (Lynch & Murray, 2000). Stepparents may also be confused regarding whether or not to play a parental role, which often involves administering discipline, bearing in mind that they are not the legal guardians (Lynch, 2005). South African law allows stepparent adoption, which gives the stepparent the legal right to be involved in the child's life without compromising the parental rights of the biological/initial parent (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Surrogacy as a pathway to parenthood is discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.2 SURROGACY**

The desire to have a biological connection with their children has been found to be a motivator for some gay male couples to choose surrogacy over adoption (Goldberg, Smith, et al., 2012). Surrogacy gives gay male couples the power to form their own families within their homosexual relationships or identities (Murphy, 2013; Norton et al., 2013). Surrogacy enables a gay male couple to play a major role in raising their own child from birth within their gay relationship (Lev, 2006; Mitchell & Green, 2008). However, successful surrogacy requires careful planning and decision making (Riggs & Due, 2014).

Gay male couples normally have to choose a surrogate to achieve parenthood (Riggs, 2008). They may choose a surrogate based on the physical similarities to one or both gay partners (Mitchell & Green, 2008). Some surrogates are altruistic and do not request payment for the surrogate relationship (Riggs, 2008). For example, some gay male couples arrange for a female friend to be a surrogate and agree to pay all her medical expenses (Shernoff, 1996). Some surrogates, however, perform the surrogate service for a fee in terms of which they are paid for the duration of the pregnancy (Riggs, 2008).

Another decision gay male couples have to make is whether they want a biological connection with the child (Mitchell & Green, 2008; Norton et al., 2013). Most gay male couples prefer to use their own sperm rather than that of a donor (Norton et al., 2013), and they then have to agree whose sperm to use for the

surrogacy (Norton et al., 2013; Riggs, 2008). For some gay male couples, this decision may be based on who is older or more dominant in the relationship or who has a better genetic history (Greenfeld & Seli, 2011).

In the United States of America (USA), gay male parents have to consider the legal requirements for surrogacy in the area where they live (Norton et al., 2013). When this study was undertaken, surrogacy was illegal in countries such as Germany, France, Spain, and Italy whereas countries such as India, Ukraine, and the USA had fewer rules and regulations regarding surrogacy (Norton et al., 2013). In South Africa, surrogacy is covered by the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005) (The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2006), which allows gay male couples to apply to the high court for approval to enter into a surrogacy relationship (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The high court requires an evaluation of the gay couple and the surrogate mother by a social worker before the application can be considered (Morison & Lynch, 2016). In South Africa, the arrangement between the surrogate mother and the gay male couple may only be altruistic and not commercial. The surrogate mother must already have had children of her own in the past and must be a South African citizen. When the child is born, the gay male couple acquire legal parental rights, and the surrogate mother's legal parental rights are terminated (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

Once the gay male couple's application has been approved by the high court, the couple have to decide on the medical health facility they are going to use for the process (Goldberg, 2006). This has been found to be challenging for some gay male couples (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006) as some health professionals discriminate against them and refuse to perform the insemination service on the grounds of their religious and personal values (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006). However, the law in South Africa prohibits professionals from denying surrogacy services to same-sex couples (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Although the law supports surrogacy services, most fertility institutions accommodate only heterosexual and lesbian couples with only a few accommodating gay male couples (Robertson, 2004). These difficulties may affect a gay male couple's decision to consider surrogacy as an option (Vitule, Couto, & Machin, 2015).

Surrogacy has higher financial implications compared to adoption and foster care (Norton et al., 2013) because of the medical costs and legal fees associated with the process (C. J. Patterson, 2000). Surrogacy has been found therefore to be most preferred by gay male couples who have the financial capacity to afford the procedure (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Dempsey, 2010; Greenfeld & Seli, 2011; Lev, 2006; Mallon, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2008; Norton et al., 2013; Riggs & Due, 2014). Adoption as a pathway to parenthood is discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.3 ADOPTION**

Gay male couples can apply for adoption rights in order to have children (Mallon, 2004). Adoption is a process whereby gay male parents are given the legal parental rights to a child and the rights of the birth

parents are terminated (Mallon, 2004). Adoption seems to be gay males' preferred option as a pathway to parenthood when compared to surrogacy and foster care (Goldberg et al., 2014) largely due to the lower financial implications compared to surrogacy (Goldberg et al., 2014; Mallon, 2004; Vitule et al., 2015). However, gay male couples have to consider certain factors relating to adoption in order for the process to be successful (Mallon, 2004).

One of these factors is the choice of adopting through the public sector or through a private agency (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). Gay male couples in South Africa can apply either through the Department of Social Development or through accredited private adoption agencies (Morison & Lynch, 2016), with the latter usually having higher financial implications (Goldberg et al., 2014; Goldberg & Moyer, 2014; Riggs & Due, 2014). Gay male couples also have to consider the type of child they wish to adopt (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014), and their decision may be influenced by the age, race, gender, culture, and special needs of the child (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014).

Gay male couples also need to consider the type of adoption from the different options available to them (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014). This first option involves a process whereby they seek legal parental rights from the biological parents when the child is born, which means the biological parents lose all legal parental and visitation rights to the child (Mallon, 2004). The second option involves allowing the biological parents access to the child. This requires the gay male couple to negotiate with the biological parents regarding visiting hours and the extent to which they want the biological parents to be involved in their child's life (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014).

The third option is to adopt a child from another country, often referred to as international adoption. In this case, the biological parents will have limited or no access to the child (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014). Another type of adoption is second parent adoption where one gay male parent adopts the child first and the second gay male parent applies for adoption later (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). This usually occurs in the USA where in some states adoption is not permitted to both gay male parents. Second parent adoption can occur also when one gay male parent joins a family that has children and later applies for adoption (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014).

Gay male parents also have to consider the legal procedures involved in adoption (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). Since 2012, only 21 states in the USA permit gay males to adopt children (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). In some states, but not in others, gay male couples can apply for second parent adoption (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). In South Africa, gay male couples are allowed to adopt children even if the couple is not married but in a committed, cohabiting relationship (Morison & Lynch, 2016). However, they have to follow procedures that are prescribed by the Department of Social Development and the Children's Court (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

The adoption procedures in South Africa require the biological parents of the child or the legal guardians to give legal consent to the adoptive parents. The biological parents are allowed to change their minds within 60 days after giving consent (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The gay male couple is then evaluated by a social worker who submits a report to the Children's Court for approval in order for the adoption to be legal (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The gay male couple have to wait for the approval from the Children's Court before the child can be placed in their care (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

Gay male couples experience difficulties with adoption agencies as they are often considered the second best or last option for placing children (Hicks, 2006). Some gay male couples report that they are at the bottom of the list or that they are considered only for more-difficult-to-place children such as those with an illness or disability (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Some private agencies do not accept gay male couples as applicants or charge them more when seeking adoption (Goldberg et al., 2014; Goldberg & Moyer, 2014; Riggs & Due, 2014).

Some professionals such as social workers discriminate against same-sex couples when comparing them to heterosexual couples in terms of their ability to be good parents (Hicks, 1996; Logan & Sellick, 2012). If a social worker considers same-sex couples as unworthy or inadequate, their adoption applications may be declined (Hicks, 1996; Logan & Sellick, 2012). Same-sex couples tend to be subjected to stricter evaluations than heterosexual applicants during the application process (Hicks, 1996; Logan & Sellick, 2012). These challenges make it difficult for many gay male parents to have positive experiences of adopting a child. Foster care as a pathway to parenthood is discussed in the next section.

#### **2.3.4 FOSTER CARE**

Gay male parents may consider parenting a child through foster care, which is the temporary placement of a child who has been removed from its biological parents or guardians and placed into the care of a suitable guardian who is not the legal parent (Morison & Lynch, 2016; Riggs & Due, 2014). Foster care offers gay male parents the opportunity to experience parenting and to determine their readiness to adopt a child (Riggs & Due, 2014; Shernoff, 1996).

In South Africa, foster care requires an application to the Children's Court for approval (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The process entails a social worker doing an evaluation of the applicants and submitting an evaluation report on the gay male couple to the Children's Court. If the application is approved by the Children's Court, the child is placed with the couple (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The legal parental rights remain with the Department of Social Development (DSD) as the legal guardian of the child. The child may also be moved back to its family of origin if the DSD considers them fit to parent the child (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

The few studies that have been done on gay male parents and fostering (Hicks, 2006; Patrick, 2006; Riggs, 2008) reveal that gay male parents are not often considered for fostering due to the societal stigma attached to LGBTIQ+ individuals. As stated earlier, gay male parents are discriminated against by adoption and foster care agencies and society at large when they seek to become parents through fostering (Hicks, 2006; Patrick, 2006; Riggs, 2008). Further investigation into foster care as a pathway to parenthood is required because of the limited research that has been done in this field (Riggs & Due, 2014). Blended families as a pathway to parenthood are discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.5 BLENDED FAMILIES**

Different types of blended families can be found in LGBTIQ+ communities (Norton et al., 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2000; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). The first type is when a gay male couple co-parents with a lesbian couple (Norton et al., 2013). This requires the lesbian couple and the gay couple legally to agree to conceive a child together and to raise the child jointly (C. J. Patterson, 2000). This is often referred to as quadra-parenting as the agreement allows four parents to become involved in raising the child together (C. J. Patterson & Chan, 1997). Another way parents can raise their child is by living in a duplex with the gay father/fathers, for example, living downstairs and the lesbian mother/mothers living upstairs. These children can be biological or non-biological (Okon, 2012).

Another format is when a gay couple and a single lesbian, or a lesbian couple and a single gay man, agree to raise a child together (C. J. Patterson, 2000). This can include a gay single man becoming a sperm donor to a lesbian couple or a lesbian single woman who will be the biological mother and raise the child with the gay couple (Norton et al., 2013; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). Some gay males co-parent with a lesbian couple even without a genetic connection to the child (Norton et al., 2013; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). This is done mainly when lesbian parents want their child to have a father figure (Norton et al., 2013; Tasker & Patterson, 2007).

The few studies that have focused on blended families as a pathway to parenthood (Herbrand, 2018; Jadva, Freeman, Tranfield, & Golombok, 2015; Norton et al., 2013; Tasker & Patterson, 2007) report that gay male and lesbian couples often choose to raise children through blended families because they want a biological connection with their children (Herbrand, 2018; Jadva et al., 2015). Blended families enable lesbian and gay couples to have a child within their homosexual identities and to raise the child from birth (Herbrand, 2018; Jadva et al., 2015). For blended family arrangements to be successful, the blended families need to agree on issues such culture, background, living arrangements, visiting hours, and each parent's role and responsibility (Jadva et al., 2015). Further investigation into blended families as a pathway to parenthood is required because of the limited research that has been done in this field (Riggs & Due, 2014). The challenges that same-sex couples often encounter in their journey to become parents are discussed in the next section.



### **2.3.6 SOCIAL FATHERING**

Gay male couples in South Africa can also become parents through social fathering where they become involved in the life of a child without being the biological fathers (Morison & Lynch, 2016; Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). The child may be from their family or from the community in which they reside without requiring them to become the legal parents of the child. They may, however, establish an emotional bond with the child (Morison & Lynch, 2016; Richter et al., 2010; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Gay male parents may also have a biological child as well as be the social fathers of a child they are not biologically related to (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018).

In South Africa, approximately 50% of fathers do not have regular contact with their children (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Social fathering gives children the opportunity to have a male figure in their lives. Because of South Africa's multiculturalism, social fathering can occur in different ways (Morison & Lynch, 2016; Richter et al., 2010; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). It can occur, for example, when a man takes financial responsibility for his sister's children because he is the elder brother and they live in the same household. A man can also take responsibility for the children of his new partner because they stay in the same household, and he is the primary source of support (Richter et al., 2010).

Social fathers may also be paternal uncles, grandfathers, older brothers, neighbours, pastors, and community leaders (Richter et al., 2010; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). They can be financially responsible for a child by paying school fees, buying groceries, or meeting any financial needs the child may have (Richter et al., 2010; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Gay male parents can also become social fathers by being role models for and mentors to a child. This can include seeing to the child's education and social well-being (Morison & Lynch, 2016). Further research on social fathering as a pathway to parenthood is required because of the limited research that has been done so far in this field. The challenges that same-sex couples often encounter in their journey to become parents are discussed in the next section.

## **2.4 CHALLENGES SAME-SEX PARENTS FACE**

LGBTIQ+ individuals experience societal stigmatisation, prejudice, and discrimination on a daily basis because of their sexual orientation (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006; Hicks, 2005; Msibi 2012, C. J. Patterson et al., 2004; Reygan & Steyn, 2017; Tamale, 2011). LGBTIQ+ individuals are subjected to negative attitudes because of the stereotypes that are attached to them by society (Goldberg et al., 2012; Tamale, 2011). Some beliefs society has about LGBTIQ+ individuals are that they are unstable, unable to form lasting relationships, self-centred, inept during crises, indecisive and impulsive, and have a mental illness that causes them to be gay (Lambert, 2005; Titlestad & Pooley, 2014). These beliefs have been taken on by various systems in society resulting

in discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals by, among others, health service providers, employers, housing agencies, and legal professionals (Goldberg, 2006; Major & O'Brien, 2005).

The entrenched societal prejudices against LGBTIQ+ individuals can seriously undermine same-sex couples' opportunities and decisions to become parents (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Tornello, Farr, and Patterson (2011) conducted a study among gay male parents and found that most of them experienced high stress levels due to the stigmatisation and discrimination they encountered on a daily basis. This stigmatisation manifests when they try to access the services of lawyers, teachers, social workers, medical practitioners, and other professionals in their quest to become parents (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006). One societal belief is that women are more nurturing than men and that children should be raised in a nuclear family where the mother is the primary caregiver (Hicks, 2005; Mallon, 2000).

Various misconceptions exist regarding children raised by gay male parents (Morison & Lynch, 2016). One such misconception is that the children will be sexually molested by their gay parents (Bigner & Bozett, 1989; C. J. Patterson, 1992). There is also the belief that children raised by gay male parents will be bullied or teased at school and in the community. Other beliefs are that the children will also become gay or will have developmental problems (Bigner & Bozett, 1989; C. J. Patterson, 1992). However, research suggests that children raised by same-sex parents do not necessarily have childhood developmental problems and that the misconceptions about same-sex couples are indeed misconceptions (Morison & Lynch, 2016; C. J. Patterson, 1992).

In addition to societal discrimination, gay men also have to deal with the beliefs of other gay males, namely that gay male couples should not have children as they associate parenting with heterosexual couples and not with gay identities (Bozett, 1987; Mallon, 2004). This can lead to their own gay community devaluing their need to become parents (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007). Gay male-parented families may see themselves as not fitting the accepted social norms or criteria for parenthood resulting in such families receiving less social support from their family of origin, friends, and other gay males (Bigner & Bozett, 1989; Lubbe, 2007).

The lack of support from their family of origin may arise from their family of origin's religious beliefs and views on homosexuality (Goldberg, Downing, et al., 2012). The family of origin may instil fear and anxiety in gay couples about what it will be like for a child to grow up with same-sex parents (Gianino, 2008). The family of origin may also be concerned about the genes of the adopted children as well as mixed-race adoption (Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, Downing, et al., 2012). All these considerations have been found to affect same-sex couples' decision to become parents (Gianino, 2008).

LGBTIQ+ individuals may also experience discrimination in the school system because of their sexual orientation (Byard, Kosciw, & Bartkiewicz, 2013; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Studies conducted in South Africa on the experiences of learners in schools indicate that they often experience homophobia (Msibi, 2012;

Reygan & Steyn, 2017; Tamale, 2011) as a result of, for example, the language used by teachers and peers. Words such as *istabane*, *moffie*, *faggot*, *usis-buti* (mixtures of male and female) and *tomboy* are frequently used to describe LGBTIQ+ individuals (Msibi, 2012). These labels are demeaning in Zulu, Afrikaans, and English and promote homophobia and heterosexism (Msibi, 2012).

Fear is another factor in the homophobia in the school environment and in the community (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Steyn, 2017). It is one of the reasons the LGBTIQ+ learners in the above studies were unable to identify themselves as lesbian or gay (Msibi, 2012). The girl learners who identified themselves as lesbian feared being raped by the men in their communities owing to their sexual orientation (Msibi, 2012). Some of the teachers told the learners that homosexuality was contagious and that they should not associate with learners who were suspected of being gay or lesbian (Msibi, 2012). This further marginalised the LGBTIQ+ learners as they often received less support from their peers and teachers in the school system (Msibi, 2012).

Violence was another way the learners experienced homophobia (Msibi, 2012; OUT LGBT Well-being study, 2016; Reygan & Steyn, 2017). The OUT LGBT Well-being study that was conducted in South Africa in 2016 revealed that of the 638 LGBT learners, 55% experienced verbal insults, 35% were threatened with violence, and 21% had objects thrown at them. Furthermore, 20% had their personal property destroyed, 18% were punched, kicked, or beaten, and 11% were sexually abused or raped (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2016). Some of the gay learners had negative experiences with teachers including being shouted at, being beaten, and being threatened with expulsion because of their sexual orientation (Msibi, 2012). Violence was thus used to promote homophobia and sexism and maintain patriarchy and heterosexuality (Msibi, 2012).

Culture and religion are also used to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ learners (Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Steyn, 2017) as African culture and Christianity consider homosexuality sinful and wrong (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Msibi, 2012). Many of the LGBTIQ+ learners in the above studies experienced harassment, avoidance, and rejection by peers, teachers, and school administrators who used their own religious beliefs to discriminate against them (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). Some of the LGBTIQ+ girl learners were, for example, sent home because they wore trousers. Some of the teachers either expressed their religious views on homosexuality in the classroom or excluded the LGBTIQ+ learners from their classes because they did not want to teach them (Reygan & Steyn, 2017).

In South Africa, research on the school experiences of the children of same-sex parents is limited as most of the research to date has focused on the experiences of lesbian and gay learners at school (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2016). Even though the research has not focused on the experiences of children from same-sex families, these children may internalise these discourses regarding LGBTIQ+ to their family identity (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2016). Same-sex parented families may experience discrimination in the school system in different ways. This discrimination includes application forms that do not make

provision for their family demographics, exclusion from school activities such as meetings and school plays, backlash from heterosexual parents, and teachers who ask inappropriate questions regarding their family structures (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2016; Byard et al., 2013; Fox, 2007; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

An experimental study by Diaz-Serrano and Meix-Llop (2016) on selected schools in Spain found that the gay male parents in the study were 22% more likely to receive negative responses regarding the admission of their children to a school. The study also found that there was no discrimination against lesbian parents compared to gay male parents (Diaz-Serrano & Meix-Llop, 2016). Lubbe's (2007) study in South Africa involving eight children from lesbian-parented families on their experiences in school settings revealed that schools that included different family types were welcoming and accepting of children from same-sex families. The children who attended these schools reported positive experiences after disclosure of their family identity (Lubbe, 2007).

Some gay male parents are fearful about raising children in a homophobic society (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Lubbe, 2007). For example, the OUT LGBT Well-being study (2016) revealed that 55% of the LGBTIQ+ individuals in the study feared they would encounter societal discrimination because of their homosexuality, which could lead to some gay male couples isolating and excluding themselves from society (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Daily experiences of stigmatisation can also lead to minority stress and depression, defined by Rostosky, Riggle, Gray, and Hatton (2007) as chronic social stress that results from belonging to a stigmatised social group in addition to the general stressors of everyday life. Gay males and parenting are discussed in the next section.

## **2.5 GAY MALES AND PARENTING**

Although gay male parents are exposed to discrimination and stigmatisation, many are able to overcome these challenges and live meaningful lives with their children (Titlestad & Pooley, 2014) thus demonstrating resilience and good parenting skills (Bergman et al., 2010; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; C. J. Patterson, 2006; Stacey, 2006). Gay male parents tend to be more responsive compared to heterosexual parents with regards to their children's emotional needs and are able to set clear limits and boundaries for their children (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). They are also less likely to use corporal punishment when disciplining their children (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002).

In their study on fathers' involvement in their children's lives, Bigner and Jacobsen (1992) compared 33 gay men who had children from past heterosexual relationships with 33 heterosexual fathers. The study found that both groups of fathers shared similar experiences of having close relationships with their children and being involved in their children's lives. The study found also that the gay male fathers responded positively to their children's needs (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992). Gay male fathers' close relationship with their children has been reported to be similar to that of lesbian couples and heterosexual women (Dempsey, 2013).

Studies indicate that gay male couples share household responsibilities equally and according to each parent's strengths (Dempsey, 2013; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007; Tornello et al., 2015), which has led to gay male couples generally reporting feelings of satisfaction regarding household duties and raising their children (McPherson, 1994; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). Another advantage that same-sex couples have is that they are often in dual earner relationships and therefore have the financial resources to afford childcare (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007).

Gay couples who are willing to be open about their family identity to friends, parents, and teachers often report more positive parental experiences (Bergman et al., 2010; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). Goldberg and Moyer's (2014) study on lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents' experiences in preschool environments revealed that when lesbian and gay parents were open about their family structures, people were generally more accepting of the diversity of their families. Gay male parents often report higher self-esteem, fewer negative attitudes, and a sense of personal fulfilment after disclosing their family identities (Bergman et al., 2010).

An internet survey in the USA found that gay male couples with children reported finding greater meaning in life than gay couples who did not have children (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010). Gay couples often report that having children gives them a sense of pride and personal fulfilment and makes them feel equal to heterosexual parents (Bergman et al., 2010). The family of origin plays a key role in the parenting experiences of gay parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2011) and has been identified as a key source of social support in combating the stressors that same-sex couples encounter during their transition to parenthood (Goldberg & Smith, 2011). Many gay male parents report that once a child is born, the family of origin often puts aside negative views on homosexuality and becomes more supportive in raising the child with the gay male parents (Goldberg et al., 2014). This also strengthens gay male parents' relationship with their family of origin after becoming parents (Goldberg et al., 2014). Higher perceived social support from the family of origin correlates with fewer depressive symptoms and better adjustment to parenthood (Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

Some gay male parents report that they receive support from friends, colleagues, and from other parents in the gay community who chose the same pathway to parenthood (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg & Smith, 2011). Support from friends has been linked to fewer depressive and anxious symptoms (Goldberg & Smith, 2011). Furthermore, social support from colleagues in the workplace has been found to increase greater life satisfaction among lesbians and gay men (Goldberg & Smith, 2011). A study by Stacey (2006) found that gay male fathers did not prioritise paid employment above childcaring, and partners who worked overtime felt that they were compromising time that could be spent raising their children. As stated earlier, although gay male parents experience challenges in their transition to parenthood, they are capable of overcoming these challenges by using their resources. The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response

(FAAR) model details how families facing challenges can overcome adversity. In the next section, I discuss how I applied the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model in this study.

## **2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.6.1 FAMILY ADJUSTMENT AND ADAPTATION RESPONSE MODEL AS A LENS**

The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model provides a useful framework for understanding the experiences of gay parents. The FAAR model was developed by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) and is based on the Double ABC-X model, which grew out of family stress theory (J. M. Patterson, 1988). The family stress theory was developed in an attempt to understand why some families experience challenges with stressors while other families are able to deal with stressors (Sullivan, 2015).

Hill (1958) proposed the ABC-X model, which has its roots in family stress theory. The ABC-X model holds that “a precipitating event (A) interacting with the family’s crisis meeting resources (B) and the meaning the family assigns to the event (C) produces a crisis” (Sullivan, 2015, p. 90). Boss (2002), another theorist, further expanded the model by including the family stress and coping components. Boss (2002) maintains that families are influenced by their culture, the genetic developmental stage in their life cycle, their family structure, their values, and their beliefs in overcoming stressors (Sullivan, 2015). These theorists influenced the development of the Double ABC-X and FAAR models, which focus on the family’s internal and external resources when facing adversity (Sullivan, 2015).

The FAAR model identifies, describes, and integrates the family adjustment and adaptive coping strategies or strengths that are used in response to stressors and family crises (Dyk & Schvaneveldt, 1987). The FAAR model acknowledges that “patterns of interaction and structure, as well as recovery from a family crisis involve complex family processes” (Brown-Baatjies, Fouché, & Greeff, 2008, p. 89). The FAAR model has two phases, namely the adjustment (family resistance) phase and the adaptation (restructuring and consolidation) phase (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The two phases in the FAAR model are discussed in the next section.

### **2.6.2 FAMILY ADJUSTMENT PHASE**

The family adjustment phase occurs when a stressor or a crisis arises in a family (Brown-Baatjies et al., 2008). The family then attempts to use its existing capabilities to meet the demands of the stressor by adjusting the patterns of interactions in the family (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; J. M. Patterson, 1988). Two types of capabilities can be used. The first type consists of internal and external resources to meet the demands of stressors. These resources are each family member’s self-esteem, sense of mastery, family cohesion, adaptability, family organisation, communication skills, and community resources. The second type consists of family coping behaviour, which involves the coordination of problem-solving and complementary efforts within the family system (J. M. Patterson, 1988).

In the adjustment phase, the family uses three coping strategies, namely avoidance, elimination, and assimilation (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Avoidance entails ignoring or denying the demands of stressors, while elimination involves attempting to remove the demands of stressors by changing or redefining the stressors. Assimilation involves absorbing the demands of stressors by employing them in existing patterns of interaction and choosing the best strategy to handle the stressors (J. M. Patterson, 1988). If a family cannot meet the demands of stressors, it will experience a crisis and enter into the adaptation phase.

### **2.6.3 FAMILY ADAPTATION PHASE**

The second phase of the FAAR model is the family adaptation phase that occurs when the family experiences a crisis, which may lead to disorganisation or imbalance of the family structure (Brown-Baatjies et al., 2008). This may be due to the demands of the stressor, leading to possible restructuring and consolidation processes of which there are four in the family adaptation phase.

The four restructuring and consolidation processes include, the family having a shared definition of the problem, agreeing on solutions, followed by implementing solutions, and then using adaptive coping strategies (Brown-Baatjies et al., 2008). When the family becomes aware of the stressor, it attempts to find a shared definition of the problem and then develops and implements solutions to solve the problem. This can lead to changes in the existing structures and patterns of interaction in the family in order to meet the demands of the stressor (J. M. Patterson, 1988).

In the consolidation phase, the family attempts to form a coherent family unit (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The family then has to make changes by altering the structure and pattern of interaction in the family in order to gain a shared life meaning (Brown-Baatjies et al., 2008). This meaning includes a primary appraisal of the demands and a secondary appraisal of the family's capabilities and of the relation between the demands and the capabilities (J. M. Patterson, 1988). Adaptive coping strategies include synergising, interfacing, compromising, and system maintenance (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). These coping strategies assist in maintaining the family.

### **2.6.4 HOW I APPLIED THE FAAR MODEL TO MY STUDY**

The FAAR model informed my study regarding how families adapt and adjust in response to a stressor or family crisis. In the case of gay male-parented families, the stressors these families encounter during their transition to parenthood include how they have to adjust to their gay identity, how they have to overcome societal and personal prejudices, how they have to deal with the difficulties in the decision-making process of becoming parents, and how they have to form new and lasting family units.

The FAAR model helped me understand how gay male parents can overcome these stressors based on their strengths and capabilities. As stated earlier, in the adjustment phase, gay male parents use their

internal and external resources to overcome adversity. These internal resources include the strength of their relationship, financial security, self-confidence, and self-esteem. The external resources that gay male parents use to overcome stressors or crises are social support from the family of origin and also from friends and colleagues.

The FAAR model helped me conceptualise the challenges gay male parents face. The literature indicates that same-sex couples can overcome challenges and can lead meaningful lives with their children through their good parenting skills. The FAAR model provided a lens through which I could understand gay male-parented families during times of stress and adjustments.

## **2.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter covered the literature on the early experiences of gay male parents before they transition to parenthood. It reported on the pathways to parenthood that gay male parents can consider in order to adopt children. It dealt with the stigmatisation and discrimination that gay male parents encounter in their journey to parenthood, and it explored gay males as parents.

Lastly, I used the FAAR model as a theoretical framework to help me understand how families use their resources to counter stressors.

The next chapter discusses the research approach followed in the study, the methods of data collection, and the analysis and interpretation of the data. The quality criteria and ethical issues of the study are also discussed.

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## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study's research methodology. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research design and methodology and covers also the paradigmatic perspective, the methodological paradigm, the data collection and documentation techniques used, as well as the procedures for the data analysis. The final section of the chapter deals with quality criteria and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM**

The study was based on an interpretivist paradigm and the use of a qualitative research methodology. The following section covers the principles and assumptions of the paradigms and my reasons for using these paradigms.

#### **3.2.1 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE: INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

Interpretivism developed in the 19th century and had its roots in hermeneutics (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), a philosophical discipline concerned with the science of interpretation and "making meaning" (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012). Interpretivism focuses on the individual's subjective experiences and interactional experiences with the world (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Interpretivism introduced the concept of *Verstehen*, which means to "understand, perceive, know, and comprehend the nature and significance of a phenomenon" (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 435). The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding people's social world experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences (Creswell, 2012). It is guided by several assumptions that are discussed below.

The first assumption is that reality and the individual who observes it cannot be separated (Weber, 2004) and that reality is constructed through the shared meanings that people attach to their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The ontological view of interpretivism is that to understand human experiences, the researcher needs to understand the social world of people through their actions and interactions (Goldkuhl, 2012). Reality is a social construction comprising of numerous perspectives (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The second assumption concerns the epistemological view of interpretivism (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In a research study, the key element of an epistemological approach to interpretive knowledge is understanding the participants' subjective experiences from the participants' point of view (Goldkuhl, 2012). Interpretive researchers are interested in people's intersubjective and interactional experiences of their

social world (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). An interactional relationship between the researcher and the participants is therefore required to achieve this goal (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The third assumption involves the use in a research study of qualitative research methods in order to understand the participants' subjective experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Interpretivist researchers generally use interactive, field-based methodology in their work (Goldkuhl, 2012). They also generally use qualitative research designs such as case studies, ethnographic studies, phenomenographic studies, and ethnomethodological studies (Weber, 2004). The qualitative research methods that align with this paradigm are observations and interpretation (Livesey, 2006).

The fourth assumption of interpretivism is that research is reliable if researchers can demonstrate interpretive awareness (Weber, 2004), which can be achieved by acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity in a study and the steps taken to address such subjectivity (Weber, 2004). This can be accomplished by recording and reflecting on all the events that occurred during a research study and that affected the results (Yilmaz, 2013).

Criticism of the interpretive paradigm is discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.2 CRITICISM OF THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

Interpretive researchers are frequently criticised by positivist researchers (Weber, 2004) who argue that results obtained from the interpretive research process cannot be generalised to larger populations (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Interpretive researchers argue, however, that the primary goal of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the meaning of a phenomenon rather than to generalise or predict outcomes from data (Cranton, 2001).

The validity of interpretive research is also often criticised by empiricists who argue that interpretive studies are subjective and biased (Koch, 1995). Interpretive researchers respond by saying that they apply strategies that yield accurate, rich descriptions, that they use peer reviews, that they apply multiple methods to collect data, and that they eliminate bias through pre-understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Wu & Chen, 2005).

Interpretivism is further criticised by positivist researchers for using naturalist approaches instead of scientific approaches when studying a phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007). Interpretive researchers respond that they use a naturalistic approach in order to understand the social world of the participants through communication and other interactive strategies and that the same quality of findings cannot be achieved through a positivist approach (Phothongsunan, 2010).

Other critics express concern about the researcher's involvement and possible manipulation of the data and observations during the research process (Weber, 2004). However, interpretive researchers argue that

the knowledge/information obtained in their research is reliable because the method of data collection, the research processes, the context of the research, and the researcher's subjective experiences are open and transparent and therefore valid (Weber, 2004).

### **3.2.3 MOTIVATION FOR USING THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

The interpretive paradigm enabled me to access the natural environment of the participants and to understand how they made sense of their lived experiences as gay male parents who had transitioned to parenthood.

The interpretive paradigm enabled me also to use a qualitative and exploratory case study design where I could engage with the participants in their natural environment in an attempt to answer the very personal and relatively under-researched research question that guided the study. I consequently considered a semi-structured interview the most suitable form of data collection since it allowed me to obtain thick personal descriptions from the participants through conversation, and also allowed the participants to discuss their own personal experiences.

I showed interpretive awareness (Weber, 2004) in the study by using a researcher's journal to reduce self-bias and to manage my subjective experiences. This made me more self-reflective and self-aware and helped me manage my own biases so that I could give a true account of the participants' experiences.

### **3.2.4 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM: QUALITATIVE**

I adopted a qualitative methodological paradigm for the study. Qualitative research is considered a naturalistic and holistic way of gaining information that allows the researcher to become part of the participant's daily life (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Qualitative research seeks to study human behaviour from the perspectives of the individuals from their social environments. (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Qualitative research is described as a process where the natural environment is used to obtain information about a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Qualitative research allows the researcher to enter the natural environment of participants in order to collect data (Maree, 2012).

A qualitative methodological paradigm is flexible as it covers various methodologies such as case studies, ethnographic studies, and action research and also makes use of different ontological and epistemological perspectives (Maree, 2012). These methodologies involve collecting data using methods such as interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative research is based on understanding findings obtained from the social environment of participants (Mason, 2017). The strength of qualitative research methodology is that it gives researchers

access to participants' experiences and helps them interpret data from the participants' social world (Atieno, 2009).

Qualitative research aims to describe and understand rather than explain human experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It focuses on providing in-depth descriptions and understanding of the actions and events that people take part in and experience (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). It focuses also on understanding and gaining in-depth knowledge of participants' social world rather than generalising results to a larger population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

#### **3.2.4.1 Criticism of qualitative research**

The qualitative methodological paradigm has limitations, one of which is its use of small samples in order to gain in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007). As a consequence of this, the results cannot easily be generalised to larger populations (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Cohen et al. (2007) argue there is often bias in the research findings of qualitative research as the researcher plays a primary role in collecting the data and in transcribing, analysing, and interpreting the data as part of the research process. To counter this limitation and criticism, in the present study I used multiple data sources such as an interview, and a researcher's journal.

#### **3.2.4.2 Motivation for using a qualitative methodological paradigm**

A qualitative research approach allowed me to obtain information from the participants in a naturalistic and holistic way (Terre Blanche et al., 2006) and also to enter their natural environment in order to obtain in-depth and thick descriptions of their experiences (Maree, 2012).

As discussed earlier, qualitative research methodology involves the use of interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2009). In the present study, I used an interview to generate data.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY**

This section covers the exploratory case study design used in the present study. I first define a case study and then an exploratory case study and explain how it was applied in this study.

According to Creswell (2009), a case study entails the study of a topic through one or more cases within a confined system. A case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined" (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 22). A case study can involve an individual or several individuals (Miller & Brewer, 2003).

In this study, I used an exploratory case study design, which is a type of design that is used to explore a phenomenon where there is no identified single set of outcomes or clear interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The primary aim of an exploratory case study is to explore and extend the understanding of a phenomenon that has generally been under-researched (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010; Ogawa & Malen, 1991). An exploratory case study involves questions and hypotheses aimed at developing studies where there is limited information (Lapadat, 2010). Exploratory case studies can uncover social issues in their natural setting (Yin, 2012).

This study was guided by the following primary research question – “How did the gay male parents in the present study transition to parenthood?” The question was asked because of the limited number of studies conducted in South Africa on this topic and the need to fill the resultant knowledge gap. In an attempt to answer the question, I implemented an exploratory case study research design involving one gay male couple.

An exploratory case study has the following characteristics: firstly, it focuses on a complex phenomenon in its natural setting; secondly, it acknowledges the complexity of the phenomenon, which reduces the extent of the control the researcher has over it; thirdly, it integrates the multiple sources of data as part of its methodology; fourthly, it focuses on qualitative data; and, lastly, it seeks to provide a detailed narrative depiction of the research phenomenon in its natural setting. The researcher can achieve all this by capturing and transferring [the information and descriptions provided by the participants in a study (Ogawa & Malen, 1991; Yin, 1984).

An advantage of an exploratory case study is that it uses an intuitive approach to a research study that has previously not been researched in depth (Lapadat, 2010). Another advantage is that multiple data sources are used including direct observation, interviews, surveys, and documents (Ogawa & Malen, 1991; Yin, 1984).

A disadvantage of an exploratory case study, according to Lapadat (2010), is that it is not necessarily guided by a theory. This is due to exploratory case study using flexible methods such as a semi-structure interview, a research journal when conducting a study.

A further disadvantage is that a case study design often lacks objectivity and may not be generalisable (Miller & Brewer, 2003, pp. 22–23). These “disadvantages” were, however, not serious concerns in the present study as I did use a guiding theory to assist me in focusing the literature review and in drafting the questions for the interview. Regarding generalisability, the study was not undertaken with a view to generalising to a larger group.

The next section provides details of how the case was “bound” in this study in terms of the site, the selection of the participants, and how the data from the researcher’s journal were used.

### **3.4 BINDING THE CASE**

Binding a case ensures that a study is manageable and that all options are considered to ensure its viability (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Binding a case includes indicating what will be studied and what will not be studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008) as well as (a) the time and place, (b) the activity, and (c) the context of the study. The process includes the selection of the participants and the research site (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The next section provides details of the selection of the participants and the research site.

#### **3.4.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Purposive sampling was used for the study. Purposive sampling is defined as the deliberate selection of participants on the basis of the qualities they possess (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). It involves selecting participants because they have certain characteristics (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The selection of participants is done in accordance with their applicability to a study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delpont, 2011). The researcher decides on the research field and the participants based on their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016).

I applied homogenous purposive sampling in the present study, which is a type of purposive sampling that involves selecting participants who share similar traits or specific characteristics for a study (Etikan et al., 2016). Homogenous purposive sampling can be characterised by age, gender, culture, job, or life experience (Etikan et al., 2016). The technique requires sampling in terms of similarities the participants share and how their experiences relate to the particular research field. In this study, homogenous purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The criteria for selection included the following:

- Participants who identified themselves as gay male parents.
- Gay male parents who have children either from a past heterosexual relationship, or through co-parenting, adoption and surrogacy.
- The gay male parents had to be raising children together, living together, and did not need to be married.

The advantage of purposive sampling methods is that they generally involve data saturation. Data saturation is the process whereby the “researcher has richly fed material that has been collected and has acquired a satisfactory sense of the data” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 372) rather than emphasis on generalising (Etikan et al., 2016).

The disadvantages of purposive sampling are that the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population and also the subjectivity of the researcher as he or she chooses the subjects of a study (Etikan et al., 2016).

However, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study was not to generalise to a larger population but to explore and describe how two gay male parents transitioned to parenthood.

A description of the gay male couple selected for the study is given in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1: Description of the participating parents**

Parent	Sexual Orientation	Gender	Ethnic group	Race
P1	Gay	Male	English	White
P2	Gay	Male	Siamese	Asian

The characteristics of the study participants are given below.

#### **3.4.1.1 Race**

The two participants selected for the study are international citizens who now live in South Africa. The couple are in an interracial union: the one partner is a white American citizen and the other is a Thai citizen. They do not represent the diverse culture of South Africa, and therefore the study findings cannot be generalised to the broader South African population. However, the purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of the two participants in their transition to parenthood.

#### **3.4.1.2 Class**

The two participants in the study are currently both in employment and reside in Johannesburg. They do not reflect the experiences of other gay male couples who live in townships, semi-urban areas, and rural areas in South Africa. Their experiences are unique and cannot be generalised to other settings.

#### **3.4.1.3 Gender**

This study focused on two gay male participants as most other studies on same-sex parenting have dealt with lesbian couples, generalising the results to gay male parents.

The children of the parents did not take part in the interview as they did not form part of the data collection process.

### **3.4.2 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE**

The research site for the study was the participant's home in Randburg, a suburb in the north-west of Johannesburg. The participants chose their home as the research site because they wanted to be interviewed in a familiar environment that was also convenient for them. This was done to ensure that they felt comfortable and safe in familiar surroundings where the interviewing would not intimidate them.

Building rapport with the participants was essential to help ensure that they would freely share their knowledge and experiences. This was achieved through continuous good communication with them and assuring them that their opinions and experiences were valued in the study. The relationship with the participants was built on trust and respect. I also assured them that the information they provided would be treated confidentially.

The next section gives details of the data generation tools I used to collect the data and also the documentation strategies I used to store the data for later analysis.

### **3.5 DATA GENERATION**

Data generation refers to the methods used to collect data, such as questionnaires, tests, interviews, and checklists (Seaman, 1999). In this study, a semi-structured was used as a data collection instrument.

#### **3.5.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

A face-to-face semi-structured interview was used in the study. This type of interview requires drafting questions and an interview schedule in advance (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). A semi-structured interview consists of a well-defined questioning plan however it allows a researcher to be flexible (Maree, 2012). See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview questions used in the study.

An advantage of semi-structured interviews is that researchers can avoid imposing their own subjective views on the research process (Hellmann, 2005). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to express themselves freely without being concerned about the researcher's views. Semi-structured interview allows the researcher to be flexible by not having fixed questions. Furthermore, it allows the participants to give open-ended answers (Breakwell, Smith, & Wright, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews help researchers get the information needed for a study, and, at the same time, allow participants flexibility in responding to questions (Mertens, 1998). Semi-structured interviews furthermore allow comparability among participants (Breakwell et al., 2012). Researchers can create an atmosphere where additional insights can be gained as a result of interacting with participants (Mertens, 1998).

A disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that they do not allow for the deeper analysis provided by structured interviews. The richness of the data is also limited (Breakwell et al., 2012). Due to its use of flexibility, I made sure that I did not lose the focus of the study by asking questions which were not related to the study. The research questions were based on the literature review. The family stress and coping theoretical framework also played a role in guiding the research questions that were drafted. See Appendix A for a list of the semi-structured interview questions used in the study.



## **3.6 DATA DOCUMENTATION**

Data documentation refers to the methods used to store data for later analysis. In this study, I used audio recordings to store data that served as the basis for the verbatim transcriptions.

### **3.6.1 AUDIO RECORDINGS**

I used audio recordings to record the interviews while at the same time taking notes during the data collection process. Audio recordings are often used in qualitative research when conducting interviews (Oltmann, 2016). A challenge of using audio and video recordings is that background noise often makes the recordings inaudible (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I pre-tested the sound quality of the audio recorder before the interview and made sure the interview room had limited background noise. An advantage of using an audio recorder is that it creates a relaxed atmosphere and frees the interviewer from note-taking distractions (Whiting, 2008). In the present study, I transcribed the semi-structured interview verbatim. See Appendix D for the transcriptions used in the study.

### **3.6.2 TRANSCRIPTIONS**

Transcription refers to a process where sounds from recordings are transformed into text (Davidson, 2009). The process normally starts with listening what was said on the recording. Followed by typing each word that was mentioned on the recording. Then working systematically by moving back and forth between recordings and transcript. (Davidson, 2009). Transcriptions are an integral part of the qualitative analysis of language data (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998). A transcription can be used as evidence for data analysis and trustworthiness of the findings in the study (Davidson, 2009).

The next section covers the data analysis and interpretation approaches that were followed in the study.

## **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

In this study, I used qualitative inductive thematic analysis in the data analysis phase, which is “an approach that primarily uses detailed reading of raw data to derive concepts, themes, and models, through the researcher’s interpretations of the raw data” (Jebreen, 2012, p. 170). A qualitative inductive approach summarises raw data, links the research objectives and the summary findings, and then develops a theory based on the structure and processes that were followed (Thomas, 2006).

Qualitative inductive data analysis is a non-linear procedure that involves organising, analysing, interpreting, and describing the collected data that emerged during the data collection (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative analysis allows researchers to “make meaning” from the information they have gathered and to understand the communication patterns (Hayes, 2000). Qualitative data analysis involves grouping data into themes and assigning names to the themes (Maree, 2012).

Thematic analysis, too, involves sorting information into themes, which can be recurring ideas or topics (Hayes, 2000). Qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process requiring considerable effort to collect data and perform data analysis (Mertens, 1998). In qualitative research, data analysis starts at the data collection phase and ends with the final results (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The advantage of utilising an inductive approach is that it gives in depth insight into the research study under investigation rather than supporting the findings of the study. (Jebreen, 2012). Data analysis follows a sequence that guides the research process. The first thing I had to do when analysing the data was to gain a thorough understanding of the data, which I achieved by reading the transcripts carefully. I identified themes on the basis of conversations with the participants, repeated terms, repeated expressions, and repeated metaphors, which usually lent a particular kind of meaning to the events spoken about (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

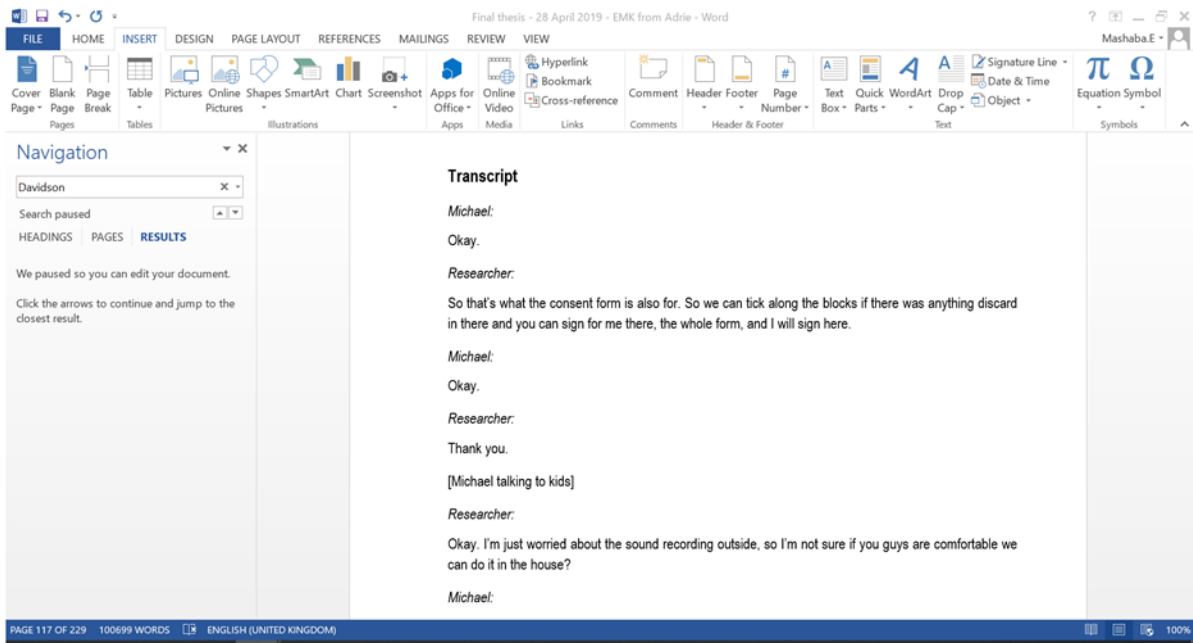
The disadvantage of thematic analysis is that researchers in a qualitative study need to work meticulously when conducting the analysis, which can be a long and tedious process (Hayes, 2000). Also, they usually have to return to their work repeatedly in order to fully grasp what has transpired in the research (Hayes, 2000).

I used the Miles and Huberman Model (1994) whose three stages are data reduction, data display, and data conclusion. These three stages and their application in the present study are discussed in the next section.

### **3.7.1 DATA REDUCTION**

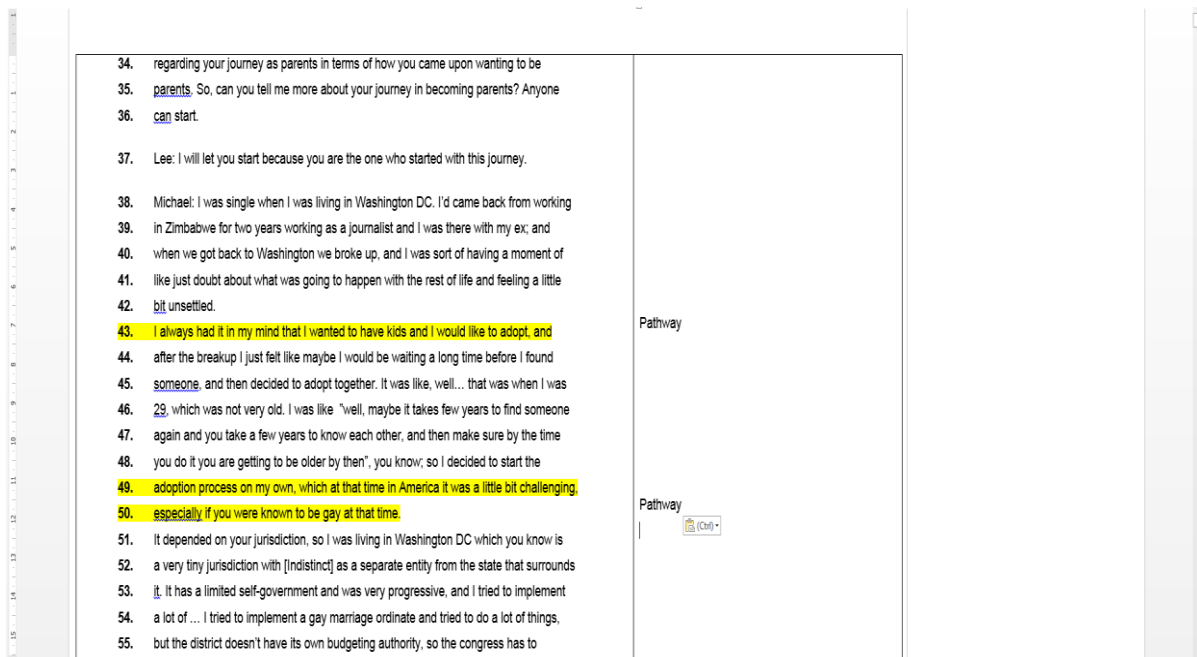
The first stage of thematic analysis is data reduction, which refers to the process of choosing, focusing on, simplifying, building, and transforming data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction occurs throughout thematic analysis: in the early stages, it occurs through editing, segmenting, and summarising the data; in the middle stages, it occurs through coding and identifying themes; and in the later stages, it occurs through conceptualising and explaining the findings of the study, (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Data reduction has three phases that have to be completed before the data display stage.

Firstly, in the present study, I transcribed the interview word for word and produced the information by means of Microsoft Word prior to preparing and organising the content of the data. See Appendix D for the transcript. I analysed this process by going through the transcribed interview carefully and using a table to set out the themes (Alhojailan, 2012). Figure 3.1 shows a screenshot of the interview transcript that was typed to Word.



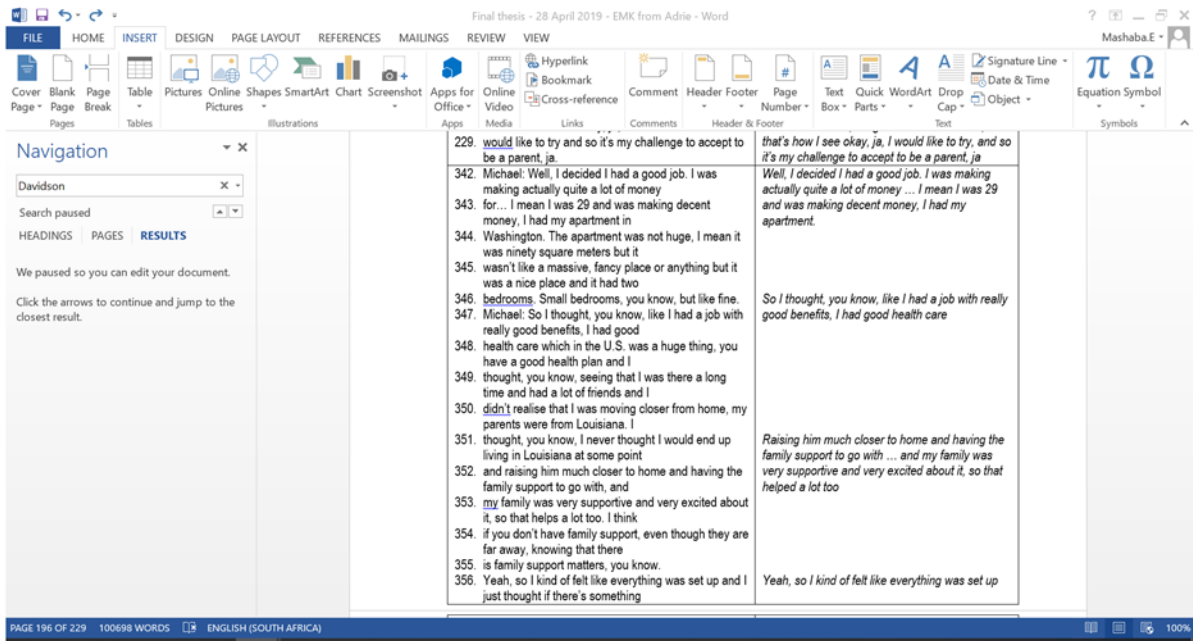
**Figure 3.1: Screenshot of the transcript**

This was followed by reading through the sentences from the interview transcript while highlighting sentences that could be used and broken down into segments or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). See Appendix E for the highlighted sentences that formed part of the themes. The highlighted sentences from the participants were used to answer the research questions of the study (Alhojailan, 2012). Figure 3.2 shows the highlighted sentences that formed part of the themes.



**Figure 3.2: Screenshot of the highlighted sentences that formed part of the themes**

In the last phase of data reduction I broke down the highlighted sentences into smaller segments or themes. See Appendix F for the data reduction phase. This required me to look at the segments or themes formed from the paragraphs and then to read the content again in order to compare and look for missing themes in the data (Alhojailan, 2012). Figure 3.3 shows the themes broken down into smaller segments.



**Figure 3.3: Screenshot of the smaller segments or themes**

### 3.7.2 DATA DISPLAY

The second stage of data analysis involves data display, which is defined as “an organised, compressed, assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Data display organises data and helps to arrange concepts and thoughts. The different ways of displaying data include charts, networks, diagrams, tables, narrative text, and quotations for in-depth understanding (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The advantage of using different data display techniques is that descriptions of comparisons and similarities are clearer (Alhojailan, 2012). See Appendix G for the data display phase.

### 3.7.3 DATA DRAWING/VERIFYING CONCLUSIONS

The rationale for data reduction and data display is to help in the drawing of conclusions (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The final stage of data analysis involves drawing conclusions, and here the researcher has to note different themes, group data, and build conceptual consistency and coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This stage involves inferring conclusions and is distinct from the other stages although it occurs concurrently with them (Punch & Oancea, 2014). See Appendix H for the data drawing/verifying conclusions phase.

### **3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA**

#### **3.8.1 VALIDITY/TRUSTWORTHINESS OF FINDINGS**

Trustworthiness is determined by the manner in which data are collected, sorted, and classified (Maree, 2012). Trustworthiness is linked to validity (the degree to which a research study measures what it was intended to measure), which plays an important role in the interpretation of shared meaning for participants. Validity means a true picture is presented of what is being studied. It serves as a basis for applying the information in other settings and for researchers to demonstrate that the findings emerge from the data and not their own preconceptions (Shenton, 2004). Strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research projects include credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as set out by Shenton (2004).

#### **3.8.2 CREDIBILITY**

Credibility “refers to factors such as the significance of results (truth value) for participants and readers” (Maree, 2012, p. 140). Credibility is an important factor when considering trustworthiness. To ensure that credibility is achieved, researchers use a combination of methods for collecting data and for analysing different sources of data in the research process (Chowdhury, 2014). Credibility can also be achieved through peer review by colleagues, supervisors, and other academics (Shenton, 2004).

In the present study, I applied member checking where the participants were asked to read the transcript of the semi-structured interview and check whether the words match what they intended to say. I familiarised myself with the culture of the participating parents before I collected the data. I also had frequent debriefing sessions with my supervisor in order to build a collaborative relationship. Ample room was allowed for positive as well as negative feedback from my peers and supervisor when conducting the study.

#### **3.8.3 TRANSFERABILITY**

Transferability refers to the degree that research findings can be exported and generalised to other contexts (Maree, 2012). The purpose of transferability is to ensure external validity and to demonstrate the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004).

In the present study, I provided sufficient information and in-depth thick descriptions regarding the data collected and the findings (Shenton, 2004). I also reflected continuously on my world view and the opinions and thoughts I had during the study.

### **3.8.4 DEPENDABILITY**

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of a research process (Maree, 2012). An inquiry audit can be undertaken to ascertain dependability in qualitative research where the process entails the examination of “the product, data, findings, interpretations, recommendations, and attests whether it is supported by data and internally coherent” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 278).

The present study reported in-depth discussions to enable future researchers to repeat the study. I also ensured that the research design covered what was planned, the operational detail of the data gathering, the reflective appraisal of the project, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the inquiry process (Shenton, 2004).

### **3.8.5 CONFORMABILITY**

Conformability is the extent to which the results of a study are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases or preconceptions of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Conformability can be ensured by following a data-oriented approach, which entails indicating how the data eventually led to the recommendations, and the processes that were followed during the study (Shenton, 2004).

To overcome any bias of my own, I acknowledged my own preconceptions through reflective in the journal. The researcher’s journal is a reflective writing tool designed for promoting and understanding researcher development (Borg, 2001). It serves as a historical record of the research process and of the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of the researcher as well as participants (De Vos et al., 2011). Filling in the journal regularly helps monitor the role of the researcher as required in qualitative research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). By using a researcher’s journal, researchers can document and reflect on their own experiences leading to greater insights into and awareness of themselves (Borg, 2001).

The researcher’s journal enabled me to record my feelings, insights, experiences, and thoughts during the research process. It also played a role in identifying themes that emerged and helped me reflect on my own subjectivity and biases and ways of overcoming them. The researcher’s journal entries are attached as Appendix C.

My decisions and methods were discussed in the report with my reasons for them. Why one approach was followed rather than another and the strengths and the weaknesses of the study were also discussed. I applied a data-oriented approach by showing how the findings led to recommendations for further studies.

## **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are many ethical considerations in qualitative research, and, for this study, I used the code of ethics for research of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (2008) and the University of

Pretoria (2009). I also obtained ethical clearance from the research committee at the University of Pretoria I embarked the research process and data collection.

The ethical considerations in the present study included obtaining informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, doing no harm, voluntary participation, privacy, the right to withdraw, respect, and dignity (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

### **3.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

The participants' permission to include them in the study was obtained beforehand through ongoing communication with them about the purpose of the study, my role as researcher, and what was expected of them. I further sought permission from the participants by sending them informed consent forms and a brief description of the study (see Appendix B). Information regarding voluntary permission and the right to withdraw from the research at any stage was included in the consent form (King, 2010). Permission to make an audio recording was also obtained from the participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The informed consent form was read out to the participants before they signed it.

### **3.9.2 PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND ANONYMITY**

The informed consent form covered ethical considerations such as confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity as required by the ethical guidelines of the HPCSA (2008) and the University of Pretoria (2009). Confidentiality includes showing respect and offering protection to research participants by ensuring information surety and not revealing their identity (Halai, 2006). This was achieved in the present study by giving each participant a pseudonym and obtaining their permission to record their responses to the questions.

### **3.9.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM**

Issues concerning the safety, beneficence, and protection of the participants were assured in the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, I kept my records safely secured with only my supervisor having access to them. I encouraged the participants to be honest and frank at all times, and I endeavoured to maintain a non-judgemental and non-biased approach throughout the research process. The participants felt at ease and comfortable because the interviews were held at their home. I created a welcoming and friendly environment and assured the participants' well-being by not exposing them to any physical or psychological harm. The participants were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand any of the questions.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter gave a detailed description of my paradigmatic perspective in the study, which influenced the qualitative exploratory case study design, the research design, and the selection of the case and the participants involved in the study. The data collection techniques and the data analysis strategies were also discussed. The chapter ended with a detailed explanation of my role as researcher, the quality criteria adhered to, and the ethical considerations that applied throughout the research project.

Chapter 4 reports on the results of the research and explains the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data as well as the data analysis process. This is followed by an interpretation of the results in accordance with the research questions and literature review.

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## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the study. The chapter aims at answering the overarching research question that relates to the experiences of two gay male parents in their transition to parenthood. The chapter covers three themes and seven sub-themes. Theme 1 aims at answering the first secondary research question that relates to how the gay male parents in this study transitioned to parenthood. Theme 2 aims at answering the second secondary research question that relates to the pathway to parenthood the gay male parents in this study chose. Theme 3 aims at answering the final secondary question that relates to the participants' experience of being parents.

### 4.2 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The three themes and seven sub-themes that emerged from the data are summarised in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes**

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
<i>Theme 1: Decision to become parents</i>	Sub-theme 1.1: Process of becoming parents
	Sub-theme 1.2: Factors that influenced the gay male parents' decision to become parents
<i>Theme 2: Choosing a pathway to parenthood</i>	Sub-theme 2.1: Adoption as a pathway to parenthood
	Sub-theme 2.2: Experiences of the gay male parents during adoption
<i>Theme 3: Experiences of parenthood</i>	Sub-theme 3.1: Adjustment to parenthood
	Sub-theme 3.2: Challenges from society
	Sub-theme 3.3: Creating a positive family Identity

The following section provides definitions for each theme and the sub-themes. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for each sub-theme are provided as well as extracts from the data sources to support the findings. Each theme concludes with a recursive literature review of the theme.

The following section provides definitions for each theme and the sub-themes. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for each sub-theme are provided as well as extracts from the data sources to support the findings. Each theme concludes with a recursive literature review of the theme.

#### 4.2.1 THEME 1: DECISION TO BECOME PARENTS

As stated in Chapter 2, gay male parents have the same desire as heterosexual couples to become parents (Farr & Tornello, 2016). However, the decision to become parents is a more complex process for gay male couples than it is for heterosexual couples (Farr & Tornello, 2016). Gay male couples' unique childhood experiences of their sexual identity and the disclosure of their identity and coming-out experiences to their families and society play a role in their decision-making process (Glazer, 2014; Pereira, 2014). However, just like heterosexual couples, some homosexual couples have the same need to become parents and have to consider various factors before becoming parents such as financial security, age, employment status, and medical expenses (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2014; Mallon, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2008; Norton et al., 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2000). In addition to the above considerations, gay male couples also have to consider how they are going to conceive their children (Farr & Tornello, 2016).

Data presented under this theme relate to the process the participants in this study went through during their decision to become parents. This covers their childhood and coming-out experiences leading up to the point when they decided to become parents (Sub-theme 1.1). Under this theme, data are presented on the factors that influenced the gay male couple's decision to become parents (Sub-theme 1.2).

##### 4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Process of becoming parents

Table 4.2 provides a working definition of the process of becoming a parent as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 1.1.

**Table 4.2: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 1.1**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: PROCESS OF BECOMING A PARENT</b>	
Process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative solutions (University of Massachusetts, 2019).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to when the gay male couple decided to become parents, how they decided to become parents, and how their decision was influenced or met by their families of origin and society.	Data that were excluded related to the experiences of the gay male couple other than those of making the decision to become parents.

The two participants in this study each had a unique process they went through before they decided to become parents. Participant 1 (P1) indicated that he always had an awareness that he wanted to become a parent and that he was certain that he would be a parent one day:

- *I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt (P1<sup>1</sup>, line 44).*
- *I never felt uncertain about being a parent (P1, line 719).*

During his coming-out to his family of origin at the age of 18, participant one had to address his family's concerns that he would not be able to become a parent as a gay male, but he assured them he could still have children if he wished to and that he had various options to choose from. He explained that being gay did not mean he would not be able to have children:

- *I came out when I was 18 and actually that was one of the things like, you know, "what about kids"? I was sort of, like, I don't understand the connection actually, and I can still have children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second, I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the idea. (P1, lines 972–977)<sup>2</sup>*

According to participant one, his decision to become a parent reached an impasse when he went through a relationship breakup at the age of 29. During this time he was confronted with his future decisions and what he still wanted to achieve in his life. He felt that he did not want to put off his decision to become a parent much longer bearing in mind his age, so he decided to proceed with adoption as a single parent:

- *I was single when I was living in the Washington DC. I'd come back from working from Africa, and I was there with my ex, and when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of my life and feeling a little bit unsettled. I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt, and after the breakup, I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found someone, and then decided to adopt together. It was like, well...that was when I was 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone again and you take a few years to know each other, and then make sure by the time you do it you are getting to be older by then", you know. (P1, lines 39–49)*

Both participants reported that participant two had a different experience in terms of his coming-out experience compared to participant one. Unlike participant one, participant two did not have the support and acceptance that participant one had from his family of origin:

- *Well, we had very different family experiences (P1, line 909).*

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<sup>1</sup> P1 indicates responses from participant one, and P2 indicates responses from participant two.

<sup>2</sup> The responses of the participants are verbatim with only very light editing in order to preserve the authenticity of the responses.

Participant two said the following about the response from his family of origin to his sexual identity:

- *For me my family was not there from the beginning, they did not accept the way I'm gay, so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay... this is who I am. (P2, lines 910–912)*

Participant two said that it was easier for him to show his family of origin through his actions that he could be a good parent:

- *So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents have seen like, this is my actions, and this is results from both of them. So then, the questions that they ask, they have been answered by actions, so now they are happy. (P2, lines 913–916)*

The participants indicated that participant two came to his decision to become a parent in a more coincidental and unplanned way, unlike participant one who actively made the decision to become a parent. Participant two became a parent as a result of his entering into a relationship with participant one after participant one had already started the adoption process. In fact, both participants believed that participant two would never have considered the idea of becoming a parent had he been on his own and not in a relationship with participant one:

- *I think for Lee it was very different because he was presented with a choice that was already done (P1, line 220).*
- *If he hadn't been thinking about that already, I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own (P1, line 222).*
- *No, never thought (P2, line 223).*

It was during their second date that participant one broke the news to participant two that he was in the process of becoming a parent:

- *So, on our second date, Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... [Laughter] So, yeah, but it wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting him to co-parent or anything. (P1, lines 87–90)*

The process of becoming a parent reached an impasse for participant two after he moved in with participant one, and he became involved in taking care of participant one's adopted child:

- *Ja, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you know, Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent, but I'm there for him ... so I kind of didn't have the chance. (P2, lines 225–227)*

It was during this time that participant two began to develop a bond with participant one's child:

- *Then me and Will, we got bonded at the end, so that's how I see okay, ja, I would like to try, and so it's my challenge to<sup>3</sup> accept to be a parent, ja (P2, lines 228–229).*
- *I had a chance to see Will, how he's growing up, because he came home at four months, and at the time in two years, I didn't decide to be a parent while he is there, so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I have seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night. So ... I felt for him because I bonded with him very nicely, and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt I loved him. (P2, lines 382–388)*

The process to become parents for the second time was also different for the two participants. Participant one believed that it was important for their first child to have a sibling:

- *We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will (P1, lines 176–177).*

Participant two, however, was uncertain at the time if adopting a second child was a good idea. In the end he agreed to it as he wanted to support participant one in his decision. According to participant one:

- *Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea, but he was going to support it, and we are going to go along with it (P1, lines 178–179).*

The data presented under this sub-theme indicated that the two participants in this study had gone through different processes in the decision to become parents. Participant one knew from an early age that he wanted to become a parent, and he clarified this with his family of origin when he “came out” to them. Participant two's family of origin did not accept his gay identity immediately, and the notion of his being a parent became more acceptable to them only when he was able to demonstrate to them what it meant to be gay and that he could be a good parent to his children.

The decision to become a parent for participant one reached an impasse after a relationship breakup at which time he considered his age, the duration of the process of adopting a child, and how long it would

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms were provided for the two participants and their children.

take him to be in a new relationship before he could adopt. He then decided to adopt as a single parent. The decision to become a parent for participant two occurred when he entered into a relationship with his partner who was already the parent of an adopted child. He moved in with the family, formed a bond with the child, and then decided to co-parent. The decision to become parents for a second time was initiated by participant one who felt the need to provide a sibling for their first child. Although participant two was uncertain about this decision, he supported participant one's decision. Sub-theme 1.2 is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Factors that influenced the gay male parents' decision to become parents

Table 4.3 gives a working definition of the factors that influenced the decision to become parents as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.3: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 1.2**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE DECISION TO BECOME PARENTS</b>	
This refers to factors that influenced the decision to become parents, which included finances, health, leave from work, and employment (Wall, 2011).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to the decision-making factors the two participants mentioned such as financial security, age, employment status, and medical expenses among other factors that also played role in deciding to become parents.	Data that were excluded related to the decision-making factors that did not play a role in deciding to become parents.

Participant one considered various factors before he made the decision to become a parent. As stated in Sub-theme 1, participant one was confronted with the decision to become a parent after his long-term relationship came to an end. During this time, he considered his age and how long it would take him to find a new partner. He also considered other factors such as his financial status, employment situation, living arrangements, health plan, and family support:

- *Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money ... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment (P1, lines 342–343).*
- *So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good health care (P1, lines 347–348).*

- *Raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with ... and my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helped a lot too (P1, lines 352–353).*
- *Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up (P1, line 356).*

As stated in Sub-theme 1, the decision to become a parent for participant two was coincidental and unplanned. At the time participant two decided to co-parent, he was unemployed. He considered the fact that he could not contribute financially to raising their first child, however, he believed that he could contribute by taking care of the child on a daily basis:

- *For me, I feel different from Michael because I've seen the good things, you know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own, but for me I wasn't able to, you know, even to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my own, but I think Michael was able to do it, so then I decided to be help him and to contribute with my physical ability in terms of, you know, to be with Will while Michael was working because later on he offered to ... and asked me to move in with them, that's how I thought I think I could, you know, jump on board in raising Will together with Michael, even though at the time I didn't have a job. (P2, lines 367–375)*

After moving from the United States of America (USA) to South Africa (SA), the participants first wanted to settle down in their new location, and they also waited until participant two had settled into his new career before they considered adopting their second child. Only after participant two's business was stable did participant one suggest they should consider adopting a second child because he wanted a sibling for their first child:

- *So, we got here [South Africa]; Will was three and a half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know, it was hard moving, and so it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Johannesburg. Lee tried some different things, and then finally figured out the business would be a good one, so he started the business. (P1, lines 172–176)*

The data generated under Sub-theme 1.2 indicated that that each participant had their own decision-making factors to consider before becoming a parent. Participant one considered his age after a long-term relationship had ended, and the time it would take to establish a new relationship. He also considered the timeframe for adoption and decided to proceed with adoption as a single parent. Other factors for him were his financial security, employment situation, living arrangements, and health plan, among others.

Participant two, after moving in with participant one and forming a bond with participant one's child, considered that he might not be able to take care of the child financially but that he could look after the child while participant one was at work. The decision to adopt their second child was influenced by their need to settle down first after arriving in SA and ensuring participant two's career stability. The overall findings of the study for Theme 1 are discussed next.

### 4.2.1.3 Findings on the decision to become parents

Gay male parents' process of becoming parents is complex (Glazer, 2014). It involves defining their homosexual feelings, accepting their sexual identity, and disclosing their identity to their family of origin and society (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001). The process of identifying homosexual feelings and accepting a homosexual identity is different for every LGBTIQ+ individual (Pereira, 2014). Experiences of coming out may affect some LGBTIQ+ individuals negatively (Crespi, 2001) resulting in their wanting to remain childless (Crespi, 2001; Mallon, 2004).

The findings of this study correlated with those of other studies that LGBTIQ+ individuals have different experiences of accepting and disclosing their homosexual identity to society. Both the participants in the present study also faced societal challenges regarding acceptance of their sexual identity. In addition, being gay meant their ability to become parents was questioned by their families of origin. However, participant one's family of origin accepted him soon after he came out to them, and he was also able to identify with being a parent from a relatively early age. Participant two struggled to gain his family's acceptance of his sexual identity, and it also took longer for them to come to terms with his being a parent. In fact, his chances of becoming a parent were remote until he met his life partner who was already in the process of becoming a parent. He had to show his family of origin what it meant to be gay and that he could be a good parent to his children before they accepted him.

LGBTIQ+ individuals who are open about their sexual identity also often experience the need to form loving relationships or get married to their partners and seek parenthood (Glazer, 2014). According to Glazer (2014), same-sex couples often have to work through their different expectations and decide whether parenthood is wanted by both partners or by only one partner. If one partner does not wish to be a parent, this may result in a loss for the other partner who wants to be a parent (Glazer, 2014). For the transition to parenthood to be successful, the same-sex couple must agree about having a child (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Glazer, 2014). Although the participants in this study initially went through different processes in deciding if they wanted to become parents, they were eventually able to agree that they both wanted to co-parent and also to adopt for a second time.

Same-sex couples have to consider their financial status extra carefully before becoming parents because medical screening, donor insemination, prenatal care, preparation for birth, and legal fees can add substantially to the financial burden they have to take on (C. J. Patterson, 2000). If same-sex couples are not strong enough financially, these expenses may prevent them from becoming parents (Mitchell & Green, 2008). Gay male couples also need to consider their own factors before they can become parents. These factors include leave from work, medical expenses, whether both parents are ready to become parents, employment, and daycare (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2014; Goldberg & Moyer, 2014; Mallon, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2008; Norton et al., 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2000). An important factor that gay male couples have to consider in their decision to become parents is their



financial stability. The literature indicates that financial instability may affect the readiness for parenthood of a gay male couple due to the costs associated with becoming a parent such as affording surrogacy or adoption, medical costs, and lawyer fees (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2014; Mallon, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2008; Norton et al., 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2000).

The participants in this study also had to consider various factors before deciding to become parents. However, they had different factors to consider compared to the factors mentioned in research. Participant one had to consider whether he wanted to become a single parent after he experienced a failed relationship. In the process, he considered how long it would take him to find a new partner who would be willing to co-parent with him. He then considered his age and the time it would take for a new relationship to happen. He also knew the adoption process took time, and so he opted to become a single parent through adoption as soon as possible. Participant two in the study had to consider co-parenting with his new life partner who was already in the process of adopting. He also considered his financial status but, since he was unemployed at the time, he believed his caregiving abilities would be sufficient to contribute to their child's life.

Choosing a pathway to parenthood is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.2 THEME 2: CHOOSING A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD**

As stated in Chapter 2, there are various pathways to parenthood that same-sex couples can consider in order to have children of their own (Dempsey, 2013). These pathways include having children from past heterosexual relationships, surrogacy, adoption, foster care, and blended families (Mallon, 2004; Morison & Lynch, 2016). Each pathway has its own processes and is often associated with positive experiences and challenges (Dempsey, 2013). In this study, the gay male parents chose adoption as their pathway to parenthood. The data presented under this theme therefore related to adoption as a pathway (Sub-theme 2.1) and covered also the positive experiences and the challenges the participants in this study encountered during the adoption process (Sub-theme 2.2).

##### **4.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Adoption as a pathway to parenthood**

Table 4.4 gives a working definition of adoption as a pathway to parenthood as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.4: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 2.1**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: ADOPTION AS A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD</b>	
Adoption is a process whereby non-biological parents are given the legal parental rights to a child and the rights of the birth parents are terminated (Mallon, 2004).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to how the participants chose adoption as a pathway to parenthood and the process they followed during adoption as their pathway to parenthood.	Data that were excluded related to processes that did not play a role in choosing adoption as a pathway to parenthood.

Participant one – when he was considering adoption – he worked within Africa. He decided that he wanted to become a parent through adoption because in his line of work he was exposed to many orphaned children and realised the need for these children to be placed in families:

- *I spent a lot of time doing farm stories at that time, land reform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about ... all these kids you meet each one personally and to choose to leave one of them behind. (P1, lines 234–238)*

In his decision-making process, participant one also considered surrogacy as a pathway to parenthood. Although his brother had successfully become a parent through surrogacy, he thought that if there were other alternatives that it would not be his first choice as a pathway to parenthood:

- *My brother used a surrogate with their second child, so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it ... but if you don't have to do that (P1, lines 241–243).*

Participant one concluded that surrogacy would not be his first option after considering various factors. The first factor was the cost of surrogacy:

- *It is actually usually expensive (P1, line 243).*
- *To do a surrogate ... starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send a child to university ... and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these things. So to me it's just a different thing. (P1, lines 260–263)*
- *So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive, I think twenty thousand dollars for his adoption, which I think is a medium price (P1, lines 255–256).*

Participant one also considered surrogacy a more complicated and tedious process, and he did not like the power surrogacy gave the surrogate mother. He added that he did not like the fact some of the embryos might not be used in the process and might have to be destroyed:

- *Very complicated, and it's surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother because, you know, if there's multiple births, a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes you uncomfortable, if you think of having surrogacy. I think another issue is that you are creating these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be aborted or ... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by, you know, it's not bad, but I also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation with another person. (P1, lines 243–250)*

Participant one said also that having a biological connection to his child was not that important to him, and his family lineage did not depend on his carrying the family genes forward:

- *I know people as adults that were adopted themselves, and it was never important to them to have a biological connection, and they went through the surrogacy process or they just ... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason, but for me I didn't really see the point, and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is going to run out or something, you know. (P1, lines 265–269)*

When participant one had considered all his options, he started the adoption process on his own:

- *I decided to start the adoption process on my own, which at that time in America, it was a little bit challenging, especially if you were known to be gay at that time (P1, lines 49–51).*

According to participant one, being a single male made the adoption process more difficult as few adoption agencies allowed single men to adopt:

- *But there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight (P1, lines 71–72).*

This challenge, however, did not prevent participant one from seeking an adoption agency that allowed single gay men to adopt. During his search, he discovered that orphanages in Guatemala allowed single gay men to adopt children, which resulted in his applying for international adoption:

- *So, at that time, the only country that would allow a single man to do an international adoption was Guatemala (P1, lines 73–74).*
- *I adopted from this orphanage in Guatemala (P1, lines 77–78).*

The adoption process entailed filling in application forms and submitting them to the orphanage:

- *It's just paperwork that you have to do (P1, line 198).*

The adoption process also entailed working with different professionals such as a social worker and a lawyer:

- *There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state (P1, line 66).*

The adoption agreement participant one entered into with his first child's adoption entailed that the biological parents would have limited or no access to the child after the adoption:

- *Will was left at an orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the DNA testing, and she did home studies and, you know, all those things, so he wasn't completely abandoned, but he was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I did not make any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year, but we couldn't find her again. (P1, lines 278–280)*

Participant one said that his experience of the adoption process with the first child made the process easier the second time around, as he already knew what to expect. This may have influenced his decision to apply for adoption again:

- *I think if anything else, I personally have been through it once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect, and then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process. (P1, lines 201–203)*

With the adoption of their second child, the participants started the application process with Johannesburg Children Welfare. However, their application was lost in this process:

- *We did an application at Johannesburg Children Welfare, but they lost it (P1, lines 180–181).*

Despite this initial setback, the participants did not give up on their quest for adoption but started the adoption process again. At about this time, a Thai woman contacted them and offered to give up her parental rights to the participants through adoption because she was unable to raise her child:

- *One night a Thai woman called up and said, "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how we ended up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's ... but at least it's worth it in the end. (P1, lines 193–196)*

To legalise the adoption, they had to complete the required application forms and have interviews with a social worker at their home before their application could be approved:

- *He's born in South Africa, and it was sort of a different process, but it was very easy actually. I think it's about adoption and it's sort of like ... it's just paperwork that you have to do, and I think for some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know, it's very tense, it's very intimidating ... and to answer a lot of questions and be having a home study, but I mean, you know. (P1, lines 196–201)*

The participants indicated that the application process for the second child took less than a year for approval by the court:

- *Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because ... by the time you're done, there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court. (P1, lines 205–207)*

The type of adoption the participants chose was where the biological mother gives up her legal parental rights but is allowed access to the child. In this case, the biological mother had monthly playdates with her child:

- *So he has a monthly playdate with his birth mom (P1, line 284–285).*
- *Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month (P2, line 299).*

The data that were generated under Sub-theme 2.1 indicated that the participants chose adoption as a pathway to parenthood. Adoption in this case was the preferred choice as it was less costly than surrogacy and was regarded by the participants as a less complicated option. It was also not a priority for participant one to have a biological connection with his child. The type of adoption chosen with their first child was international adoption – here the participants had all legal parental rights, and the biological mother did not have visitation rights to her child.

The participants also chose adoption for their second child as participant one knew what the process entailed. The adoption was done through the public service in South Africa. The type of adoption the participants chose was where the adoptive parents have all legal parental rights, and the biological mother has monthly visitation rights to her child. Sub-theme 2.2. is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Experiences of the gay male parents during adoption**

Table 4.5 provides a working definition of the experiences of the gay male parents during adoption as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.5: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 2.2**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: EXPERIENCES OF THE GAY MALE PARENTS DURING ADOPTION</b>	
This refers to the experiences the gay male parents encountered during the adoption process (Hicks, 2006; Logan & Sellick, 2012).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to the participants' experiences with the law and jurisdiction, the application process through the courts, encounters with the biological mothers, and the support they received from their families of origin during the adoption process.	Data that were excluded related to the participants' experiences that were unrelated to the adoption process.

Participant one experienced problems with the laws and legal powers in the state where he lived at the time when he started the adoption process for his first child. He resided in Washington DC in the USA at a time when the state was still finalising the laws and jurisdiction for adoption, which meant he could not apply for adoption in his own state:

- *So, I was living in Washington DC which, you know, is a very tiny jurisdiction as a separate entity from the state that surrounds it. It has limited self-government and was very progressive, and tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and do a lot of things, but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the Congress has to approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the Congress and live in a district ... they still tell us what to do. So, they definitely tried to do a lot, but they were unable to implement all the laws because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck ... (P1, lines 52–61)*

Participant one then considered applying in a neighbouring state, which was Virginia. However, in Virginia it was illegal for gay men to adopt at that time:

- *Which means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our jurisdiction over DC. In Virginia, gay marriage was illegal and adoption was illegal, a marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a challenge in terms of finding adoption agencies to work with. (P1, lines 61–65)*

Participant one then considered adopting a child in a developing country, however he soon discovered that only a few countries allowed single men to adopt:

- *So at the time it was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight. (P1, lines 69–72)*

Participant one researched which countries allowed single men to adopt and discovered that he could apply for adoption in Guatemala. While he was in the process of applying for adoption, his company transferred him to Asia:

- *I didn't really have a good experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Asia (P1, lines 78–80).*

Participant one therefore had to finalise the adoption process for his child while residing in Asia:

- *I ended up in Asia. I finished the paperwork while I was there (P1, lines 81–82).*

The orphanage in Guatemala contacted participant one to inform him that they had paired him with a boy child and that he needed to respond if he wished to proceed with the adoption:

- *The orphanage called and said 'hey, we have matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details, and if you agree to the match then we will proceed' (P1, lines 84–86).*

Participant one was informed that the adoption application process would take twenty-four months to finalise. He then started visiting the child with the support of his family and also started with the application process for USA citizenship for the child:

- *To be exact, it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months old and they were like, okay, you need to go back and be patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent like a week there. (P1, lines 93–98)*

Participant one was then informed by the orphanage that the application process would take another twenty months and that he should return to Asia and wait for a response:

- *Then I was leaving to go back to Asia, go back to work, the orphanage, you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back and be patient, you don't have to call us every day, and we will let you know when things are happening. (P1, lines 99–102)*

Participant one travelled back to the USA with his family. After some time had elapsed, he prepared to return to his job in Asia. While he was waiting for his flight to Asia, he received the news that his application had been successful:

- *So, I was in the transit lounge in the United States going back to Asia, and the orphanage rang on my cell phone, and they were like congratulations, it has been approved (P1, lines 102–104).*

The sudden approval of his application caught him off guard because he had not yet organised his life to accommodate a child, and he had used up his parental leave in Asia:

- *I was like, wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn't really organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn't really set up for kids and I didn't have a daycare lined up, I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract even though I was working in Asia, and the country I was working in is quite conservative for any sort of social policy like that, you know. (P1, lines 105–110)*
- *So, basically, dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like, well, you only get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala and, you know, that stuff ... I said okay, great. (P1, lines 111–113)*

Participant one flew back to Asia with his mother and her best friend to assist him with the arrangements for the child. He then hired a nanny, moved into a new apartment, and bought everything he required at that time in preparation for the arrival of the child in Asia:

- *I hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and so everything came together pretty quickly and my mom and her best friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks (P1, lines 115–117).*

Participant one then flew to Guatemala with the support of his family to fetch the child from the orphanage:

- *We picked up Will, my dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will's godmother, went back with me to Guatemala (P1, lines 118–120).*

Participant one later flew with the child to Louisiana in the USA where his parents and family lived in order to have the child baptised. However, while he was in the USA, a hurricane trapped him in his home town making it impossible for him to get his child's passport:

- *We stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church and then as that was happening, Hurricane Katrina hit, so the city was shut down. Will's passport was in the passport*



*office in New Orleans. We couldn't get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and destroyed. (P1, lines 120–124)*

Participant one contacted the embassy of the country he resided in Washington DC to get assistance with travel documents for his child but was informed that he had to fly to Asia and apply at the US embassy there for travel documents:

- *It was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted out. Finally, the Embassy in Washington is like "oh, you can bring him back and pick up his visa at the embassy in Asia". I said, okay, that would be great, thanks. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana where my parents lived to get to Asia. (P1, lines 124–128)*

When participant one and his child arrived at the airport in Asia they were not allowed entry into the country where he was residing by immigration officers because he did not have his child's Guatemalan passport. He then had to contact the US foreign ministry, and his child was duly granted a visa for 24 hours:

- *We get there and the immigration officials were like, well, he can't come in because he doesn't have a Guatemalan passport. Even though he is an American citizen, you haven't got a proof of that yet, and I was like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in. (P1, lines 128–132)*

Participant one then went to the US embassy where he successfully obtained a visa for his child. He returned to the airport to get the immigration officers to stamp the visa, but they said they had to deport the child back to the USA:

- *We went to the US embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane. They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back. (P1, lines 132–136)*

The immigration officers allowed participant one and his child to fly to Singapore in order to have the child's visa stamped. When they flew back they were allowed entrance into the country as all the required documentation had been finalised:

- *So in the end they agreed we take a plane to Singapore ... so we flew to Singapore, which was like an hour and a half away. I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport, turned around, right back into the queue, walked back out of Singapore, got back onto the same plane that flew me back, and then it was fine, they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport with the resident fees and all that. (P1, lines 136–142)*

When the participants applied for the adoption of their second child, they experienced some difficulties as the adoption laws in South Africa had changed:

- *Then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the government introduced the new Child Welfare Law (P1, lines 181–182).*

Participant one reported that instead of having their applications approved under the previous law, the application process was suspended by the court:

- *I think rather than grandfathering instead the applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they just stopped processing adoptions from the moment the Bill was introduced to Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year. (P1, lines 183–186)*

The participants then decided to give up on the adoption of a second child because of all the problems arising from the changing laws in South Africa:

- *So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not meant to be, it's whatever we're happy (P1, lines 191–192).*

The participants applied for adoption a second time when a Thai woman contacted them privately. Participant one said the process was emotionally difficult because the mother was present:

- *There's not that kind of emotional difficulty with a woman who's making a very difficult choice. Whereas with Juno's adoption, because she called us, and we know her and we see her still. We had to experience all of her emotional difficulties, and she was not in a great place. (P1, lines 282–286)*

The participants had positive experiences with the adoption procedure for their second child, which was completed in less than a year. They first had to go through a court hearing after which their application was approved. However, the participants were worried about the biological mother's mental state and whether she would stay in South Africa or leave:

- *Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because. like, by the time you're done ... there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court because the papers are going to the court, and you just wait for your hearing, and in the end we sort of pushed them after a while as we weren't sure if Juno's gonna go or is he gonna stay ... and can he just see her, and there were these questions, and if she actually went back to Asia, and we couldn't find her again or anything, you know, then it would be a problem. But it was all done without too much drama. (P1, lines 205–212)*

In summary, the data under Sub-theme 2.2 indicated that the participants experienced challenges as well as positive experiences during the adoption application process. When participant one started the process with his first child, he struggled to apply as a single man in the USA, as no state had implemented laws to enable single men to adopt. After applying internationally, he was able to adopt his first child successfully. Participant one received approval for the adoption of his first child at short notice, and he had to adjust to this change by hiring a nanny, moving into a new apartment, and purchasing baby care products. Another difficulty for participant one with international adoption were the different laws for adoption that the different countries had. This was evident when he struggled to get his child into the country he resided, which was a stressful experience as he had to make several trips to other countries and contact embassies to obtain a visa to enable the child to enter the Asian country he resided in.

When the participants applied to adopt their second child, their application forms were mislaid by Johannesburg Children Welfare. They also encountered difficulties with the changing laws and regulations for adoption in South Africa, which resulted in the suspension of their first application. They were, however, fortunate in that they were approached privately by their second child's mother to adopt her baby. This was emotionally stressful because the biological mother was present during the process unlike the first biological mother who had been absent.

The findings for Theme 2 are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.2.3 Findings on choosing a pathway to parenthood**

Research indicates that adoption is the most preferred pathway to parenthood for gay male parents (Goldberg et al., 2014) mainly because of the lower financial cost compared to surrogacy (Goldberg et al., 2014; Mallon, 2004; Vitule et al., 2015). Adoption was also the most preferred option as a pathway to parenthood for the participants in this study, too, because it was less costly and complicated than surrogacy. These factors thus played a role in the decision making of the participants.

Various types of adoption are available to gay male parents (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014). The first type involves the biological parents transferring all legal parental rights and all access to their child to the adoptive parents. The second type of adoption involves the biological parents transferring all legal parental rights to the adoptive parents but having limited access to their child (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014; Mallon, 2004). The third type of adoption involves adopting a child from another country, often referred to as international adoption, where the biological parents transfer all legal parental rights to the adoptive parents and have no access to their child (Downing et al., 2009; Goldberg et al., 2014). Another type of adoption is second parent adoption, which is a process where one gay male parent adopts the child first, and the second gay male parent applies for adoption later (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014).

The findings of this study correlated with those of other research conducted on adoption. In this study, the participants adopted the first child through international adoption where they procured all legal parental rights from the biological mother who also had no access to her child. The second child was adopted in South Africa where the participants took over all legal parental rights from the biological mother who, however, has monthly playdates with her child.

Gay male couples can adopt children through the public sector or private agencies (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). Gay male couples in South Africa can apply through the Department of Social Development or accredited private adoption agencies (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The participants in this study did not use public adoption for their children – the first child was adopted from an orphanage in Guatemala through private adoption by means of international adoption, and the second child was adopted through a non-profit organisation known as Johannesburg Children Welfare.

According to Goldberg and Moyer (2014), gay male couples usually consider the type of child they wish to adopt. This decision may be influenced by the age, race, gender, culture, and special needs of the child (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). The findings of this study indicated, however, that the participants did not take these factors into consideration. The first child was paired with participant one who did not consider any of these factors in his decision making. The second child was adopted when a woman contacted the participants privately and transferred all legal parental rights to them.

Certain legal requirements have to be met by gay male parents before they can apply for adoption (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). In the USA only 21 states have permitted gay males to adopt since 2012 (Goldberg & Moyer, 2014). In South Africa, gay male couples are allowed to adopt children even if the couple are not married but in a committed cohabiting relationship (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The findings of this study correlated with those of the above literature. Participant one in this study could not find any agency in the USA that would allow him to adopt. Furthermore, the state he resided in (Washington DC) at that time was still in the process of finalising the law and jurisdiction for adoption. He also could not adopt in the neighbouring state (Virginia) where it was illegal for gay males to adopt children. The present study revealed that the participants in the study could adopt their second child in South African because the law permitted gay male couples in a committed relationship to adopt.

In South Africa, gay male parents have to follow procedures prescribed by the Department of Social Development and the Children's Court (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The adoption procedures require the biological parents of the child or legal guardians to give legal consent to the adoptive parents. The gay male couple is then evaluated by a social worker who provides a report for submission to the Children's Court for approval (Morison & Lynch, 2016). The gay male couple have to wait for the approval of the Children's Court before the child can be placed in their care (Morison & Lynch, 2016).

The findings of this study correlated with those of research conducted on the legal procedure for adoption in South Africa. The participants in this study were given consent by the biological mother of their second child to take over all parental rights to her child. The participants were evaluated by a social worker who submitted a report to the Children’s Court. They also attended a court hearing before their application was approved.

Theme 3 is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.3 THEME 3: EXPERIENCES OF PARENTHOOD**

Gay male parents face many of the experiences of adjusting to parenthood that heterosexual parents also face (Farr & Tornello, 2016). These include sleep deprivation and changes in relationships, intimacy, and communication (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Lavner et al. 2014; O’Neill, Hamer, & Dixon, 2012).

As stated in Chapter 2, gay male parents experience additional challenges that heterosexual couples do not such as social discrimination and stigmatisation (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg, 2006; Hicks, 2005; C. J. Patterson et al., 2004). Despite this, many gay male parents create positive family environments for their children (Titlestad & Pooley, 2014).

The data presented under this theme related to how the participants in the study adjusted to parenthood (Sub-theme 3.1). Data are presented also on the opposition the participants faced from members of society (Sub-theme 3.2). Also discussed is how the gay male parents created a positive family identity with their children (Sub-theme 3.3).

##### **4.2.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Adjustment to parenthood**

Table 4.6 gives a working definition of adjustment to parenthood as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.6: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 3.1**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD</b>	
This refers to a period of change that occurs with the arrival of a new baby and the re-arrangements parents have to make to accommodate the new baby (Brotherson, 2007; Cowan & Cowan, 2000).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to the participants’ experiences of adjustment to parenthood, which included sleep, balancing life and work routines, and household responsibilities.	Data that were excluded related to the participants’ experiences that were not related to adjustment to parenthood.

Participant one indicated that at the beginning it was difficult for him to adjust to being a parent as he did not receive any paternity leave and had to do everything on his own. He had to rely on daycare to assist him during working hours, and he was concerned about not having enough time to bond with his child:

- *I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave (P1, lines 107–108).*
- *At the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything, but I needed to have full-time help because I was working ... that can be a bit challenging because you also want to bond with the kid, but you do need full time daycare because that's what working parents need. (P1, lines 309–313)*

At the time of adopting his first child, participant one was living in Asia, and he had to adjust to parenthood without the support of his family. He therefore had to rely on service providers to help him take care of his child:

- *I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom and say like, "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a choice (P1, lines 313–315).*
- *Not only do you need a full-time day nanny, you need full-time daycare plus a backup system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. It can be nervous ... you know it's hard. (P1, lines 315–317)*

As a result of using daycare, participant one indicated that he was concerned that he might miss out on his child's developmental milestones while he was at work:

- *Basically the nanny would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of things, but to be honest those things seem important at the moment, but a few years later it's like ... at the time it's a really big deal, but then you realise you have a more complex relationship later. (P1, lines 318–322)*

When participant two started dating participant one, he was able to take on the responsibility of childcare:

- *I've seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night, even though I didn't live with them (P2, lines 384–386).*

However, participant two initially found it hard to adjust to his role since he believed he needed more knowledge on how to understand his child's behaviour. During this time, he relied on his mother's advice to help him cope with parenthood:

- *I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially Will. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves, and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy. (P2, lines 392–394)*

When the participants moved to South Africa, participant two was not employed, and he continued with caregiving while participant one was at work:

- *When we got to South Africa Lee wasn't ... Lee wasn't working but he was trying to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He ended up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot. (P1, lines 323–326)*

As stated earlier, participant one worked long hours, including weekends, which meant he could not spend enough time with his family:

- *I was at work a lot, and I work for 24 hours, so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend (P1, lines 326–327).*

When both the participants were settled in their careers, they applied for adoption for their second child. The adjustment to parenthood with the second child was different because both parents were present as a couple and both were employed. Participant one also had parental leave unlike when he was in the Asian country where he resided where he had only one day's leave. This gave participant one the opportunity to bond with their second child. Participant two struggled in the beginning to manage his work and be a parent at the same time. However, the participants had daycare, but most of all they had the support of each other in raising their children. This assisted participant two to adjust better to parenthood:

- *It switched because I was home, and then my job here gave me full parental leave, so I had sixteen weeks of paid leave, so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby, and Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business. (P1, lines 328–331)*
- *It was a transition between, you know, business and like full-time parents, so I struggled, but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have daycare and also Michael came out from work as well (P2, lines 335–337).*

According to the participants, they respected each other's opinions, and they tried not to argue in front of their children:

- *Yeah, I mean, I don't know ... Lee and I will end up having a little argument and then you take a little break, chill out for a while, and then you try it again later, you know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or ... you know. (P1, lines 675–677)*

- *When I disagreed, I just let Michael deal the way he thinks he should do, then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him doing it his own way, and that's how we're working as a team because I respect Michael's opinion and the way he reads to both of them, so then let him do his own thing ... I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed it, and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it. (P2, lines 431–436)*

The data generated under Sub-theme 3.1 indicated that participant one struggled in the beginning as a single parent to adjust to parenthood. This was attributed largely to the fact that he could not get parental leave in the Asian country he resided with the first child. He was also in a foreign country, which meant he did not have access to support from his family of origin as they were in the USA. He had to hire a full-time nanny, pay for daycare, and schedule holidays and leave for the nanny. He was concerned that he was missing out on his child's developmental milestones while at work. When participant two joined the family, he helped with raising their first child. He reached out to his mother for support and advice on how to understand and deal with their first child's behaviour.

The participants had different experiences with adjustment to parenthood with their second child compared to their first child. With their second child, participant one was able to get parental leave and to bond with the child before returning to work. Participant two struggled at first to adjust to full-time work and being a parent, but with the help of daycare and his partner, he managed later on to adjust to working and being a parent. The participants said they resolved their disagreements about child rearing when the children were not present. Sub-theme 3.2: Challenges from society is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Challenges from society

Table 4.7 gives a working definition of challenges from society as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.7: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 3.2**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: CHALLENGES FROM SOCIETY</b>	
This refers to the experiences of stigmatisation, prejudice, and discrimination that gay male parents encounter from society due to their sexuality (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006; Hicks, 2005; C. J. Patterson et al., 2004).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to the participants' experiences of stigmatisation, prejudice, and discrimination from the school system, church, and other people in society due to their sexuality.	Data that were excluded related to the participants' experiences that were not related to stigmatisation, prejudice, and discrimination from society due to their sexuality.



Some of the problems the participants faced related to how they were acknowledged as male parents in a school system where mothers were stereotypically the parents who were included in their children's school activities. Participant one gave some examples of how he felt excluded by the school system:

- *I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 6.4, I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me, and it will be a "good morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like ... first of all, I find that offensive for the women because they are using this sweetie, cute little tone of voice with adult women who have, like, real jobs. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this process? You know. (P1, lines 743–750)*
- *I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the time, and I find it slightly offensive to go to, like, a parents' meeting that is not a parents' meeting, but it's been called that, it's a moms' meeting. (P1, lines 736–739).*

The participants also received newsletters that stereotyped parents according to the parents' duties at school functions:

- *You'll get these newsletters like 'we need moms to volunteer to cook.' I know, and we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't want to braai? (P1, lines 739–741).*

The participants also expressed frustration with the school forms that did not make provision for diversity in terms of the race of children:

- *When he got to primary school the teachers were insistent that he must fit in one of the squares, you know. Like 'oh, you are a little Indian boy' (P1, lines 599–601).*

The participants' second child experienced peer rejection from the other schoolchildren due to his ethnicity:

- *So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were two new kids in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school. You know we are having supper, and he's, like, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I was, like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like ... dad I'm a different colour than you. They don't like my colour. (P1, lines 622–626)*

The participant's first child was also marginalised by the other children due to being of a different race:

- *The kids would be, like, well you are not white, and you are not black, so you are nothing, you know (P1, lines 573–574).*

The participants' children were also teased because they came from a family with two fathers:

- *Guess so, they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said 'well, at least I have a mamma,' you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right? (P1, lines 509–510).*
- *Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then, it's hard (P1, lines 490–491).*

Participant one indicated that the teachers were not able to identify the bullying at the school, and it was so bad they had to change schools. However, the children still encountered bullying even though it was to a lesser degree:

- *The teachers weren't really able to observe the dynamics within the kids very well, you know that these kids were out at an adopted boy. He was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and having an international family. (P1, lines 487–490)*
- *Yeah, I find it's still there, but it's been less, you know, than at the previous school (P2, line 503).*

The participants were judged critically and asked insensitive questions about their families:

- *So in Asia people would come up to me all the time, and we would be like at the school play and be like 'where is the mom? How can there be no mom?' (P1, lines 649–651).*
- *This mom comes out and she's, like, 'oh, you're not from here.' I'm like, 'oh yeah, I'm an American, so which one is your kid?' And I go, 'this is mine.' Yeah, she's like, 'oh so, hmmm what is he?' and I say, 'he's a boy, he's an American too,' and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know, and then someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy. And so, finally, like the third person asking in the course of like fifteen minutes, and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like, 'oh he's Guatemalan' and she's like, 'and what are they?' (P2, lines 545–553).*
- *They always go; how do you know that he loves you, because you are not the dad, because you are not related (P1, lines 656–658).*

The participants had different religious beliefs. Participant one was Catholic and participant two was Buddhist. They said that they did not enjoy the full support of their religious communities because they were gay:

- *We're Catholic, and we go to the Catholic church. Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do, and I don't actually care enough. (P1, lines 1023–1026)*

- *They [Buddhist church]; wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are supportive, but there is a line (P1, lines 1039–1040).*

The data that were generated under Sub-theme 3.2 indicated that the participants encountered challenges from different social systems. They had problems with teachers who did not include gay fathers during meetings and school functions, and the school system also did not make provision for diversity in the school forms. The participant's children were marginalised and bullied by the other children in the school system because of their different ethnicity and because they were from an adopted gay male family. The teachers were also not helpful in reducing the bullying at school. In addition, the participants were exposed to critical judgements and were asked insensitive questions about their families by members of society. The participants were also excluded from services provided by their different churches. Sub-theme 3.3 is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Creating a positive family identity

Table 4.8 gives a working definition of creating a positive family identity as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Table 4.8: Working definition and inclusion and exclusion criteria for Sub-theme 3.3**

<b>WORKING DEFINITION: CREATING A POSITIVE FAMILY IDENTITY</b>	
This refers to the ways gay male families form positive identities from within their familial structures (Breshears, 2010).	
<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY</b>
Data that were included related to the participants' experiences of creating a positive family identity. These experiences are linked to gay male parents' positive discipline techniques, their relationship with their children, the meanings they attach to parenthood, and so on.	Data that were excluded related to the participants' experiences that were not associated with creating a positive family identity.

According to participant two, they taught their children that they were a normal family. He tried not to focus on how other people saw them and instead focused on how they interacted with each other like normal people:

- *We're a gay couple and how we interact in public like normal families, like other families, friends, men or women, so I try to show them, but for other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to ... it's like I know how they look at us, but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the way they're looking at us. (P2, lines 1119–1123)*

The participants also said that they embraced the diversity of their family by allowing each member of the family to express their culture and identity. They allowed their children to ask questions about their heritage and to respect their heritage:

- *We're a very international family, right, and for us, part of that is bringing out our own cultural and international identities, whether for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered, where they came from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots. (P1, lines 809–812)*

As stated earlier, the participants were from two different religious backgrounds. They shared both these religions with their children:

- *The priest was there when Will was baptised. I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child, and that's a chance to welcome your child into the community (P1, lines 997–1015).*
- *Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is ... I've talked to them about reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know, so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being gay and you not being a Buddhist. (P2, lines 1061–1064)*

The participants also used recreational activities to create an optimal environment for their children. This included activities such as having a movie night, going to the park, and travelling:

- *We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home (P1, lines 1104–1105).*
- *We go to the park relatively often (P1, line 1107).*
- *We travel a lot, ja (P2, line 1110).*
- *Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah (P2, line 1109).*

The participants indicated that they used positive discipline techniques with their children instead of corporal punishment. These techniques included encouraging their children to be independent, using time-outs such as a naughty corner, and making a time schedule for school work and for watching the television:

- *There's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent (P1, lines 457–458).*
- *I discipline them by using naughty corners like half for an hour, you know (P2, lines 423).*

- *I have to deal with those school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours (P1, lines 721–722).*

Participant two said he showed affection to his children when disciplining them:

- *How to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important ... for me, I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons. (P2, lines 411–413)*

Both participants indicated that being parents to their children brought satisfaction to their lives:

- *It makes me feel very complete (P1, line 688).*
- *I feel like ... because I look at my father, and to be honest I have a memory about my father which disappeared, and somehow it came back. It came back, and I remember that my dad ... he was always there for me, and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them. (P2, lines 438–442)*

The data that were generated under Sub-theme 3.3 indicated that the participants were able to have fulfilling lives with their children. They taught their children about their family identity and used culture, religion, and recreational activities to provide an optimal environment for them. They used positive discipline techniques with their children and said that being parents brought satisfaction to their lives.

The findings for Theme 3 are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.3.4 Findings on the experiences of parenthood**

Studies comparing lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples during the transition to parenthood reveal that all these groups report similar challenges regarding adjustment to parenthood (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). These challenges include sleep deprivation, reduction in time spent as a couple, changes in the quality of the romantic relationship, challenges regarding the division of household responsibilities, working hours, not having enough parental leave, and an increase in conflict and high stress levels (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Lavner et al., 2014; O'Neill et al., 2012).

The findings of this study indicated that the participants experienced similar challenges when it came to adjustment to parenthood. Participant one experienced difficulties at the beginning of parenthood with regard to working long hours, not obtaining parental leave from employment, lack of social support from his family of origin due to being alone in a foreign country, and not spending adequate time with his child because of his work commitments. When participant two joined the family, he helped with raising their first

child. Participant two said that he had to adjust from being a partner to being a parent, which involved helping with childcare duties such as feeding, soothing, and changing diapers and also changes in his sleep routine because he fed their child during the night. Participant two was able to obtain social support from his family of origin, but when he started working, he struggled with adjusting to being in full-time employment and also being a parent.

The study indicated also that when the participants became parents for the second time, they experienced fewer problems with adjustment to parenthood. Participant one initially worked long hours, but when he changed employment he had parental leave and could bond with their second child before returning to work. The participants experienced less conflict and shared parenting and financial responsibilities. The findings from this study correlated with those of studies that also reported gay male couples sharing household responsibilities equally and according to each parent's strengths (Dempsey, 2013; Farr & Tornello, 2016; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007; Tornello et al., 2015). This led to most gay male couples reporting feelings of satisfaction with regard to household responsibilities and raising their children (McPherson, 1994; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). Gay male couples are generally in dual earner relationships where both partners work and therefore have the financial freedom to afford assistance with regard to childcare (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). This was evident in the present study as well because both participants were in employment and could afford daycare for their children.

Even though same-sex couples have similar experiences of adjustment to parenthood as heterosexual couples, same-sex couples have additional challenges (Farr & Tornello, 2016). These challenges include experiencing societal discrimination and stigmatisation because of their sexual orientation (Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006, 2010; C. J. Patterson et al., 2004). The findings of this study indicated that the participants experienced similar challenges with other members of society. They were often judged critically and asked insensitive questions about their family type.

Gay male parents are often discriminated against by school systems. Forms of such discrimination include application forms that do not make provision for different family demographics, being excluded from school meetings and school plays, and teachers asking inappropriate questions about their family structures (Byard et al., 2013; Fox, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2014; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). The findings from this study indicated that the participants encountered similar challenges with the school system and also experienced problems with teachers who excluded them from school meetings and school functions. The participants, too, found that the school forms did not accommodate diversity and reported that their children were bullied and marginalised by their school peers due to their different ethnicity and because they were from a gay male-parented family.

Same-sex couples also often experience discrimination and stigmatisation from professionals such as medical practitioners, religious leaders, social workers, and lawyers because of their sexual orientation

(Farr & Tornello, 2016; Goldberg, 2006, 2010). The findings from this study correlated with those of other studies as the participants were denied services from Catholic as well as Buddhist religious denominations.

Gay male parents can live meaningful lives with their children despite the societal challenges they face (Titlestad & Pooley, 2014), but they have to prepare their children for possible discrimination from peers and other members of society (Breshears, 2010).

Gay couples who are willing to be open about their family identity to friends, parents, and teachers report more positive parental experiences (Bergman et al., 2010; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). The participants in this study, too, said they taught their children about their family type in order to create a positive family identity. Gay male parents can create positive family identities through the use of symbols and rituals (Suter, 2008). The participants in this study also used their own rituals to create a positive family identity. They informed their children about their own culture and religious practices and used recreational activities as a way of spending more time with them.

Gay male couples have been reported to have good parental skills (Bergman et al., 2010; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; C. J. Patterson, 2006; Stacey, 2006). They have also been reported to be more responsive to their children's emotional needs, to set clear limits and boundaries, and to be less likely to use corporal punishment in disciplining their children (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). The findings from this study correlated with other research on gay males' parental skills in that the participants used positive discipline techniques with their children such as encouraging them to be independent, using time-out, and drawing up a time schedule for school work and for watching television. They also displayed affection to their children when disciplining them. Many gay male couples have reported feelings of satisfaction with regard to raising their children (McPherson, 1994; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). The participants in this study also indicated that being parents made them feel confident and complete.

I revisit the theoretical framework for this study in the next section.

### **4.3 REVISITING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model was used as a framework for understanding the participants in this study, particularly their experiences in transitioning to parenthood. As mentioned in Chapter 2 the FAAR model has two phases, namely the adjustment (family resistance) phase and the adaptation (restructuring and consolidation) phase (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The theoretical framework was utilised to understand how the family in this study was able to deal with stressors they encountered with their transition to parenthood.

The family adjustment phase consists of the family identifying, describing, and integrating the family stressors/crises and using adaptive coping strategies in response to these stressors and crises (Dyk &

Schvaneveldt, 1987). The participants in this study experienced various stressors in their transition to parenthood. In the adjustment phase, the challenges they encountered were mainly during the “coming out” phase, the application process for adoption, the adjustment to parenthood, and opposition from members of society. Both the participants faced challenges from their families of origin regarding acceptance of their sexual identity and their ability to become parents. The process of applying for adoption for both children was difficult. When participant one started the process with his first child, he struggled to apply as a single man in the USA as no state had laws that permitted single men to adopt. When the participants applied to adopt their second child, their application forms were mislaid by Johannesburg Children Welfare. They also encountered difficulties with the changing laws and regulations for adoption in South Africa, which resulted in the suspension of their first application.

The participants also experienced difficulties adjusting to parenthood. Participant one struggled in the beginning to adjust to parenthood largely because he could not get parental leave. He was also in a foreign country, which meant he did not have access to support from his family of origin in the USA. Participant two also struggled to adjust to parenthood as he had to adjust to full-time work while also being a parent to his second child.

The participants also faced opposition from members of society. For example, some teachers did not include gay fathers during meetings and school functions, and the school system also did not make provision for diversity in the various school forms. The participants’ children were often marginalised and bullied by the other schoolchildren because of their different ethnicity and because they were from an adopted gay male family. The participants were exposed to critical judgements and were frequently asked insensitive questions about their families. They were also often made to feel unwelcome at different churches.

The participants used their internal and external resources to overcome the different stressors. During the “coming out” phase, participant one used his knowledge of human sexuality to educate his family of origin about his own sexuality and his need to be open about his sexual identity. Participant two had to demonstrate his parenting skills to his family of origin and had to rely on his strong bond with them to get them to accept his sexual identity.

When participant one experienced challenges as a single gay man during the adoption phase, he relied on his internal resources such as his desire to become a parent, his perseverance, his self-confidence, his positive outlook, and his resilience to overcome the challenges. He also used his external resources such as his financial security and the support he received from his family of origin and from the professionals involved in the adoption process in the adjustment phase. When the participants struggled with the adoption of their second child, they coped by persevering, concentrating on their desire to become parents, and cultivating a positive outlook. They also had the financial resources needed to cover the costs of the application process.



As mentioned earlier, both participants struggled with adjustment to parenthood. To help them adjust, they used their internal and external resources such as effective communication skills, family organisation, financial security, and support from their families of origin. Furthermore, they used family interactions, cohesion, adaptability, and effective problem solving to overcome the discrimination and marginalisation they experienced from members of society.

The family adaptation phase occurs when a family experiences a crisis, possibly leading to disorganisation or imbalance of the family structure (Brown-Baatjies et al., 2008). The participants in this study were aware of the demands of their stressors and had a shared definition of their problems, which assisted them in developing and implementing solutions to their problems. For example, when participant one realised he could not adopt as a single gay man in his own country, he researched other countries that allowed such adoption. The participants were also aware of their difficulties in adjusting to parenthood and accordingly implemented solutions such as organising daycare for the children, employing a housekeeper, and obtaining support from their families of origin.

The participants coped effectively in the adaptation phase – they showed that they were a strong family unit and that they could rely on the strength of their relationship to overcome adversity. They relied also on their good parenting skills and the relationship they had with their children to adapt to the changes in the family structure. They applied adaptive coping strategies such as system maintenance to assist them in maintaining their family (McCubbin & Patterson 1983). They applied this strategy by teaching their children about their interracial gay male-parented family, culture, and family rituals.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

Chapter 4 covered the research findings of the study as well as the identified themes and sub-themes. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study in relation to the relevant literature as well as the research questions in relation to the findings of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and assumptions of the study, recommendations, and the contributions of the study.

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## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore and describe how the two gay male parents in this study transitioned to parenthood. The literature reveals that same-sex couples have similar experiences of transitioning to parenthood as heterosexual couples. However, same-sex couples have additional challenges such as dealing with societal discrimination and stigmatisation. Studies up to now on couples transitioning to parenthood have been limited to heterosexual couples and lesbian couples with only a few studies focusing on gay male parents. This study endeavoured to fill the gap in the literature by conducting a semi-structured interview with two gay male parents on their experiences of transitioning to parenthood. In this final chapter, the primary research question posed in Chapter 1 is answered. I reflect also reflect on the contributions, challenges, and limitations of the study and make some recommendations for future research.

### **5.2 REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In answering the primary research question, “What were the experiences of two gay male parents in their transition to parenthood?”, I needed to consider the secondary research questions in the study.

These secondary research questions concerned the gay male parents’ decision to become parents, the pathway to parenthood they chose, and their experiences of parenthood.

#### **5.2.1 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

##### **5.2.1.1 Secondary research question 1**

###### **How did the gay male parents in this study come to the decision to be parents?**

The studies reviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that the challenges gay men face in their journey to becoming parents may relate back to their first “coming out” in society. The responses of their families of origin and society in general may influence their decision to seek parenthood. The two participants in this study similarly had to manage and make sense of their families of origin’s responses to their coming out. The one participant, for example, had to manage his family of origin’s fears about his ability to have children. The other participant was accepted as gay only after a long period of time in which he had to show his family of origin what it meant to be gay and how he could still be a good parent irrespective of his sexual orientation.

Same-sex couples have the same need to become parents as do heterosexual couples. They, too, have a desire for parenthood and a sustaining environment for raising their own children. The one participant in this study knew from an early age that he wanted to become a parent, a need that was fulfilled when he adopted a child as a single parent. The second participant had no desire to become a parent until he was in a relationship with his partner who was already a parent. This enabled him to show his family of origin that he was a good parent.

All couples have to consider various factors before they become parents. Just like heterosexual couples, same-sex couples have to consider their financial situation, job security, parental leave, age, health benefits, division of household responsibilities, and support from the family of origin. The participants in this study chose adoption as a partway to parenthood since it outweighed the financial burden that surrogacy brings and it also has less legal implications.

#### **5.2.1.2 Secondary research question 2**

##### **What pathway to parenthood did the gay male parents in this study choose and why?**

The literature review conducted as part of the study indicated that more gay men today are seeking parenthood. Most gay parents in the 1980s parented through heterosexual relationships while there was a shift in the early 2000s towards other alternatives such as surrogacy, adoption, and foster care. These options have given gay men the power to decide when to have children and how to achieve this goal.

The literature review indicated also that couples have to consider their own unique circumstances before they can choose which route to follow. This may relate to financial costs, the time it will take to achieve their goal, and whether they want to have a biological connection with their children. The findings of the present study confirmed those of other studies regarding the factors gay male parents consider before choosing a pathway to parenthood. After considering their own unique circumstances, the gay male parents in this study chose adoption as their pathway to parenthood after considering two pathways to parenthood, namely surrogacy and adoption.

The literature indicates that gay male couples who choose adoption as a pathway to parenthood encounter problems during the adoption process, for example, only a few countries allow gay men to adopt children. The participants in this study, too, struggled in this regard and had to seek adoption outside the USA since gay men at that stage were not allowed to adopt in the USA. The one participant therefore had to seek an international adoption, which proved very difficult because of the problems he encountered with passport and travel requirements, inconsistencies in the adoption time frame, and a lack of paternity leave. The gay male parents also had to overcome problems with the adoption of their second child due to changes in the law. They, however, had the good fortune to be approached privately by the biological mother of the second

child they adopted. But there were also complications here as they had to support the biological mother emotionally during her pregnancy – the mother was also granted visitation rights.

### **5.2.1.3 Secondary research question 3**

#### **What experiences of parenthood did the gay male parents in this study have?**

Couples experience many changes when they transition to parenthood, including an increase in their stress levels. The participants in this study reported that some of the stressors they had to face during the adoption process concerned paternity leave, balancing work and life, and also not knowing how best to parent their children.

The literature review indicated that gay male parents experience additional challenges such as being labelled with negative stereotypes by members of society and being excluded by teachers, religious leaders, other parents, and, at times, by other childless LGBTIQA+ individuals. Despite all these challenges, gay male parents have been reported to be able to parent effectively and to build meaningful lives with their children. The findings of the present study confirmed those in the literature. The participants in this study, too, experienced problems with teachers who marginalised them within the school system, and other members of society who were judgemental about their family identity and the ethnic differences in their family. However, the participants were able to balance these negative experiences and to offset them by creating a family identity that embraced the diversity of the various family members and promoted a healthy environment for their children.

### **5.2.2 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION**

In this section, I present my conclusions relating to the primary research question as stated in Chapter 1: “What were the experiences of two gay male parents in their transition to parenthood?”

The transition to parenthood for gay male couples is complex. It involves, first of all, deciding whether they want to seek parenthood (more gay men today are choosing to become parents after accepting their gay identity). However, gay men who choose to become parents after accepting their homosexual identity often face challenges with ‘coming out’ in society, which was also a challenge for the participants in this study. One participant’s ability to become a parent was questioned while the other participant was not accepted immediately by his family of origin. The participants were, however, able to overcome these problems. The one participant assured his family of origin that being gay did not mean that he could not be a parent while the other participant showed his family of origin that he could be a good parent.

Gay male couples have a variety of pathways to choose from to become parents. In this study, the participants chose to transition to parenthood through adoption, but the process was not easy since not all countries at the time allowed gay males to adopt, forcing the first participant to seek international adoption

for his first child. He also experienced difficulty in getting paternity leave, and both participants initially had trouble balancing work and being parents. Nevertheless, these challenges did not deter the participants in their quest to become parents.

The literature indicates that gay males are often discriminated against by other members of society. The participants in this study, too, felt marginalised by the school system, and their children reported bullying by peers. The participants also experienced prejudice on the part of members of society who repeatedly asked insensitive questions about their family identity. Despite these challenges, the participants were able to establish a family that was accepting of diversity, and they were also able to report experiencing parenthood as very satisfying – a finding that correlated with the findings in international studies on gay male fathers.

### **5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study, provided insight into two gay males' experiences of transitioning to parenthood. It explored their coming-out experiences, and how these experiences influenced their decision to become parents. The findings of this study, although limited in scope, indicated that the gay parents in the study experienced similar challenges to those reported in international studies. The recorded experiences of the participants in the study have the potential to raise awareness among professionals such as psychologists, teachers, lawyers and social workers.

### **5.4 CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY**

A significant challenge I encountered was finding participants who were willing to participate in the study. The first African gay male couple that volunteered to participate opted out later due to the termination of their relationship. The second African gay male couple who were interested in participating opted out because of fear of victimisation and marginalisation in their communities, even though confidentiality was assured. This correlates with findings that most South African LGBTIQ+ individuals live in fear due to homophobia in their communities.

After spending a lot of time trying to recruit African participants for the study, my supervisor and I decided to approach non-African couples. This was due largely to the time constraints associated with completing a research study of limited scope. Because of the lengthy selection process, the study began to exceed the time frame allowed for a Master's degree, and I therefore opted to include the two participants who were willing to participate in the research. Although I realised that this was not ideal, I believed that I could still gain insight into the lived experiences of gay male parents using the participants who eventually took part in the study.

The study participants were an overseas interracial gay male couple, which restricted the study to gay male parents who were not from South Africa. However, the couple adopted their second child in South Africa

and were very open about their experiences, thereby bringing a genuine and real-world authenticity to the study.

Another limitation related to the race, class, and culture of the participants. Participant one was a white American, and participant two was an Asian. The gay male couple are currently in an interracial relationship, reside in Johannesburg, and both have jobs. The couple does not represent South African gay male couples living in townships and semi-urban areas, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to such couples.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

To gain further knowledge on the experiences of gay male parents transitioning to parenthood, further research could include the following:

- A survey study involving a large number of participants on the experiences of gay male parents transitioning to parenthood.
- A comparative study on gay and lesbian parents' experiences of transitioning to parenthood in order to integrate the findings on their experiences in South Africa. This could contribute to LGBTIQ+ and family studies on how minority groups experience parenthood.
- A longitudinal study on the experiences of children raised in gay male-parented families. This could raise awareness of the situation of these children among professionals such as psychologists, teachers, social workers, lawyers, pastors, and others who provide services to such children.

## **5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The main aim of this study was to explore how two gay male parents experienced their transition to parenthood. Their experiences were similar to those of other gay males reported in international research. The gay male parents in this study, too, were able to overcome the challenges most gay men face in their decision to become parents and to successfully create a family of their own. More gay men today are choosing to make this decision after coming out and may experience similar challenges to those experienced by the gay male parents in this study. Their story may act as an inspiration to others who seek parenthood. This study will have succeeded in its aim if it can inspire other gay male parents and create greater awareness among the professionals who serve LGBTIQ+ individuals in their quest to live normal, healthy lives.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A:  
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Appendix B:  
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Appendix C:  
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**Semi-structured interview questions**

**Demographic Information**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Race:

\_\_\_\_\_ Black/African

\_\_\_\_\_ Coloured

\_\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_\_ Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Highest level of education:

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School

\_\_\_\_\_ Higher Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Postgraduate Degree (Master's, PhD)

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been with your partner/spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children and ages: \_\_\_\_\_



## 1. **Becoming parents:**

### **Journey:**

- Can you tell me more about journey in becoming parents?
- Tell me more about the process of how you became parents?

## 2. **Method/Pathway:**

- Which method did you select?
- What made you decide to follow the method?
- What were your challenges?
  - o How did you overcome these challenges?
  - o How did the process make you feel?
- For the couple with a biological connection: describe your thoughts, feelings, and experiences of being a non-biological parent.
  - o What was their role?
  - o Tell me about the positive and negative experiences you had with outsider involvement.

## 3. **Decision making process:**

- What made you decide to become parents?
- Which factors did you take into consideration?
- How was the process for both of you?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- How did you handle the challenges?
- What was easy and what seemed difficult?
- Did you have any conflicts during the process?
- What caused the conflict?
- How did you resolve the conflict?

## 4. **Identity**

- Describe what it was like to take on the identity as a “father”/ “parent”.
- Where there times of uncertainty? If so, how did you handle uncertainty?
- What identity issues (if any) surfaced or resurfaced during your path to becoming parents?
  - o How did you handle the issues?
  - o How do they relate to your identity (sexual identity/fatherhood)?

### **Family identity:**

- How do you view your family?

- What makes your family unique and different?
- How do you communicate with your children about your family identity?
- Which type of questions and/or comments have your children made about their family identity? How did you respond?

## 5. Challenges from society

- Tell me about the instances (if any) when your family identity was challenged
  - What kinds of comments were made?
  - Who made the comments?
  - How did you feel?
  - How did you handle the comments?
- For fathers who have a child from a previous (heterosexual) relationship: describe your thoughts, feelings, and experiences of being a non-biological parent.
  - What was the biological mother reaction to your family identity?
  - How does she feel about gay male parents raising her child?
  - What comments (negative and positive) has she made about your family identity?
- Have you received any prejudice from families, neighbours, friends, legal authorities, colleagues or others? If so, tell me more about the experience.
  - How did you handle the prejudice?
  - How did you feel?
- Do you have any spiritual/religious affiliation? If so, tell me more about the spiritual/religious affiliation you belong to?
  - Are there similar families within the spiritual/religious affiliation? If so, do you engage with the families?
  - Did the members of the spiritual/religious affiliation play any role in your process of becoming parent?
  - Did you receive (if any) disapprovals from the members and authorities? If so, how did it make you feel?
  - How did you handle the disapprovals?

## Society

- How do you think society views your family?
  - What do you wish to inform society about your family identity?
- Tell me about specific conversations you had with outsiders/society (both positive and negative) regarding your family.
  - Possible probes:

- Who initiated the conversation?
- How did you feel?
- How did you respond?

## **6. Positive Family Identity**

- How do your children feel about having gay male parents?
- How do your children define their family identity?
- What are their experiences (negative and positive) with regards to their family identity (with families, friends, classmates, teachers, religious groups etc.)?
- How do you create a positive family identity for you and your children?
  - Which activities do you do to promote positive family identity?
  - Do you partake in any rituals?
- What have you learned about each other as a family through this process?
- What advice do you have for other families– advice to outsiders?

## Informed Consent Form



Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am a Masters in Educational Psychology student at the University of Pretoria with a keen interest in same-sex parenting. The goal in this study is to gain an understanding of the gay male parenting experiences in South Africa, the challenges they face and how they overcome the challenges as a family. I am interested in exploring the parental experience of gay male couples who are raising children in their homes. The information which I will obtain will provide support for interventions which can be implemented when working with same sex families.

Your names will remain confidential at all times. Pseudonyms will be used and no other identifying information will be given in order to protect the participants. Families can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and you will not be penalised for withdrawing. The data collected will be stored in accordance to the University of Pretoria's rules and regulations. The semi-structured interview should take about two hours for each day over two days. The interview will take place at the families home in order to prevent disruptions and privacy will be maintained. The interview will involve the usage of an audio recording to record the interviews while making notes during the data collection process. The data will be made available for the public and for scientific usage.

If you agree to partake in this research, please fill in the consent. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me

Kind regards,

Dr Suzanne Bester (Supervisor)  
Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Pretoria  
Contact details: (012) 420 3891  
[suzanne.bester@up.ac.za](mailto:suzanne.bester@up.ac.za)

Elvis Mashaba (Student)  
Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Pretoria  
Cell phone: (071) 8767482  
[Mashabaelvis@gmail.com](mailto:Mashabaelvis@gmail.com)

## Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_(your name), agree to take part in the research project titled: **How gay male parents experience family identity**. I understand that the project aims to gain an understanding of gay male parenting experiences in South Africa and how these experiences inform their family identities.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

- *Respect and dignity*: I understand that I will be treated with respect and dignity and will not be discriminated
- *Confidentiality*: Due to the sensitivity of the topic, confidentiality is ensured and my identity will be protected.
- *Privacy and Anonymous*: I can choose to remain anonymous and my privacy will be protected.
- *Voluntary participation*: Participation will be voluntary and I may withdraw from participating from the research at anytime without restrictions.
- *Informed consent*: I will be informed about the research procedures, purposes and give consent in order for me to participate in the study.
- *Safety in participation*: My participation in the study will not expose me to harm or to be put at risk.

Please tick a box that is relevant to you and sign below

1.	<i>I have understood the information about the research project, as provided by the student.</i>	
2.	<i>I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my family's participation.</i>	
3.	<i>I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.</i>	
4.	<i>I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will be questioned on why we have withdrawn.</i>	
5.	<i>The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.</i>	
6.	<i>I give consent for the conversation between myself and the researcher to be audio recorded.</i>	
7.	<i>The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.</i>	
9.	<i>I, along with the researcher agree to sign and date this informed consent form.</i>	

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Research Journal****JULY 2018****06 July 2018**

I started working on my interview transcript and I am happy with the recording as the sound is audible. It made the process easier even though the English used was American and Thai.

**20 July 2018**

I completed the first draft of the transcript and I will need to check again for any errors or information that I might have missed out.

**27 July 2018**

I went through the transcript to correct any errors made and checked whether all statements are included verbatim.

**AUGUST 2018****08 August 2018**

I have now started working through my transcript in depth in order to understand the data.

**14 August 2018**

I started to unpack the data by highlighting important sentences that will form part of the themes.

**20 August 2018**

I coded the data by using a table and continued highlighting sentences that were important, and on the right-hand side of the table I jotted down the things that arose.

**25 August 2018**

I read through the data again to pick up any themes that I might have left out.

**30 August 2018**

I made several comments on the right-hand side of the table for any themes that could be grouped together.

**SEPTEMBER 2018****05 September 2018**

I started to reduce my data by drawing out the highlighted sentences into one another and broke down the sentences into smaller segments.

### **07 September 2018**

The sentences were broken down into smaller segments with each theme having its own segments. The thematic analysis process is really tedious and requires back and forth readings.

### **10 September 2018**

I completed the data reduction phase and must go back and check whether I did not leave out any data that's important.

### **12 September 2018**

I went back to check up on any data that I left out and picked up that some data with regard to becoming parents was left out and needed to be included.

### **14 September 2018**

I started with drawing conclusion based on the broken down segments and started to pack the data according to different themes and sub-themes that I can be able to group.

### **16 September 2018**

Thematic analysis is exhausting and requires attention to detail, so I cannot rush the process as I might make errors or leave out important information.

### **18 September 2018**

I am finding the data to be detailed, which I did not expect from a semi-structured interview, but this means I have so much to reduce and to decide which one to use.

### **20 September 2018**

I have started writing my draft for Chapter 4 and have drawn up four themes and 10 sub-themes.

### **23 September 2018**

Chapter 4 is taking more time than I thought as I have supported the quotation with narrative statements which require reading the quotes accordingly. I am thinking to myself whether I am being authentic to statements provided by the participants and I need to make sure I don't impose my own judgements or my own understanding.

### **30 September 2018**

I have completed my first draft (Phew, what a process!). I am reading through and checking for technical and grammatical errors in order to submit to my supervisor. I then submitted my first draft to my supervisor and I await feedback while I take a break.

## **OCTOBER 2018**

### **02 October 2018**

I met with my supervisor to discuss feedback on my Chapter 4. We worked through the data and came to a conclusion to group the third and fourth theme into one theme and make it three themes with seven sub-themes.

### **03 October 2018**

I am working on my second draft and also going through the comments that my supervisor indicated. She challenged me to be more authentic of the participants' experiences.

### **10 October 2018**

I just realised that both participants had challenges of coming out and it wasn't only the second participant who struggled with his family of origin. Both families at first struggled to adjust with the coming out experiences of the participants.

### **15 October 2018**

Try to use one quotation and not repeat it in another theme but rather summarise or state that it was covered in the previous section.

### **20 October 2018**

I went back to read the transcript and challenged myself to be more authentic to the participants' experiences.

### **25 October 2018**

I am finding that the decision to become parents (Theme 1) was different for both participants and most of the decision-making process was based on where their lives were at the current moment.

## **NOVEMBER 2018**

### **03 November 2018**

My supervisor suggested that we tackle one theme at a time. I submitted Theme 1 today and will await feedback from her.

### **14 November 2018**

My supervisor provided feedback to me today and challenged me to match the findings with literature and not see this process as two distinct processes.

### **26 November 2018**

There is a lot of back and forth reading in Chapter 4 with regard to the transcript. The positive thing is that I don't get to leave out anything important.



## **DECEMBER 2018**

### **02 December 2018**

I finally work through the changes to Theme 1 and submit to my supervisor for engagement and feedback.

### **07 December 2018**

I met up with supervisor for feedback and she has approved Theme 1 and given the go ahead to continue with the second theme in order to submit. Time to rest for the December holidays.

## **JANUARY 2019**

### **10 January 2019**

Theme 2 just made me realise that the participants did not find it easy to adopt their children. Challenges encountered range from policies not allowing gay men to adopt and changing laws that delayed their process. In both cases with their children, this seemed to be a challenge.

### **14 January 2019**

Data for theme is scattered in transcript and requires back and forth readings in case I missed anything. This theme has three sub-themes and requires more work.

### **17 January 2019**

I submitted Theme 2 to my supervisor and I am waiting for feedback.

### **20 January 2019**

Some of the data for Themes 1 and 2 are placed in the same paragraph. I have to read carefully and determine which data belongs to the right theme.

### **26 January 2019**

My supervisor has approved Theme 2 after working accordingly with her comments

## **FEBRUARY 2019**

### **02 February 2019**

Theme 3 confirms some of the experiences found in literature. These experiences are linked to the participants' adjustment to parenting as they also experience challenges with balancing life, work and parenthood. Experiences are also linked society marginalizing them and challenges with the school system.

### **04 February 2019**

I submitted Theme 3 immediately after completing the reading of the data.

### **15 February 2019**

My supervisor met with me and approved the theme for the study. We came to a conclusion of three themes and seven sub-themes for the research.

### **18 February 2019**

What I also noticed is that above all these challenges that the participants have encountered, they have provided meaningful lives for their children.

### **20 February 2019**

I submitted the findings to my participants in order to do member checking and to see if I had interpreted the participants' words accurately. This was also done to check whether I captured their experiences accurately through my narrative writings.

### **28 February 2019**

The participants got back to me and approved the data that has been captured and were informed that they can contact me if anything changes or they have further questions.

## **MARCH 2019**

### **02 March 2019**

I finally combined all the themes and completed Chapter 4 and also revisited my theoretical framework for the study. I submitted the completed chapter to my supervisor for one last time.

### **05 March 2019**

My supervisor approved Chapter 4 and I gave it another reading before I submitted it to my language editor.

### **10 March 2019**

I worked on the findings and answered my primary and secondary research questions for the study.

### **15 March 2019**

I finally completed my first draft and submitted to my supervisor.

### **20 March 2019**

My supervisor made comments which I had to apply and thereafter apply changes.

### **25 March 2019**

Chapter 5 is finally approved and can be sent to the language editor.

### Transcript of Semi-Structured Interview

*Researcher:*

We follow ethics when we do research, for example respect and dignity, respecting you guys in terms of your opinion, your culture. So I have an obligation to respect you and also to treat you with dignity and not to discriminate. Confidentiality, due to the sensitivity of this topic, I have to respect your confidence or your privacy, in terms of if you don't want your names to be revealed, we can use student names or if there's specific information which you don't want other people to know it can be held back, so anything that you're not comfortable in, you can also inform me in terms of that and the information will be used by me and my supervisor. If you can see on the front page, her name is there. So, if you don't feel comfortable, because it will be a dissertation, which will be used by our academy and if it has your names people will know that it's you guys, so if you are not comfortable with that, we can use student names so that it doesn't have any affect in terms of if you're thinking about you want to keep this private. So anything that you guys are comfortable with.

And also privacy. Privacy also causes confidentiality in terms of you want to be anonymous, that's okay and your privacy will be protected and that is voluntary participation. And if, maybe, at a later stage you want to withdraw from the research, you phone me and "you know what, this is not for us", you can be able to withdraw from the research. And also informed consent which you were signing now to say that you are adhering to the purposes and procedures and you are going to be concerned and also that you are participating in this study and also your safety and participation. I don't want any danger or harm to be on to you guys.

*Michael:*

Okay.

*Researcher:*

So that's what the consent form is also for. So we can tick along the blocks if there was anything discard in there and you can sign for me there, the whole form, and I will sign here.

*Michael:*

Okay.

*Researcher:*

Thank you.

[Michael talking to kids]

*Researcher:*

Okay. I'm just worried about the sound recording outside, so I'm not sure if you guys are comfortable we can do it in the house?

*Michael:*

*Ja*, sure.

[Signing of documents]

*Researcher:*

Okay, so we are going to start. This is just questions to guide you to see what I will be asking. It means, it can follow any structure, but it's just basically to give you an idea of some of the questions that needs answers for the research.

*Researcher:*

So, okay we are going to start with becoming parents. So, this is the topic regarding your journey as parents in terms of how you came upon wanting to be parents. So, can you tell me more about your journey in becoming parents? Anyone can start.

*Lee:*

I will let you start because you are the one who started with this journey.

*Michael:*

I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd come back from working in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist and I was there with my ex; and when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of life and feeling a little bit unsettled.

I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids and I would like to adopt, and after the breakup I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found someone, and then decided to adopt together. It was like, well... that was when I was 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone again and you take a few years to know each other, and then make sure by the time you do it you are getting to be older by then", you know; so I decided to start the adoption process on my own, which at that time in America it was a little bit challenging, especially if you were known to be gay at that time.

It depended on your jurisdiction, so I was living in Washington DC which you know is a very tiny jurisdiction with [Indistinct] as a separate entity from the state that surrounds it. It has a limited self-government and was very progressive, and I tried to implement a lot of ... I tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and tried to do a lot of things, but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the congress has to approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the congress and live in a district they still tell us what to do.

So, they definitely tried to do a lot but they were unable you implement all the laws because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck which means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our jurisdiction over DC, but in Virginia gay marriage was illegal and adoption was illegal, a marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a [Indistinct] in terms of finding adoption agencies to work with.

There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state; and at the time I was feeling like my karma was developing a little bit, because I had gone to Zimbabwe and then my career progressed and then Zimbabwe kind of fell apart. Well, it kind of fell apart; it actually did fall apart, so at the time was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight.

So, that time the only country that would allow a single man to do an international adoption was Guatemala. I went to workshops in Washington at the Men's Health Clinic. They ran kind of *so you are going to be a parent* sort of workshops which is to say you wanna be a dad. There was one for men and one for women because women has more choices in that department than men do. So that's why I adopted from this orphanage in Guatemala were eventually I found Will. I didn't really have a good experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I started the paperwork and finished, my company referred me to Bangkok.

So, I started the paperwork, most of it done and then I ended up in Bangkok. I finished the paperwork while I was there and met Lee online. We had like one date. I didn't talk about that then because I was still working on it; you know, it was our first date and in between our first and second date the orphanage called and said "hey, we have matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details and if you agree to the match then we will proceed".

So, on our second date Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... [Laughter] So, yeah, but it wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting him to co-parent or anything, and I had pretty much decided that I wouldn't be dating very seriously once the adoption was done; but I also heard that the adoption is going to take two years, that is what they told me.

To be exact it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months old; not quite three months old; and they were like okay, you need to go back and be patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent like a week there.

And then when I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage, you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back and be patient, you don't have to call us every day and we will let you know when things are happening. So, I was in the transit lounge in the United States going back to Bangkok and the orphanage rang on my cell phone and they were like "congratulations, it has been approved".

I was like wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn't really organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn't really set up for kids and I didn't have a day care lined up, I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract even though I was working in Bangkok, and Hong Kong is quiet conservative for any sort of social policy like that, you know.

So, basically dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like well, you only get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala and, you know that stuff... I said okay, great,

so I really needed to have like fulltime help and all that. I went back; I was like I can only come back in a couple of weeks and back to Bangkok, hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and [Indistinct] so everything came together pretty quickly; and my mom and her best friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks.

That was good; but it was still more dramatic when I got back, we picked up Will, my dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will's godmother, went back with me, went back to Guatemala; stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church and then as that was happening, Hurricane Katrina hit, so the city was shut down. Will's passport was in the passport office in New Orleans.

We couldn't get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and destroyed, so we ... anyway, it was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted out. Finally, the Thai Embassy in Washington is like "oh, you can bring him back and pick up his visa at the embassy in Bangkok". I said, okay, that would be great, thanks. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana where my parents lived to get to Thailand. We get there and the immigration officials were like well, he can't come in because he doesn't have a Guatemalan passport.

Even though he is an American citizen, you haven't got a proof of that yet, and I was like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in. We went to the US Embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane.

They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back. So in the end they agreed we take a plane to Singapore. So we flew to Singapore, which was like an hour and a half away, I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport out, turned around, right back into the queue, stamped back out of Singapore, got back onto the same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up and then it was fine, they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport with the resident fees and all that. But while that was going on, Lee and I were still just kind of been dating because that was quite quick, so we were matched up. I would say we were matched up the first week of May and he was home with me by the end of August. So, it was really unusually fast and ... yeah; so basically we dated for a couple of years like that.

*Lee:*

*Ja.* We do. We lived together.

*Michael:*

But I was on a four-year contract so when it kind of gotten to the end of my contract, we were like well, we were still dating so we sort of decided what to do because I won't be staying in Bangkok when my contract is over and I was sort of feeling ready for going back to America close to my family; and so Lee was feeling fed up with his job basically at that time and ready to try something new.

So, we went back to America. It looked really hard like starting a business or finding jobs. We went on interviews, we worked in restaurants, we did all kinds of things but they said they wouldn't give Lee a visa, they didn't have a gay marriage in 2008, so ... So I coincidentally had a meeting with my human resources

department and they were like well, what do you want to do when the contract is over? And I was like frankly there is not many places where we can all go in the world as a family.

When I had left Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe deported me because being a journalist and all that, so I think. I came in South Africa, in and out of South Africa for about three years, four months. I was in Johannesburg and I enjoyed and they would take us and so that would be my first choice because it would be, a good place to raise the kids and we go together, and all that stuff; but the job in Johannesburg had just been filled like it really only recently got filled, there wouldn't come up in three or more years because everyone is on a four-year cycle.

I think coincidentally, right at the same time that guy ended up getting a promotion to go to the main office in Paris. So, this job came up and they rang up and they were like *hey, why don't you come to South Africa?* So, I think Lee may never have thought about South Africa for five minutes, you know, because ...

*Lee:*

*Ja.* Never heard of it. [Laughter]

*Michael:*

... And we didn't have time to come visit or anything because it was all quite rushed, but, yeah, then we were coming here. So, we got here; Will was three and a half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know it was hard moving and so, it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst. Lee tried some different things and then finally figured out the massage business would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will.

Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea but he was going to support it and are going to go along with it. So, we did an application here which was also sort of traumatic because we did an application at Jo'burg Child Welfare but they lost it and then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the government introduced the new Child Welfare Law; and rather than grandfathering and afraid she doesn't know anything. I think grandfathering at the end of the applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they just stopped processing adoptions, from the moment the Bill was introduced to Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year almost, which just made everything on hold and so we were like well, honestly, you know, to wait, you know, because at that time you don't know it is going to be one year ...

What if it's gonna be many years before they finalise the law? Which is a horrible thing for South African orphans actually to wait indefinitely, you know a year in a child's life is a very long time. So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not meant to be, it's whatever we're happy with the next family that's no good but then one night a Thai woman called up and "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how we end up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's... but at least it's worth it in the end. So Juno was born here but he's half Thai. He's born in South Africa and it was sort of a different process but it was very easy actually. I think it's about adoption and it's sort of like, it's just paperwork that you have to do and I think for some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know it's very tense but it's very intimidating into your life and to answer a lot of questions and be having a home study but I mean, you know, I think

anything else I personally have been through once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect and then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process.

*Researcher:*

How long does that take?

*Michael:*

Well, probably a year actually but that's also because you like, by the time you're done... there's only a few months actually between of actually doing things and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court, because the papers' going to the court and you just wait for your hearing and in the end we sort of pushed them after a while as we weren't sure if Juno's gonna go or is he gonna stay, and can he just see her and there were these questions and if she actually went back to Thailand and we couldn't find her again or anything, you know, then it would be a problem. But it was all done without too much drama.

And then our housekeeper had a... my housekeeper from Zimbabwe came down when we moved here because she was, you know, starving in Zimbabwe at that time. She came down, she ended up getting pregnant shortly after that, so her son was also coming and Lee's business was growing so we moved up here about two years ago, two and a half years ago. Yeah, so that's how it all happened.

*Researcher:*

Okay. Anything you want to add on that, Lee?

*Lee:*

No, I think that was a good one. [Laughter]

*Michael:*

I think for Lee it was very different because he was presented with it a choice that was already done.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And if he hadn't been thinking about that already I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own.

*Lee:*

No, never thought, *ja*.

*Michael:*

Took this long getting to know your process with Will.

*Lee:*



*Ja*, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you know, if Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent but I'm there and I'm for. So I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know, to try and then me and Will, we got bonded at the end so that's how I see okay, *ja*, I would like to try and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, *ja*.

*Researcher:*

Okay, so I can see also the motive was adoption and what made you decide for adoption? Was it because it's easy or one or other method for adoption?

*Michael:*

For me I'm comfortable with surrogacy if you have another choice and I think especially if you spend time and in this region where there are so many orphans especially at that time before people came into retroviral, you know, and I think it's not that you would go everywhere you would go, you know. I spend a lot of time doing farm stories at that time, land perform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about all these kids you meet each one personally and to choose, to leave one of them alone. Even if there's sort of a community they wouldn't really be into me because the farms are being resettled, so all the workers had to leave too so they were also being approved. For me it was kind of hard and my brother used to surrogate. My brother used to surrogate with their second child so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it. But if you don't have to do that, it's actually usually expensive, very complicated and it's surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother, because you know if there's multiple birth a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes you uncomfortable if you think of having... I think another option is you sort of creating these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be aborted or... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by... you know, it's not bad but I also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation with another person. Not that a relationship with another person is complex, but like... so I think having a child with a surrogate mother it can be challenging in different ways and for the cause of the adoption is maybe at that time about one fifth the cost of doing surrogacy assuming that the surrogate mother had no health problems along the way and that the pregnancy proceeded perfectly smoothly.

So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive I think twenty thousand dollars for his adoption which I think is a medium price and at that time the government would reimburse you about half the cost on your taxes, that's how the U.S. government works, so it's not outrageous. Less than buying a new car, right?

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But to do a surrogate starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand dollars and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send a child to university and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these things. So to me it's just a different thing. I also think that if you're a woman it can be different in depending on your personal background. People make different choices, so I know people as adults that were adopted themselves and it was never important to them to have a biological connection and they went through the surrogacy process or they just... you know for different reasons,

there's not just that reason but for me I didn't really see the point and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is gonna run out or something, you know. It's not the end of the world.

*Researcher:*

Alright, we are going to take just a few minutes of quitting.

*Michael:*

That's fine, I see you have time for the dog.

*Researcher:*

Alright, and you mentioned some time in years for adoption but how were you feeling about this process? Were you experiencing challenges in getting the adoption through... what was some of your emotional experiences?

*Michael:*

It's quite different the two of them, I think, because with Will was left at an orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the DNA-testing and she did home studies and you know all those things so he wasn't completely abandoned but he was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I don't make any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year but we couldn't find her again. It was just very different because it's very much that you are dealing with. Social workers and doctors and professional people, you know, there's not that kind of emotional difficulty with a woman whose making a very difficult choice.

Whereas with Juno's adoption, because she called us and we know her and we see her still and have a different kind of arrangement so he has a monthly playdate with his birth mom and we had to experience all of her emotional difficulties and she was not in a great place. She was basically a sex traffic here, that's how she got here so she didn't have any papers, she doesn't speak English, she was living in a broth hole, she had a drug problem, she has had all the horrible things happen which you imagine happen when you're a sex traffic.

Before that we both had endless sympathy but it's also very difficult to stay with someone who is coming out of a very dark place and who has a lot of emotions that she feels like we are the people to share them with because Lee speaks her language, so she'd reach out to him in particular, she didn't really have a lot of other people in her life who she trusted I think, so she would tell us more detail than I personally get to know about her troubles, you know, and she would change her mind along the way and that's also very difficult because it's a long way until it's finished, you know.

*Researcher:*

And then you're still in contact with her?

*Lee:*

Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month.

*Researcher:*

Okay. And does Juno know?

*Lee:*

Yeah. He knows that she's his mom.

*Researcher:*

Alright. So, a biological connection for these guys, is it something really important?

*Michael:*

Not for me.

*Lee:*

Not for me.

*Researcher:*

Okay. And also in terms of your role, in terms of being with the boys, what type of roles do you feel you play in terms of being the parent? Is it different from being... when it's a female who's the mother role? What sort of roles do you think you play in their lives?

*Michael:*

We have changed over time depending on our work situations because at the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything but I needed to have fulltime help because I was working and that can be a bit challenging because you also want to bond with the kid but you do need full time day care because that's what working parents need and I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom and be like "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a choice so not only do you need full time day care, you need full time day care plus a back-up system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. It can be nervous. You know it's hard to feel like... you know, basically the nanny would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of things but to be honest those things seem important at the moment but a few years later it's like... At the time it's a really big deal but then you realise you have a more complex relationship later.

But then when we got to South Africa Lee wasn't... Lee was working but he was trying to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He end up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot and I was at work a lot and I work for 24 hour news so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend and things like that and then when my contract finished and we decided to stay, it switched because I was home and then my job here gave me full parental leave so I had sixteen weeks of paid leave so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby and Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business.

*Lee:*

Yeah, I already started my business. Like Michael decided to quit the job, because of... otherwise we had to move to another country, so I pushed all my time and energy into my new business and that's how we

carried on living and not move. So, it was a transition between, you know, business and like full time parents so I was struggled but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have day care and also Michael came out from work as well.

*Researcher:*

Okay, this business of you becoming parents. We spoke about you both have the time now that you basically wanted to become a parent but what are some of the factors that you took into consideration when you said “now I want to be a parent”?

*Michael:*

Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money for... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment in Washington. The apartment was not huge, I mean it was ninety square meters but it wasn't like a massive, fancy place or anything but it was a nice place and it had two bedrooms. Small bedrooms, you know, but like fine.

[Michael speaking to kids]

*Michael:*

So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good health care which in the U.S. was a huge thing, you have a good health plan and I thought, you know, seeing that I was there a long time and had a lot of friends and I didn't realise that I was moving closer from home, my parents were from Louisiana. I thought, you know, I never thought I would end up living in Louisiana at some point and raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with, and my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helps a lot too. I think if you don't have family support, even though they are far away, knowing that there is family support matters, you know.

Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up and I just thought if there's something in life that you really know you want to do and then you decide to not do it, at some point you're just setting yourself up to be unhappy later. So, if you are in the position where you can do it now, finish doing it now because loss is never a time in life. I think some people wait to adopt or to have kids in general until they think they're in this perfect moment and somehow they are going to have the next twenty years free and do nothing but raise a child, you know, and no one has two decades where they are not going to work or do anything for themselves or have no other troubles in life, like they are always trying to make themselves. I was like, you know, this is as good as it's gonna get. I was making enough money, I have a place to live, everything is fine, and so I should do it now. Where, for Lee, it was more of testing the water level.

*Lee:*

For me I feel different from Michael. Because I've seen the good things, you know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own but for me I wasn't able to you know, even, to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my own but I think Michael was able to do it so then I decided to be helping him and I can contribute my physical, my ability in terms of you know to be with Will while Michael was working because later on he offered to... and asking to move in with them That's how I thought I think I could, you know jump into the board and then raising Will together with Michael. Even though at the time I didn't have a job, because I had to quit a job in Thailand.

*Michael:*

I'm gonna grab the dog and play. You can finish your story. Give me ten minutes to go down.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Lee:*

So that's why I felt I could help Michael to raise Will together.

*Researcher:*

And what would come of your personal factors, like for example did you feel ready to be a parent? Did you feel you had the willing, the strength, you know, some of the factors, like the maturity to have a child, like at that time like trying to think of some of those things also?

*Lee:*

No, because for me I had a chance to see Will how he's growing up, because he came home on four months and at the time in two years I didn't decide to be a parent while he is there so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I've seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night. Even though I didn't live with them, so I felt for him because I bonded with him very, very nicely and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt loving him, both of them.

*Researcher:*

Okay, I'm not sure if we should wait for him, but for you: what were some of the challenges you encountered with raising children or what was some of the challenges in obtaining which you encountered?

*Lee:*

To be honest, I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially for Will. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy and he's just like, you know, and I took it very personal, I thought like "oh, I didn't raise my child well at that point that's why they would behave like this" but my mom called me and said "listen, you did the fine thing". She explained it to me like, you know, when I was young like... I was also like screaming and shouting to my parents so that's why I thought "oh, so this is normal to be three years old, two years old to not listening to parents. So that's how I told myself and just to let them be and also like, you know, trying to discipline them in the way it should be.

*Researcher:*

Yeah, okay. And how do you think it was for Michael? How do you think the experience was for Michael? The challenges that he also went through you mentioned changing nappies... how was it for him?

[Juno speaking to Lee]

*Researcher:*

I was mentioning Michael's challenges. How did you think he faced challenges? Did he also feel like that?

*Lee:*

Michael read lots of books on how to raising kids but they are not the same. They are not the same as in the book because they have their own... they are very different from other families as well. Even my niece is different from my sister, so... you can read from the book 'how to' like a guideline, you know, but in reality we have to look at who they are and then how to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important to... for me I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons. And to love Will and Juno. And I will address the best thing for them, you know.

*Researcher:*

Disagreements. You and Michael. Did you had some disagreements in terms of raising the kids?

*Lee:*

No, because obviously we came from different cultures. You know, I grew up in Thailand and when I was young, I was punished by my parents in a challenging way. Discipline, *ja*. So it's different from Michael. I learnt a lot from Michael. The way he disciplines both of them. So I kind of adopt and apply the content of firm discipline routine and I've seen that it worked with them so that's how I get rid of like how to discipline them by maths at all because I didn't see good results to do that with both of them but discipline them by naughty corners like half an hour, you know.

*Researcher:*

Okay, so do you find it useful to use those?

*Lee:*

Yes. It's very successful but it has to be very firm. Consistency. You know, to both of them.

*Researcher:*

Okay. How did you handle these disagreements in terms of you disagreeing for example your disciplinary side? How did you handle these disagreements?

*Lee:*

We didn't have disagreements in terms of arguing or disagreement. We didn't really have that but usually when I disagreed I just let Michael deal the way he thinks he should do then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him doing it his own way and that's how we're working as a team because of I respect Michael's opinion and the way he read both of them so then let him do his own thing and I then I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed it and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it.

[Lee speaking to kids]

*Researcher:*

Okay. And what does it mean to be a father to you?

*Lee:*

I feel like... because I look at my father and to be honest I have a memory about my father had disappeared and somehow it came back. It came back and I remember that my dad... he always be there for me and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them.

*Researcher:*

Okay. Alright. And, the process of becoming a father: was it easy? Slow? How was it for you?

*Lee:*

It was difficult. It was difficult for me. Like I say, I... from my family, we were more like relaxed, I try to comfort. I used to do a lot for them like pick up their clothes and try to really discipline them but somehow I've seen that that was wrong so I started to show them how to do, instead of doing it for them and then that worked.

[Michael came in]

*Researcher:*

So I was talking to Lee regarding some of the challenges in being a father and he mentioned me so I want to also know some of the challenges.

*Lee:*

I think with both of them it was a challenge for me.

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean also I guess we come from different backgrounds so...

*Researcher:* Which is nice, eh?

*Michael:*

...so different expectations and just different experiences the way that you rep yourself, so... *Ja*, I mean the discipline thing is hard because it's got a part to know where the line is sometimes, you know. You think you know but then afterwards there's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent, you know. So they need a chance to fail and they have to take the consequence for that. So I'm pretty happy to give like for Will that we could have a lot of back to school. It was hard to get back into the routine. He struggled a little bit, he forgot a lot of things you know, he doesn't know what his done, things got lost, it wasn't great coming back and all that stuff but, so... that was part of the conversation yesterday. It's like you have a lot of freedom to manage your own time and clearly it's not that well because clearly you can do better than that, I mean if I intervene you have to follow my routine, which means you're giving me time and salary to do your maths homework, you know. You don't get your screen time, you don't get to do other things, stuff like that. That's hard but it's also hard like... kind of realising that they are their own little people and have their own internal

life that we're actually not part of at that time and that's truly difficult because I get on my mind as an adult what I remember being five, six, seven, eight that clearly. I still remember things that happened and I still remember the stories that my parents tell, but my home memories, about myself and how I'm feeling. At that young age they don't really remember.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

I remember being in high school and what that was like, so it's actually interesting to see on how much emotional challenges you have at this point and it's hard to know like its very different, you know, like how to really shine, staying really calm because Will is very aggressive and very bold, you know. Will had some bullying problems at school and it was kind of hard to figure out because he didn't really talk about it, you know, so he went through this long process where he was in like very... carrying this very dark place emotionally. It just seemed like inappropriate for an eight-year-old. It was too dark, you know. But then once we realised what was happening at school then it was clear because the school was giving us support in terms of... you know it's... he was at a government school, which was a very good performing government school but even at this school the classes get quite big to be more thirty fiveish which for Second Grade or Third Grade is still a lot of kids. It just felt like the teachers didn't really... wasn't able to observe the dynamics within the kids very well or appreciate the need that maybe, you know, that if these kids were out at another adopted boy who was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and having an international family. Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then it's hard to...

[Juno speaking to Michael]

*Michael:*

...it's always hard to know whether you're doing the right thing and at some degree learn what parenting is all about because you get some confidence, you know, search yourself. On the other hand, if you learn to do that in an environment that is supportive and where you're not being blocked up to try, it shouldn't be particularly threatening, you know. At least you learn to do things patiently. So we put the children in another school, which was a big thing, you know.

*Lee:*

For one year.

*Researcher:*

Okay. And now, how are they settling in the new school?

*Michael:*

This is his third year in this school. We changed him mid-year in Grade 3 and now he's in Grade 5.

*Researcher:*



And the bullying?

*Lee:*

Yeah, I find it's still there but it's been less, you know, from previous school.

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean, for example, last year there was a thing where the boys heard where's your mamma jokes.

*Researcher:*

Oh yes.

*Michael:*

Your mamma's so fat, she's ironing her pants on the driveway. You know, like, this kind of thing? Which is horrible, but happens, and you know, whatever, I guess, so they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right? And I mean... and I am not sure if it's well to be good friends but, you know, I chatted to the teacher about it once, he came to us right away that was a first. That he told us it didn't happen and he was really upset. He was crying and all that stuff and... you know. It kind of brought back memories of being beat up at the old school and I chatted to the teacher and its like "hey, these things happen. I'd just like to see you tomorrow morning" and we can discuss what we can do and she was super-proactive so by the time that I went to see her after school the next day, she's gotten the two boys together and it's like... "hey, you know, so...it's happened and why did you say that?" And it's like "well, you know, we were just like talking and then one kid says something and then it's all these mama jokes and then I couldn't think of one so the only thing I could think of I said that to Will but by now it's my friend and I didn't mean to hurt him" and, you know, and he was really... that was kind of one of the most positive outcomes you can expect and they are still friends. They go out and do stuff.

So I think that's good and the school is very... he's going to Crawford in Sandton now and it's very, you know he's a president like the parental form says like parents / guardians or parents he has no mother and father and they are very... I would say that was really hard and then the little kids stuff is hard with the babies, toddlers and all this parts. I mean that stuff is hard in a sort of physical endurance kind of way to begin with. It's the not sleeping. You don't really... you have to work the next day and you're exhausted and then you get home and It's like "oh there's poo on the floor", I mean honestly. You're angry at me so you're gonna piss on me, like actually piss on me, how you're going to respond, you know. But once they get a language and they can do more things and all that gets better. I expected that the bullying and all that stuff would start later. I thought it would happen more like when he got into high school.

And I also underestimated the racial issues. Frankly, which I think is partly South Africa and I love South Africa and I thought its part of staying in South Africa and I thought there would be different issues like when you're in America or Thailand or whatever.

*Lee:*

Thailand would be the same thing.

*Michael:*

But it's quite... it started very early and it comes from parents, which is just jaw dropping I mean like the first week, you see what I mean: the child is three and a half years old he's not a dash for, you know, we're doing the parents thing and it's just like a parade of... you know like nice white production moms, you know and other nice whites, moms or dads or whatever so it's not like slam packed either as a thing, you know or whatever it is what it is. But this mom comes out she's like "oh, you're not from here". I'm like "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I go "This is mine".

[Michael talking to kids]

*Michael:*

Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he"? and I say "He's a boy, he's an American too" and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know and then someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy.

[Michael talking to kids]

*Michael:*

And so finally like the third person asking in a course of like fifteen minutes and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like, "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like "and what are they"? And I was like, well... [laughing]

*Lee:*

We need a map and then we will show you Geography. Stuff that.

*Michael:*

And then it's like well actually Guatemala is a very small country in central America where there are 11 different indigenous groups plus the Spanish who conquered them and now everyone is sort of mixed up because it's a very small place and you know things happen over hundreds years and she's like "oh", and I guess like for me, I don't – well anyway if you are racial it is nothing to discuss your home amongst yourselves and you are like really that never, you don't throw in the house thing like "I'm white".

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

Lee is Asian. You know, like you don't have that kind of conversations, you know, but then they would come home from school and I could see that he was – well perhaps in pre-schools you draw self-portraits and stuff...

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

That's part of development in life how you draw yourself and you would experiment with the colours and some days you will colour in the same colours ... he would draw the white kinds, which is always like a weird pink colour, it is not actually like a natural colour.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And some days he would colour over it and do it and do it again and it's like oh he is trying to redo it and it made him so upset ... and the kids would be like; well you are not white and you are not black so you are nothing, you know.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

And that is also sort what you are told that you are nothing you know and anyway so my mom when he was like 4 or something got the ... I don't think they sell them here, I don't know why but like – in America you get this box of Crayola's that come in skin tones.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

And it's like 36 skin tones from very light-skinned to very dark-skinned and every shade of brown in between because ultimately we are all sort of shades of brown.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

You know for ...with the Crayola box right and I mean... like 36 Crayola's colour until he found his you know and he's like; dad I found my colour.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

It's like; what colour am I ... and I'm like burnt sienna. That's the name on the Crayola.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

Like you are burnt sienna... and he's like "oh, I'm burnt sienna".

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But of course you don't go and tell everyone I am burnt sienna you know.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

It is like when you are telling people I am beige.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

I am ... you know.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But quite hard and then the teachers, when he got to primary school were also like- they were insistent that you must fit in one of the squares you know. Like "oh, you are a little Indian boy".

*Researcher:*

Oh.

*Michael:*

And I think it was meant in a – Indian teachers would say that.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And you see what you expect to see as well, you have all these choices when you are in South Africa.

[Michael talking to kids]

*Michael:*

And he would get so frustrated because he would tell people you know and would tell the kids. You know, they would ask where he is from and which is a normal “getting to know you” question, right, but it is quite hard to answer actually.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

If you were born in Guatemala and you are adopted by an American and you .... And you stayed there for 3 years and now you are in South Africa. It is not a straight forward answer.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

Like you know; I am from Jo'burg, I am from Pretoria, I am from ... you know.

*Lee:*

It's hard to open the... show him the music video from ... when you are growing up you will look exactly like him.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

[Kid interrupting conversation].

He would cry about it all the time you know, not every day but then to show like how much it is. Kids and their personalities when they would interact with you ...last year...

So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were 2 new kids in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school, you know we are having supper and he's like ehm, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I was like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like; dad I'm a different colour than you. They don't like my colour.

And it's like oh, what did you tell them? He's like, I said well you are a stinky pooh-pooh head and I don't want to play with you. [laughing]- and I was like well that is the correct response.

*Researcher:*

And what were your feelings, your emotions going through that?

*Michael:*

I mean it is very frustrating because you want your kids to love who they are.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And to be proud of who they are and to be proud of their family and it is very hard like it is twice as hard because they- especially ... primary school people, the kids will say I like that is so gay. I don't actually have any real understanding of what they are saying, you know.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

[Talking to kid]- I just think it is really sad. I mean and I really wonder like it almost makes me sad for the other kids at school but. And it's not like only the white kids who do it, only the black kids who do it. It's like quite the...

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And it makes me sad for them too because they are being brought up with these very kind of specific about people ... you must be like this, you must be like that. And that is so unfortunate to be 2015 and 2016 and that.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And you just don't... I don't know. Like I think when you are- it's just sad but only think is I don't know if it's necessarily different from what we would have experienced in America and in Thailand certainly other things came up, you know, because adoption is a very foreign concept and so in Thailand people would come up to me all the time and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is the mom? How can there be no mom?" So it was like I think those options are clear right. I mean that is like is not really a question.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

All you need is just to think about it for a few minutes and you will understand what would have happened. At the end of the day it will be revealed at the school play and they call me a nice dad you know, a friendly dad. And they always go; how do you know that he loves you [remark- because you are not the dad] because you are not related.

So it would be different things [kids talking] ... and I don't know. I also just thought those things would happen earlier because I didn't expect preschool children to be racially conscious in that way.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

You know I just didn't really think that in my mind ... Sesame Street and that wouldn't be an issue until later when they learned how to do those things so I wasn't really prepared for it and I think also like when you grow up why am I kind of in a majority kind of white environment you don't have to think about those things very much because those are never issues that anyone ever confronted me with.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

And so you kind of know it happens, you know, the reality is different.

[Michael talking to kids]

*Researcher:*

Okay, and I also asked Lee regarding disagreements between the two of you.

*Michael:*

We never disagree.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Lee:*

We did but we don't have big arguments.

*Researcher:*

And how do you handle them if there are any?

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean, I don't know... Lee and I will end up having a little argument and then you take a little break, chill out for a while and then you try it again later, you know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or... you know.

[Michael talking to Juno]

*Michael:*

Yeah, and I mean. I think my parents did a very good job of hiding their disagreements all the time so I didn't even know if they had any because it was only when I was in University that they told me they had a therapist and that they went to couples' counselling and that they've done all that stuff, you know, over the years through their marriage and that was total revelation to me that they've ever argued because they would never ever do it in front of us, you know. The right intention but not, you know, an actual argument which I think is very good, and on the other hand you have to be prepared for understanding how to argue. I am not very good at it still.

*Researcher:*

And we asked another question in terms of what it means to be a father to you?

*Michael:*

Yeah, I'm very... for me it makes me feel very complete. I feel very much like this is the way that I always wanted things to be in terms of me and the kids and I think what's complicated is balancing that would being a husband, a professional of some sort where you have some of your own creative life and your own mental engagement and I mean being a... it makes me feel very full and at the same time it's interesting like how that is one part of life, you know, and feeling like this you will always be fathers but each day is different. They all ask a really long time. People say that you've got so far to really make it happen. It's really hard, I mean it's not an easy buck house. You don't just fly by, I mean, every day is very challenging and very... which doesn't mean that it's bad, but it means that it does takes a lot from your engagement with life and these relationships and it's not easy and it doesn't fly by, it's not like you have a great time and then you're done, you know. Yeah, but, it all ends up differently.

*Lee:*

What do they go through? What is it like to come back to normal?

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And they're changing all the time. You think you got it figured out then there's something new.

*Lee:*

And they're not attached like there are any emotions, like, you know. You have to, okay, let them be. Each day, each month, each year, they're not the same.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But it is funny like when they're very little. First come those first couple of days, it is not like babysitting. You know, like bonding is real. Especially when I went to visit Will's orphanage the first time. They just hand you this little baby and you go off to their little chalet in the back. It really just feels like babysitting at first.



It's like "hey, I've never seen this kid before. I mean you sent an e-mail and I've seen photos but I don't know who it is, he doesn't know who I am". But it's amazing the bonding is real and we just spent time together and that bonding happened and I think actually that's a magical process. That is something very special.

*Researcher:*

And were there times that you felt uncertain of to be a parent or when you felt like I'm not sure what am I doing here or uncertainty is coming up.

*Michael:*

I never felt uncertain about being a parent but I felt uncertain about my skill on parenting all the time [laughter] and an excellent opportunity has worked itself out. And I think the results about what you're doing manifests so far into the future. So it's like we did this today, and we did it yesterday, it's like wow, I have to deal with those school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours and these things but you don't really know if that works until like months later when you see if the behaviour has shifted, you know, and all that stuff that happens when they're really little, you know. And especially if a lot has freaked you out about babies, you know. And they can't communicate so you really don't know. It's like "well, we decided to perverse. Was that a good thing?" I mean, you've been screaming for an hour now and you don't eat until later and don't know if they'll be happy adults. Well, they're not really happy adults, happy, healthy, well-adjusted people until they get to be adults. It's a very long way still.

*Researcher:*

Okay, and in terms of, you know, you're a father. But now you're a gay father, also your sexual identity. You noticed as a father with another person who's a woman. You now have your sexual identity in terms of 'I am a gay father'. Were there conflicts in terms of your sexual identity when it came to it? Were there some challenges with regards to that?

*Michael:*

I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the time and I find it slightly offensive to go to like a parents meeting that is not a parents meeting but it's been called that, it's a mom's meeting. I think for class moms and you'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know and we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't want to braai? And what if "serving" is not really how we want to describe the activity of, you know, providing the meal to the children. There's a different way to formulate this for class. And, you know, I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 64, I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me. And it will be a "good morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like... First of all, I find that offensive for the women because they are using this sweetie cute little tone of voice with adult women who have like real jobs, or like do serious work and even if they're working at home, they're doing a lot, like don't talk to them like they're five year olds, who's going to keep moving. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this process? You know.

But I find that annoying and I find it a little bit... I feel it's like a shared sensibility with other gay people and gay men in particular that, I do get a little bit lonely for when you're surrounded by the moms all the time and I find that dads are all very cool and very nice. I've never really related that well with straight boys, I

don't think you know, so... and even we have lots of good straight coupled friends. I mean lovely, lovely people. And good friends whom I trust and miss and, you know, all that stuff. But, I don't know, it is nice. I mean we have the other gay dads who I do find it really useful to like have a hangout every now and then. You know just come over and have like coffee or whatever.

*Researcher:*

Yes, yes.

*Michael:*

Because I mean, really, I don't want to be... I don't want to go to a bar. I really have no desire to do that.

*Lee:*

Or watch rugby. Or cricket.

*Michael:*

Or braai or do any of that stuff. But I don't want to go to a gay party either. I don't want to be... because we wake up early. There is no scenario where we sleep until ten. It's not going to happen.

*Lee:*

It's not happening.

*Researcher:*

Okay. So now. We're on becoming a parent. We are on family identity. What is your view of a gay parented family in terms of the identity? Your family identity. What is your view on that?

*Michael:*

I think it's... especially at the beginning when you are say, changing schools or entering school for the first time, and with two kids with the age gaps that we have. Basically that is all the time. You are kind of shifting into new classes and the way that South African schools tend to mix the kids from year to year, that means you have a new pool of parents every year, too, so you have kind of this constant process coming out...

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

...All the time and that's okay. I mean it doesn't... it is a bit tiresome after a while but that is what it is, you know. I don't in particular feel that we're the gay family that other people probably do and I'm sure it's the topic of the conversation, you know, but that doesn't bother me in any way. And I think they talk about other things too because we conduct our lives in a very different way than a lot of people and I mean... and also because we're all foreign, so... We have different expectations and different... and we're not only at a point where we're all from different places and we navigate different things trying to find ways that work for everyone together and I think a lot of families don't have to do that because they're a single nationality, often has a single race, often have very similar upbringings, you know, so they don't have those differences

to reconcile, which means that we end up on a different path, which is also fine. We're all very happy with those paths.

But I do think that, at school, for the kids to... like Will gets tired to explain hard and he finds it very tedious. He doesn't like kids all the time asking "where's your mom?" And that's just gonna be life, I'm afraid. I mean, I agree with him, you know, I get it. But that's just gonna be life, because people will always be asking that question.

*Researcher:*

For everyone, everywhere.

*Michael:*

And I feel that's different from being parents because people assume that there's gonna be a mom. It's very rare to have a single dad in general and I think for a woman to show up with a child especially a child that looks more or sort of like her in some way. No one ever questions that. They'll never... very rarely will people come out and think "where's the dad?" Because people know all kinds of things can happen. They wouldn't be so blunt about it necessarily because they would see there was a divorce and there was custody or he passed or he left or all the things that happen are pretty well pretty clear.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But when you show up and there's no mom, that is a thing that people feel they need to figure out. *Ja.*

*Researcher:*

And what makes your family unique? What is it different from other families? Whether it's from gay parenting...

*Michael:*

Much better looking than the other families [laughter]. From a different point... I think, yeah, we're in fashion, we're a very international family, right, and for us, part of that is bringing us out our own cultural and international identities, whether for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered where they came from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots, and how do you incorporate those things in different ways and then, I think in certain ways we are a very modern family because the world is moving so fast, people are moving and mixing in different ways so quickly so for a child like Will it was have a... I mean, back to the racial thing.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

You know, neither of them knows what it's clear about. So for Juno in South Africa, people are like "oh, you're coloured." You know, he is sort of, you know. I mean, that's a very broad category and he's dad is Pygmalion, so that is correct but it's not entirely correct either.

*Lee:*

People's just like... putting them in a box.

*Michael:*

And yeah. And so everybody's got their own things to figure out. I mean, to think about the way that they were brought up, in terms of... they're very international, and they're very well-travelled and they have very international friends and yet are very South African in many ways that we are not. And we can't relate to sometimes because it's very important. And Will is learning a second language at school and it's not like Thai and brings Thai home and I think it's also interesting for, like... I don't think either of us were especially sporty in school. I didn't know sport at all. It wasn't important. Will is extremely athletic and loves it, and loves soccer and loves basketball. That's all it's about learning how to support each other's actions.

*Lee:*

We learned to accept who we are and then we learned to accept the way like, you know, they are. That's how we are. We became family so I think that's our support, you know, for the family. And then, being different.

*Researcher:* Okay.

*Michael:*

Biologically, you know. Like being their own children in that way. Sometimes there is an expectation like I did this when I grew up. Dad did that or you know, whatever, and therefore you're gonna love those things too. I love soccer so you're gonna love soccer. I went to this school and loved it, so you're gonna go to this school and love it and especially in this Northern suburbs where that's all very corn for me too, you've been going to this school like forever and that it has a real identity to it for now.

*Lee:*

Not like Thailand do.

*Michael:*

Yeah, I just grew up in a very small town so I went to the same school as my father and my grandfather because there were only two schools.

*Researcher:*

Yes. [laughter]

*Michael:*

It was gonna be one or the other, either way, there was a fifty-fifty chance no matter what, you know. A different environment, but yeah. But I think that's also the big city it's just kind of new to me but... I think it's nice that they're free to identify themselves and figure out what they love.

*Researcher:*

How do you communicate family identity therein? How do you tell them? In which way do you tell them to say "look we are"?

*Michael:*

I tell them to decide. I don't blame them. But there was a moment for me when Will went to the Third Grade and he came back saying "that's okay" and he just went weird, you know he meant in that way. I mean THAT way.

*Researcher:*

From friends at school.

*Michael:*

I'll say "Oh yeah, that's right". But dad you're so gay and I'll say "yeah, that's correct". So we had a conversation about what that means and it's like you're a man and you fell in love with another man and so that's how you decided to have... Your family was with somebody like themselves who's also a man, or like our friends who are women and they fell in love with another woman, that means we're gay.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

And if you're a guy or a girl who falls in love with someone who's not the same, then you're straight. And that's what that means. And then there was a review in the car a few days later and he was like "so... Sindi and Cynthia are gay, am I correct?" "They are gay. As are me and Pappa". But it's interesting that they also, I think, growing up in a very mixed environment with a, you know, lots of different kinds of friends at school.

*Lee:*

Just like Bella. We also have like stressed couples, but they also adopted two children. Basically we have a family who are different like their families left them.

Michael: But they don't know it until their friends at school starts pulling it out of them. Sort of outside the circle.

*Lee:*

The kids are black but the parents are white. So we're trying to point to Will "look, this is an example."

*Michael:*

And our friends who have, our friends who are in interracial marriages, like one is black and one is white, or the one is inhuman or you know, whatever. They don't think about it. Will often felt like he was the only one. Its like, "oh no, what about Cigar?" You know, I mean, he's got a white mom and a black dad.

*Lee:*

To point out it out.

*Michael:*

I mean, he knows that, he knows that. He plays with that kid every day. So you're the parents, then very well. He doesn't think about it. So people they would tease him. He's like: "I am the only one; no one else has two dads". Like: "oh well, remember Patrick and Paul? We went to their wedding and they have a family that they can play with. They're gay. Because we went to their wedding they are two male adults, I mean, we know that. But you have to actually sit there and actually point out. These are the people and that's what that means. But... *ja*. I think at school it's hard to define, define too much, you know.

*Researcher:*

And another thing challenging to your family identity – was there anything there that might have happened to challenge you? Your family identity – anything that happened recently to might have challenged your family identity or to question your family identity?

*Michael:*

I mean randomly when we're in public and there's just one of us, I think people always thinks that there's a wife somewhere, you know. There's that kind of thing so we're "where's mom?" you know, that kind of things but it's always like little stuff. I mean it's not like people are being intentionally upstairs there's just not that many heads turning around relative to the numbers of heads turning around. So, I don't think so. I mean actually at the new school they bent over backwards for us.

*Researcher:*

And how do you perform when they "Where's the mom?", "is your wives around"?

*Michael:*

Hmmm, you know, there's no mom. We have a lot of kind of things like "oh, mom's got the day off? How's dad doing managing with the boys?" Well, dad manages everyday thank you very much, you know. But it is just a few little stuff, I mean there's always strangers, but I'm sure the kids get it more at school than we necessarily realise.

*Researcher:*

Okay. And we now will be talking about support. Do you receive support from family, neighbours, friends, society? And how was the support or how did they support you, how were you feeling during the support, were there mixed feelings and what engagement your roll was and what was some other comments by your family members, your friends now that you are parents?

*Michael:*

Well, we had very different family experiences.

*Lee:*

For me, my family wasn't there from the beginning. They didn't accept the way I'm gay so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay. This is who I am. I could be better, I could become success, I could be a dad and my sons, both of them, love me as a dad. So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents have seen like, this is my actions and this is results from both of them. So then, the questions that they ask, it have been answered by actions. So now they are happy, they...

*Michael:*

Improvised a lot of support when we were in Bangkok. They do a lot and they're wonderful parents.

*Researcher:*

And was there other support from legal authorities like a lawyer in terms of you getting adoption? Were there other people involved?

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean there are, like I am not seeing South Africa as an issue now, I've been dealing with the questions in South Africa. Straight forward. I've never... I actually don't know anyone which had a bad experience. As opposed to, when I and Will were up in America, to...I had a cat and mouse thing, like constantly trying to check it in the box over here and check it in the box over there and kind of answering questions in a weird way, you know, so I... because the social worker, my social workers from Virginia, didn't have their marriage and she probably felt... so she knew I was gay because she could tell, I mean she's not stupid. But she wouldn't ask. She wasn't suspicious, she was very supportive in that way. I mean she helped me work the system so she would ask me in very general terms. So she never asked "what if you get a girlfriend?" and "what happens if you get married?" or something else. She's a mother. There were no questions like that. Its like "So how are you going to manage dating?" And it was all kind of wink, wink, nod, nod. "Well, I don't really plan to date for a while because I have a full time job that's quite serious and that I take seriously and take pride in and if I wanna be a good dad, it's gonna take a lot of my time and so I don't really expect to date for a long while". And we would always kind of do this and it was like that. She was very supportive in that way with the restrictions never in place at the time in the U.S. Then you get here, I mean you end up the whole thing with a Visa for Lee which was such a head ache.

He went to South Africa at Home Affairs and I mean, and they had like, they have their issues, right? Which you can imagine but then he applied for the Visa, after the U.S. would not give him a Visa, and he kind of, he would go to the South African guys and they're like, where... I'm like "and then what do we have to do?" You sign at the bottom of the page. I'm like "and then what do we have to do?" And then you're done. "Oh". Now, I mean it was just that easy and I mean of course like Home Affairs screwed up other things like... but on the gay issue they're super good and we finally did get married and I mean like, we did it at Home Affairs, the guy came to our living room, we did it here, I mean all of that is great and when you go through... I mean, I've had some really... some snarky American immigrations officials at the airports and things who weren't being super jerks but they were being kind of assholes. But we never had those issues here. Not at Home Affairs, at the airport, or at the border post or whatever.

*Michael:*

And I mean honestly the... you know like Mark Gavistor's story about getting married, you know, when... it's like eight years ago or something now. He actually got a partner and they were moving to Paris because that's part of his work so they were moving up there. And they go to Home Affairs to get married just for the Visa. They thought "well, they're in Paris why don't they get married" and the woman at the counter is like "well, when is your wedding gonna be?" It's like "the third". Just sign your papers here at Home Affairs. The woman stopped, put the papers away and it's just like, "you know, this is the new South Africa and you need to celebrate your love". It's like "Aw, how sweet" you know.

And we went to the police one time for a separate thing and just like we're making our way to report, you know, stupid stuff and she's like "well, actually this is the poorest woman ever, she got shot like three years ago but anyway she's like "you know, we have a beautiful democracy and everyone should feel safe and important". It's like "aw!" I mean really, that's so sweet. But I promise you no one in America ever said that to me ever on purpose, you know.

*Researcher:*

And your family, Michael, were your family supportive in terms of the adoption?

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean, my family were great. My family had the... I came out when I was eighteen and actually that was one of the things like, you know "what about kids"? I was sort of like, I don't understand the connection actually. I can still have children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second, I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the idea.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

And then when it was time I just feel like they thought it would come at some point, but my mom was like "I never thought you can't give me a grandchild" Even though the storm was coming...

[Michael talking to children]

*Michael:*

Hmmm, you know, even when if the storm was coming and all that stuff, she sent out printed invitations to the baptism, she invited the entire town, there were tables set up in their garden, it's like, everybody came. I thought it was very sweet. It was very conservative, small type of town, Louisiana. Everyone was really, really great. When I came up to my grandmother, she's quite old you know, she cried a little bit and she's like... then she dried her tears, she's like "I just want you know that this will not be a problem for anyone". It's like, wow, now you've decided, it's great, that's gonna make the rest of it so much easier.

*Researcher:*



Okay. And we're now gonna go to religious affiliations, you had Will baptised... and, tell me more about that. When it's supportive? Some comments or so.

*Michael:*

The church is weird, you know, you may say. It's all wink, wink, nod, nod because, for me it's not right. I grew up in a small town. You know, my grandmother she and her family were to live in the same area, don't move or leaving and my dad, you know, my dad and grandfather moved into his town in the 1920's, they all lived in the same house, or in the house next door, on the same piece of property, going to the same church since the 1920's. I just have a very long history with the particular pattern. The priest was there when Will was baptised was actually quite but basically and you kind of chat with the bishops on what the limits was on... you know, were to be done, and... I really, I was single at that point, there were less to hide, or whatever. So they did it, but they didn't do the baptism during a regular service, they didn't do it during mass, they had a special thing, we felt that the church was more...

Anyway, there were 120 there I'm sure. But you wouldn't do your regular service that other people would do, and even that, which was a ridiculous thing because it was a small town and my mother sent out printed invitations to half of the city, it's like everyone knew, but anyway... And they came when Lee and I were together there was a new priest who was actually nice and whatever, but is more conservative and all that stuff and older and generational issues and all that stuff. He was willing to do it, there was the printed invitations and it was very small and just about Lee got home, which was fine being able to also agree that which I don't go to church, that's the thing, I don't actually... I sort of resent the church in many ways more than anything.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child and that's a chance to welcome your child into the community and your family and my mother, she is a seamstress and spent her whole life making beautiful baptismal gowns for other people's babies and it's like look at mine, it's your first grandchild and you don't get to make a baptismal gown for your own grandchild. You know, I'm not an asshole, you know, I'm not gonna do that and the thing is and the rest of them is like we don't do it, you know. We go with my parents for Christmas or for Easter, we go to church and the other way around because they like to go and we support them but I don't need to go to a church that's not gonna support me back and I don't really think it's appropriate after explaining to my kids like "oh, we're Catholic and we go to Catholic Church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do and I don't actually care enough to be bothered or something. It just doesn't interest me, I mean, whereas Lee is having interest. You were less interested in the beginning, but now you are more religious so it's a different thing now.

*Lee:*

Yeah.

*Researcher:*

And there are supporters at school?

*Lee:*

You mean at the temple?

*Michael:*

Lee's Buddhist.

*Researcher:*

Oh, okay. But how was your experience with the guys to find out you were a gay dad and...

*Lee:*

No they are... I mean, at the temple, I mean, they don't mind if you are gay or straight, you know, they did give support, and you know... yeah.

*Researcher:*

Okay. There's not any disapproval or...

*Lee:*

No. Not at all.

*Michael:*

But they wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are supportive but there is a line.

*Researcher:*

So when you guys got married, who married you?

*Michael:*

Home Affairs.

*Researcher:*

Home Affairs. So there was no support from...

*Michael:*

From church? No. But we don't... like Lee explained to the kids about Buddhism, and he tends to meditate and things like that. I only explain as it comes up, you know. And I try to explain, that's one of the biggest adjustments for me is that religion is part of school in South Africa. So I feel I have to unexplain a lot of what they talk at school, you know. Because they'll come back with some very unusual ideas in my opinion about God and Jesus and stuff like that.

*Researcher:*

So it seems religion is there but also it's not strong and if they want to know more and how do you do that?

*Michael:*

I will not let my church teach my children about first of all. That would terrify me a little bit to be totally honest because for me the Catholic Church is a fundamentally clause vision of human love and for me that's a big thing, like if you don't understand what human love is like, which you see in the way they play it in homosexuality. I mean, if you don't understand the difference between those two things, that's actually a large problem, I mean that's not a small thing. You don't understand how adult humans relate to each other and therefore I don't very clear on that boundary. You don't be around children, you know, as my but... the rest is a lot different, I think.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Lee:*

Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is not I've talked to them about reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know, so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being gay and you not being a Buddhist and...

*Researcher:*

You may intensify in regards to karma, but I also want to find out where you're living life, in your community. I can see that you're very suburban but how is the feelings there in terms of the area that you're in?

*Michael:*

I mean, for me there's no danger for being gay, relatively for Johannesburg, you know. You don't hear of it every day in Johannesburg. There's quite a lot of homo's running around. So I don't think that we're necessarily feeling out in any of that way. And I do feel that in South Africa broadly there is an idea that like, even if maybe people are conservative or religious or something and might be a little homophobic in different ways. There is a study that you're not supposed to be and therefore people would never express that in public.

And so, the kinds of things that like in America it was kind of common I mean it wasn't that unusual for people to drive past a car and "hey faggits, and stuff like that". I mean that doesn't happen here, partly because people are always in cars so you don't walk that much. On the other hand, I do like find I do a lot of work in CBD and one of my... I just want to protect AI there, you know, because I don't know where everyone is coming from so one of the guys that's a jerk and I know this jerk is barely homophobic and so I just don't engage with him about family very much, you know.

*Researcher:*

Okay.

*Michael:*

As soon as he has children, he'll ask me about my wife and my children. Because I really don't want to be ordered, you know.

*Researcher:*

And for Lee?

*Michael:*

We did come out of the school, though, when we go to the school every time.

*Researcher:*

And park? Do you go to park?

*Michael:*

Yeah, I mean whatever. People don't even look. I just thought that they would look more.

*Researcher:*

Okay. We can move both back and just wanted to get your opinion. Now, the important thing is about a pro-active family identity. Okay. Lee, I was asking Michael regarding society, which is your neighbourhood, when you go to park, how has that been for you? Have you had any conversation from anyone saying "oh, you're from a different family" or something like that?

*Lee:*

For me I never have.

*Researcher:*

So, it's the same. Nothing much of that. Okay. Now we're coming to the last part, which is family identity. Now this is about how you guys as a family create a pro-active identity also for the boys. What are some of the things you do in terms of you have rituals, you have specific things that you do as a family. Do you go to movies together? What are some of the things you do as a family which are sort of special and... *ja*, what do you do as a family?

*Michael:*

We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home. We both like movies anyway so we'll probably do it more often than other people because we enjoy that. I don't know. What other things do we do? We go to the park relatively often.

*Lee:*

We're travelling.

*Michael:*

Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah.

*Lee:*

We travel a lot, *ja*.

*Michael:*

And we like to do, say we go to the market and just check it out and stuff or go to the farm and see the cows and the pigs and the goats and eat at the farm stall, just do something, you know. Which honestly even there which is pretty raw, I mean like no one says anything or look or...

*Lee:*

For me I've seen it.

*Michael:*

Oh, did you?

*Lee:*

For me, I... how do I say? I know this is like people look up at us in a good way and in not a nice way, but for me I try to express my family in the public and then show my kids okay, this is how... we're a gay couple and how we interact in the public like normal, like other families, friends, men or women so I try to show them but for other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to... it's like I know how they look at us but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the way they're looking at us.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But that's the worst thing that could ever happen.

*Lee:*

I saw, I saw the look on...

*Michael:*

I am oblivious, Lee is more aware.

*Lee:*

I am more aware of everything around me, but not to, what can I say, not to attach or conduct or for men. Just let them be and also, we can be the way that we are.

*Michael:*

I took them to the pride, at Wonderers last year, and we did march a little away and we did which, we had like, there were three or four gay families together that we were kind of friends with and stuff and there were like five little protestors with their cross and like and it was hard to explain like "why are they shouting at us"?

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

It's like... well, some people think we shouldn't be a family and this is the way they treat us to express that and it's important to know that some people think we shouldn't be a family and to be able to stand up to that and say that "whatever, we don't really care what you think".

*Researcher:*

And your boys? How do they deal with your family identity problems?

*Lee:*

Hmmm, do we have any chance to have a girlfriend? Because they have like... questions. They have questions in their minds.

*Michael:*

We come at a point where people are kissing in a movie or something and it's like... so then like if we're kissing each other it's like a coffee pot, you know, but that's just a general kind of like...

*Researcher:*

People doesn't say it's different from other type of families?

*Lee:*

No, I think do they have an effect to show how we love each other, how we take care of each other and I don't explain much to Will but I can see that he...

*Michael:*

He's very observant.

*Lee:*

He observes, yeah and he accepts who we are and the way he treats us back is the same way as we treat them back.

*Researcher:*

And, one thing that is also important is what have you learn about being a family to this boys for you guys?

*Michael:*

I think one thing is the decision to be a family. That is a choice that we make to stay together and that we made that decision and we choose to honour that decision and which we're now gonna get some clinical with each other but when it's hard, and when we argue and... those things happen. You know you made a decision and I think we're both confident to respect that decision, you know. And I think it's also valuable that it's a choice and you respect the other person's choice and deals with that you made that choice.

*Researcher:*

And you, Lee?

*Lee:*

For me you know, I'm sure it's just like every family, every life. One day you are, you know, really committed, you know, hundred percent, that you love each other and some days, you know, it like falls apart, we argue, you know, we fight, we're shouting, or even, you know, my kids say "you're not my dad" and "I don't love you", you know, yeah, I'm a human, I felt down, I felt disappointment but somehow, it overcomes, we care, you know, we're family. I became a dad. I learn not to, what can I say, like hold on the moment that I feel so happy so I try to... I know, you know, that's why we became family because of we love each other. I don't forget about it. I try to... like, you know, but to remind myself "no, they're kids" and Michael, you know, he knows my feelings are steady so then... yeah...

*Researcher:*

Okay, what advice, like I've mentioned this is going to other parents? What advice do you have for other gay parents?

*Michael:*

I always say like if you, we have friends we are now in our forties so a lot of friends who are in their forties but I think if it's something you want to do, you should just do it and not wait for the perfect moment where the stars are all alive and everything is bright and basically if you have a job or you have enough money to be able to do it, and you have a house, as long as it's a house with a roof and stuff, I mean, like go for it because if it's something you really want to do, there is a point in life where you can't do it before you can't do it anymore. You reach a point where that door is closed. Even if it's not a biological thing like for women to reproduce itself, but like... I mean, to be fifty and start a family, it's like, you're gonna be tired. I mean I was thirty when Will came home and I was tired at thirty, you know, and often enough we just heard that it can seem hard or it can seem too much, because ultimately, I think people's trying to predict everything single thing that will happen along the way. You kind of rationalise every decision like you don't know what child you're gonna end up with, you don't know what that child's personality is gonna be like and a lot of it is going to you as the parent to figure out how you're going to engage with this little human being and it's like... being really stupid like any other human being. You also have to make some compromises and change the things that you do to suit them. I mean, yeah.

And that doesn't mean that you haven't got rules or anything like that but it's like I personally would never go to a soccer match in my entire life and not care about it in any way, but I have been to a lot of soccer matches now and you really accommodate and not just like the easy things like that but for the bigger things. You don't know if your child is gonna be very independent or very aggressive or... you really don't know until it comes. Let them be. Learn how to deal with that and you'll never know, and you can't predict everything that's gonna come, so why bother, you know. If it's something you really want to do then you should.

*Lee:*

Yeah, I agree with Michael. I'm sure there are a lot of parents that put a lot of expectations to the kids, like this is the way they should do... they should go to school, they should study, you know, and then of course like every day is not perfect. Some days, you know, you fail, so it's learn to be like a day to day... manage day to day. I think its better, you know.

*Michael:*

Yeah, and maybe not overanalyse every single thing that comes along. We have a friend who's a single mom, a bi-sexual mom, white mom, black child, adopted and sometimes she has so much pressure to make everything right, she always makes sure everything right to make sure nothing is wrong and, you know, does her son connect with his roots, you know, does he... is he feeling left out because his friends treat him differently, because I'm white, you know, because his this, or because his that... And it's like, *ja*, you know they do, but, like us, they do, but so what, like, honestly you love each other, you take care of each other, your son is doing well and he is happy and well-adjusted.

So, people will always, you know, you can't trust too much about it and part of him growing up is learning so long as you're not physically injured or being truly emotionally like ravage and at some point the kids will stop because his actually a very cool little boy who, he knows better than to care too much about what other people think about, you know.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

But it's easy to kind of look at every little struggle along the way and extract too much because of these other huge issues we have in life. Like Lee was saying sometimes you have a bad day, sometimes you wake up at the wrong side of the bed or you didn't eat right or you are feeling a little bit funny or you're just cranky.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

Those things are okay, too. It's okay for children to see that we are human with emotions and that we all learn to deal with it, because that's how they're gonna learn, too, is for watching out.

*Researcher:*

Okay, and lastly, we spoke about confidentiality, how would you guys want this to be distributed? Do you want it to be known? Your names, your family, what is your need in terms of me going forward with the research? What are you comfortable with, what are you not comfortable with?

*Michael:*

I'm fine, *ja*. Yeah, I mean, don't throw our phone number and address out there in the world, but it's like, you know, otherwise it's okay.

*Lee:*

Yeah.

*Researcher:*



Okay, so the last that is what you want to share with me, would you be comfortable in doing a drawing of your family to just show me how you see your family, or...?

*Michael:*

You want us to draw or do you want our children to draw?

*Researcher:*

All of you guys. Just something to show your portrait, and also if you want to share also using your albums in terms of making a collage or some of the places you've been together for me to have a picture, and then to take it forward to show what's some of the things you do with the family. So anything from a drawing as a family. It has to be a family drawing and also like a collage.

*Michael:*

We have a lot of pictures.

*Researcher:*

Something with arty. Not one picture. With different pictures not just one. Like a portrait, a family portrait with different activities you've done together or anything that will just show...

*Michael:*

We are a family.

*Researcher.*

*Ja.*

*Michael:*

We can probably slice up. You want a drawing?

*Lee:*

Drawing?

*Michael:*

I can draw while you wait for your lift to come fetch you.

*Lee:*

No, we have two.

*Michael:*

We have two my goddaughter made for us. Are they coming to fetch you or do you need a...

*Michael:*

Ah, shame, and he didn't want to sit here for two hours while we...

*Researcher:*

So...

*Michael:*

Yeah, go for it. Five little heads, four little heads.

*Researcher:*

Oh, this is beautiful. Was that done by you?

*Lee:*

No, by his goddaughter.

*Michael:*

By my goddaughter.

*Researcher:*

Wow. Can I take a picture of this?

*Michael:*

Yeah. Juno's got a Superman cape, Will's got a soccer ball, what do you want, Papa? Do you want a cell phone or a camera?

*Lee:*

Camera, yeah.

*Michael:*

It looks like a handbag. That's a camera.

*Lee:*

I like that massive woman. A book?

*Michael:*

There's my book. I don't know why it's so little, there's so much space, I don't know. You want me to put an aeroplane, too?

*Lee:*

Yeah.

*Michael:*

Some stuff means something, actually.

*Lee:*

As I wanted my fortune teller to predict that I would be like a flight attendant but I didn't get the job.

*Michael:*

But you still fly.

*Lee:*

I still fly very often.

*Michael:*

My brother and his wife don't travel that much as we do.

*Researcher:*

Okay. *Michael:*

And then sometimes they come like, how do you manage to do that? It's like, we don't do anything. You know if they have really good football tickets and they like basketball and sport and stuff. That's what they spend their money on. They spend it on sports and doing things like that. We don't do any of that so there's a lot of, you know, time and money to do something else. Thank goodness we have time and money for that.

You need both, Researcher, to make sure that when you get your job you have both time and money involved for yourself, you know like...

*Lee:*

If you have boys and time and money so you don't just attach to one thing.

*Researcher:*

Yes.

*Michael:*

Even though it takes like ten years before you have any of those. Those first ten years are hard.

*Researcher:*

There is nothing like that in South Africa, it's never been done. I'm going to be the first to publish this, so it's going to be big. It's going to be big, especially also within the communities, it's going to be big.

But, like I say, if you have anything to add, please e-mail me. I will contact you if maybe I missed something which I need for my research so I will also contact you.

*Researcher:*

I just wanna thank you very much for allowing your room and your space and your lives to share them, all the detailed part of your life and it's just...

*Michael:*

For all of all your time...

*Researcher:*

I just... *ja*. Thank you so much and I've enjoyed this interview and it's going It's important for us because we also are professionals and Psychologists and there is a mass training on the communities. I'll be having a child who will be assisting and I'm looking for some emotional and I'll be asking to draw a picture of your mom and dad. So also to simplify professionals whose working with kids. So this is really going out to teach professional teachers or anybody who's having contact with children. We know they have to be sensitive in the information they come across.

*Michael:*

Can you think this thing is doing to the schools and professionals and stuff is mothering that tends to subconsciously come through a lot? And have you seen kids that they're missing something because I've found that the kids don't have fathers and stuff and you feel the same way about it, you know. *Ja*, so it's... *Ja*, so it's kind of the end of mother and children, opposed to parents and children and I think quite a lot of very narrow experience in our immediate suburbs that is not necessarily true. I think its larger than three or four suburbs and it's this exclusion of dads which feels that the mothers are very defensive about their children, you know, in a way that is strange. Yeah, so because they give their differences.

*Researcher:*

Yes. Thank you again. I'll be in contact.

## Coding of data

Line	Theme
<p>1. Researcher: We follow ethics when we do research, for example respect and dignity,</p> <p>2. respecting you guys in terms of your opinion, your culture. So, I have an obligation to</p> <p>3. respect you and also to treat you with dignity and not to discriminate. Confidentiality:</p> <p>4. due to the sensitivity of this topic, I have to respect your confidence or your privacy</p> <p>5. in terms of if you don't want your names to be revealed, we can use student names or</p> <p>6. if there's specific information which you don't want other people to know it can be held</p> <p>7. back, so anything that you're not comfortable in, you can also inform me in terms of.</p> <p>8. that and the information will be used by me and my supervisor. If you can see on the</p> <p>9. front page, her name is there. So, if you don't feel comfortable, because it will be a</p> <p>10. dissertation which will be used by our academy, and if it has your names people will</p> <p>11. know that it's you guys, so if you are not comfortable with that, we can use student</p> <p>12. names so that it doesn't have any effect in terms of if you're thinking about whether you want</p> <p>13. to keep this private. So, anything that you guys are comfortable with; and also privacy.</p> <p>14. Privacy also causes confidentiality in terms of you want to be anonymous, that's okay</p> <p>15. and your privacy will be protected and that is voluntary participation. And if, maybe, at</p> <p>16. a later stage you want to withdraw from the research, you phone me and "you know</p> <p>17. what, this is not for us", you can be able to withdraw from the research. And also</p> <p>18. informed consent which you were signing now to say that you are adhering to the</p> <p>19. purposes and procedures and you are going to be concerned and also that you are</p> <p>20. participating in this study and also your safety and participation. I don't want any</p> <p>21. danger or harm to be on to you guys.</p> <p>22. Michael: Okay.</p> <p>23. Researcher: So that's what the consent form is also for. So we can tick along the blocks</p> <p>24. if there was anything discard in there and you can sign for me there, the whole form,</p> <p>25. and I will sign here.</p> <p>26. Michael: Okay.</p> <p>27. Researcher: Thank you.</p> <p>28. <b>Researcher:</b> Okay. I'm just worried about the sound recording outside, so I'm not sure if you</p> <p>29. guys are comfortable we can do it in the house?</p> <p>30. Michael: <i>Ja</i>, sure.</p> <p>31. Researcher: Okay, so we are going to start. This is just questions to guide you to see</p>	

<p>32. what I will be asking. It means, it can follow any structure, but it's just basically to give</p> <p>33. you an idea of some of the questions that needs answers for the research.</p> <p>34. Researcher: So, okay we are going to start with becoming parents. So, this is the topic</p> <p>35. regarding your journey as parents in terms of how you came upon wanting to be</p> <p>36. parents. So, can you tell me more about your journey in becoming parents? Anyone</p> <p>37. can start.</p> <p>38. Lee: I will let you start because you are the one who started with this journey.</p> <p>39. Michael: I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd came back from working</p> <p>40. in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist and I was there with my ex; and</p> <p>41. when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of</p> <p>42. like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of life and feeling a little</p> <p>43. bit unsettled.</p> <p>44. I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids and I would like to adopt, and</p> <p>45. after the breakup I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found</p> <p>46. someone, and then decided to adopt together. It was like, well... that was when I was</p> <p>47. 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone</p> <p>48. again and you take a few years to know each other, and then make sure by the time</p> <p>49. you do it you are getting to be older by then", you know; so I decided to start the</p> <p>50. adoption process on my own, which at that time in America it was a little bit challenging,</p> <p>51. especially if you were known to be gay at that time.</p> <p>52. It depended on your jurisdiction, so I was living in Washington DC which you know is</p> <p>53. a very tiny jurisdiction with as a separate entity from the state that surrounds</p> <p>54. it. It has a limited self-government and was very progressive, and I tried to implement</p> <p>55. a lot of ... I tried to implement a gay marriage ordinate and tried to do a lot of things,</p> <p>56. but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the congress has to</p> <p>57. approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the congress and live</p> <p>58. in a district they still tell us what to do.</p> <p>59. So, they definitely tried to do a lot but they were unable you implement all the laws</p> <p>60. because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the</p> <p>61. marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck which</p> <p>62. means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our</p> <p>63. jurisdiction over DC, but in Virginia gay marriage was illegal and adoption was legal, a</p> <p>64. marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a problem in terms of finding</p> <p>65. adoption agencies to work with.</p>	<p>Decision process to become a parent</p> <p>Aspiration and desire to become a parent</p> <p>Decision to become a parent</p> <p>Pathway to parenthood challenges</p> <p>Challenges with policies on adoption</p> <p>Pathway to parenthood challenges</p>
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<p>66. There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state; and at</p> <p>67. the time I was feeling like my karma was developing a little bit, because I had gone to</p> <p>68. Zimbabwe and then my career progressed and then Zimbabwe kind of fell apart. Well,</p> <p>69. it kind of fell apart; it actually did fell apart, so at the time was important for me to adopt</p> <p>70. from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you</p> <p>71. know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you</p> <p>72. are gay or straight.</p> <p>73. So, that time the only country that would allow a single man to do an international</p> <p>74. adoption was Guatemala. I went to workshops in Washington at the Men's Health</p> <p>75. Clinic. They ran kind of <i>so you are going to be a parent</i> sort of workshops which is to</p> <p>76. say you wanna be a dad. There was one for men and one for women because women</p> <p>77. has more choices in that department than men do. So that's why I adopted from this</p> <p>78. orphanage in Guatemala were eventually I found Will. I didn't really have a good</p> <p>79. experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I</p> <p>80. started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Bangkok.</p> <p>81. So, I started the paperwork, most of it done and then I ended up in Bangkok. I finished</p> <p>82. the paperwork while I was there and met Lee online. We had like one date. I didn't talk</p> <p>83. about that then because I was still working on it; you know, it was our first date and in</p> <p>84. between our first and second date the orphanage called and said "hey, we have</p> <p>85. matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details and if</p> <p>86. you agree to the match then we will proceed".</p> <p>87. So, on our second date Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like</p> <p>88. "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... [Laughter] So, yeah, but it</p> <p>89. wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting</p> <p>90. him to co-parent or anything, and I had pretty much decided that I wouldn't be dating</p> <p>91. very seriously once the adoption was done; but I also heard that the adoption is going</p> <p>92. to take two years, that is what they told me.</p> <p>93. To be exact it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S.</p> <p>94. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and</p> <p>95. spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months</p> <p>96. old; not quite three months old; and they were like okay, you need to go back and be</p> <p>97. patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent</p> <p>98. like a week there.</p> <p>99. And then when I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage,</p>	<p>Professionals involved in the adoption process</p> <p>Challenges with associated adoption</p> <p>Type of adoption chosen</p> <p>Adoption process</p> <p>Adoption process</p> <p>Process of becoming a parent.</p> <p>Adoption process</p>
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134. they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane.

135. They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was

136. like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back. So in the end they

137. agreed we take a plane to Singapore. So we flew to Singapore, which was like an

138. hour and a half away, I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport out, turned

139. around, right back into the queue, stamped back out of Singapore, got back onto the

140. same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up and then it was fine,

141. they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport

142. with the resident fees and all that. But while that was going on, Lee and I were still

143. just kind of been dating because that was quite quick, so we were matched up. I

144. would say we were matched up the first week of May and he was home with me by

145. the end of August. So, it was really unusually fast and ... yeah; so basically we dated

146. for a couple of years like that.

147. Lee: *Ja*. We do. We lived together.

148. Michael: But I was on a four-year contract so when it kind of gotten to the end of my

149. contract, we were like well, we were still dating so we sort of decided what to do

150. because I won't be staying in Bangkok when my contract is over and I was sort of

151. feeling ready for going back to America close to my family; and so Lee was feeling

152. fed up with his job basically at that time and ready to try something new.

153. So, we went back to America. It looked really hard like starting a business or finding

154. jobs. We went on interviews, we worked in restaurants, we did all kinds of things but

155. they said they wouldn't give Lee a visa, they didn't have a gay marriage in 2008, so

156. So I coincidentally had a meeting with my human resources department and they

157. were like well, what do you want to do when the contract is over? And I was like

158. frankly there is not many places where we can all go in the world as a family.

159. When I had left Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe deported me because being a journalist and

160. all that, so I think. I came in South Africa, in and out of South Africa for about three

161. years, four months. I was in Johannesburg and I enjoyed and they would take us and

162. so that would be my first choice because it would be, a good place to raise the kids

163. and we go together, and all that stuff; but the job in Johannesburg had just been filled

164. like it really only recently got filled, there wouldn't come up in three or more years

165. because everyone is on a four-year cycle.

166. I think coincidentally, right at the same time that guy ended up getting a promotion to

167. go to the main office in Paris. So, this job came up and they rang up and they were

Financial  
considerations

<p><b>168.</b> like <i>hey, why don't you come to South Africa?</i> So, I think Lee may never have thought</p> <p><b>169.</b> about South Africa for five minutes, you know, because ...</p> <p><b>170.</b> Lee: <i>Ja.</i> Never heard of it. [Laughter]</p> <p><b>171.</b> Michael: ... and we didn't have time to come visit or anything because it was all quite</p> <p><b>172.</b> rushed, but, yeah, then we were coming here. So, we got here; Will was three and a</p> <p><b>173.</b> half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know it was hard moving</p> <p><b>174.</b> and so, it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst.</p> <p><b>175.</b> Lee tried some different things and then finally figured out the massage business</p> <p><b>176.</b> would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and</p> <p><b>177.</b> adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will.</p> <p><b>178.</b> Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea but he was going to</p> <p><b>179.</b> support it and are going to go along with it. So, we did an application here which was</p> <p><b>180.</b> also sort of traumatic because we did an application at Jo'burg Child Welfare but they</p> <p><b>181.</b> lost it and then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the</p> <p><b>182.</b> government introduced the new Child Welfare Law; and rather than grandfathering</p> <p><b>183.</b> and afraid she doesn't know anything. I think grandfathering at the end of the</p> <p><b>184.</b> applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they</p> <p><b>185.</b> just stopped processing adoptions, from the moment the Bill was introduced to</p> <p><b>186.</b> Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year almost,</p> <p><b>187.</b> which just made everything on hold and so we were like well, honestly, you know, to</p> <p><b>188.</b> wait, you know, because at that time you don't know it is going to be one year ...</p> <p><b>189.</b> What if it's gonna be many years before they finalise the law? Which is a horrible</p> <p><b>190.</b> thing for South African orphans actually to wait indefinitely, you know a year in a</p> <p><b>191.</b> child's life is a very long time. So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not</p> <p><b>192.</b> meant to be, it's whatever we're happy with the next family that's no good but then</p> <p><b>193.</b> one night a Thai woman called up and "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm</p> <p><b>194.</b> pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how</p> <p><b>195.</b> we end up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's... but at least it's</p> <p><b>196.</b> worth it in the end. So Juno was born here but he's half Thai. He's born in South</p> <p><b>197.</b> Africa and it was sort of a different process but it was very easy actually. I think it's</p> <p><b>198.</b> about adoption and it's sort of like, it's just paperwork that you have to do and I think</p> <p><b>199.</b> or some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know</p> <p><b>200.</b> it's very tense but it's very intimidating into your life and to answer a lot of questions</p> <p><b>201.</b> and be having a home study but I mean, you know, I think anything else I personally</p>	<p>Settling in their careers</p> <p>Decision to become parent again</p> <p>Experiences with adoption second time around</p> <p>Experiences with adoption second time around</p> <p>Adoption process</p> <p>Experiences with adoption second time around</p>
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<p><b>202.</b> have been through once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect and</p> <p><b>203.</b> then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process.</p> <p><b>204.</b> Researcher How long does that take?</p> <p><b>205.</b> Michael: Well, probably a year actually but that's also because you like, by the time</p> <p><b>206.</b> you're done... there's only a few months actually between of actually doing things</p> <p><b>207.</b> and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court,</p> <p><b>208.</b> because the papers' going to the court and you just wait for your hearing and in the</p> <p><b>209.</b> end we sort of pushed them after a while as we weren't sure if Juno's gonna go or is</p> <p><b>210.</b> he gonna stay, and can he just see her and there were these questions and if she</p> <p><b>211.</b> actually went back to Thailand and we couldn't find her again or anything, you know,</p> <p><b>212.</b> then it would be a problem. But it was all done without too much drama.</p> <p><b>213.</b> And then our housekeeper had a... my housekeeper from Zimbabwe came down</p> <p><b>214.</b> when we moved here because she was, you know, starving in Zimbabwe at that time.</p> <p><b>215.</b> She came down, she ended up getting pregnant shortly after that, so her son was</p> <p><b>216.</b> also coming and Lee's business was growing so we moved up here about two years</p> <p><b>217.</b> ago, two and a half years ago. Yeah, so that's how it all happened.</p> <p><b>218.</b> Researcher Okay. Anything you want to add on that, Lee</p> <p><b>219.</b> Lee: No, I think that was a good one. [laughter]</p> <p><b>220.</b> Michael: I think for Lee it was very different because he was presented with it a choice that was already done.</p> <p><b>221.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>222.</b> Michael: And if he hadn't been thinking about that already I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own.</p> <p><b>223.</b> Lee: No, never thought, <i>ja</i>.</p> <p><b>224.</b> Michael: Took this long getting to know your process with Will.</p> <p><b>225.</b> Lee: <i>Ja</i>, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you</p> <p><b>226.</b> know, if Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent</p> <p><b>227.</b> but I'm there and I'm for. So I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know, to</p> <p><b>228.</b> try and then me and Will, we got bonded at the end so that's how I see okay, <i>ja</i>, I</p> <p><b>229.</b> would like to try and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, <i>ja</i>.</p> <p><b>230.</b> Researcher: Okay, so I can see also the motive was adoption and what made you decide for adoption? Was it because it's easy or one or other method for adoption?</p> <p><b>231.</b> Michael: For me I'm comfortable with surrogacy if you have another choice and I think</p> <p><b>232.</b> especially if you spend time and in this region where there are so many orphans</p> <p><b>233.</b> especially at that time before people came into retrovirals, you know, and I think it's</p> <p><b>234.</b> not that you would go everywhere you would go, you know. I spent a lot of time doing</p>	<p>Experiences with adoption second time around</p> <p>Process to become a parent</p> <p>Process to become a parent</p>
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<p>235. farm stories at that time, land perform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go</p> <p>236. to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty</p> <p>237. or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about all these kids you meet</p> <p>238. each one personally and to choose, to leave one of them behind. Even if there's sort</p> <p>239. of a community they wouldn't really be into me because the farms are being resettled,</p> <p>240. so all the workers had to leave too so they were also being approved. For me it was</p> <p>241. kind of hard and my brother used to surrogate. My brother used a surrogate with</p> <p>242. their second child so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it. But if</p> <p>243. you don't have to do that, it's actually usually expensive, very complicated and it's</p> <p>244. surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother, because you know</p> <p>245. if there's multiple birth a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes</p> <p>246. you uncomfortable if you think of having... I think another option is you sort of creating</p> <p>247. these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be</p> <p>248. aborted or... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by... you know, it's not bad but I</p> <p>249. also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation</p> <p>250. with another person. Not that a relationship with another person is complex, but like...</p> <p>251. so I think having a child with a surrogate mother it can be challenging in different</p> <p>252. ways and for the cause of the adoption is maybe at that time about one fifth the cost</p> <p>253. of doing surrogacy assuming that the surrogate mother had no health problems along</p> <p>254. the way and that the pregnancy proceeded perfectly smoothly.</p> <p>255. So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive I think twenty thousand dollars for his</p> <p>256. adoption which I think is a medium price and at that time the government would</p> <p>257. reimbursed you about half the cost on your taxes, that's how the U.S. government</p> <p>258. works, so it's not outrageous. Less than buying a new car, right?</p> <p>259. Researcher Yes.</p> <p>260. Michael: But to do a surrogate starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand</p> <p>261. dollars and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send</p> <p>262. a child to university and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these</p> <p>263. things. So to me it's just a different thing. I also think that if you're a woman it can be</p> <p>264. different in depending on your personal background. People make different choices,</p> <p>265. so I know people as adults that were adopted themselves and it was never important</p> <p>266. to them to have a biological connection and they went through the surrogacy process</p> <p>267. or they just... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason but for me I</p> <p>268. didn't really see the point and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is gonna</p>	<p>Financial implication for surrogacy</p> <p>Reason for pathway</p> <p>Factors taken into consideration for adoption</p>
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<p><b>269.</b> run out or something, you know. It's not the end of the world.</p> <p><b>270.</b> Researcher Alright, we are going to take just a few minutes on challenges.</p> <p><b>271.</b> Michael: That's fine, I see you have time for the dog.</p> <p><b>272.</b> Researcher: Alright, and you mentioned some time in years for adoption but how</p> <p><b>273.</b> were you feeling about this process? Were you experiencing challenges in getting</p> <p><b>274.</b> the adoption through... what was some of your emotional experiences?</p> <p><b>275.</b> Michael: It's quite different the two of them, I think, because with Will was left at an</p> <p><b>276.</b> orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the</p> <p><b>277.</b> DNA-testing and she did home studies and you know all those things so he wasn't</p> <p><b>278.</b> completely abandoned but Will was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I don't make</p> <p><b>279.</b> any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year but we</p> <p><b>280.</b> couldn't find her again. It was just very different because it's very much that you are</p> <p><b>281.</b> dealing with. Social workers and doctors and professional people, you know, there's</p> <p><b>282.</b> not that kind of emotional difficulty with a woman whose making a very difficult choice.</p> <p><b>283.</b> Whereas with Juno's adoption, because she called us and we know her and we see</p> <p><b>284.</b> her still and have a different kind of arrangement so he has a monthly playdate with</p> <p><b>285.</b> his birth mom and we had to experience all of her emotional difficulties and she was</p> <p><b>286.</b> not in a great place. She was basically a sex trafficker here, that's how she got here</p> <p><b>287.</b> so she didn't have any papers, she doesn't speak English, she was living in a brothel,</p> <p><b>288.</b> she had a drug problem, she has had all the horrible things happen which you imagine</p> <p><b>289.</b> happen when you're a sex trafficker .</p> <p><b>290.</b> Before that we both had endless sympathy but it's also very difficult to stay with</p> <p><b>291.</b> someone who is coming out of a very dark place and who has a lot of emotions that</p> <p><b>292.</b> she feels like we are the people to share them with because Lee speaks her</p> <p><b>293.</b> language, so she'd reach out to him in particular, she didn't really have a lot of other</p> <p><b>294.</b> people in her life who she trusted I think, so she would tell us more detail than I</p> <p><b>295.</b> personally get to know about her troubles, you know, and she would change her mind</p> <p><b>296.</b> along the way and that's also very difficult because it's a long way until it's finished</p> <p><b>297.</b> finished, you know.</p> <p><b>298.</b> Researcher: And then you're still in contact with her?</p> <p><b>299.</b> Lee: Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month.</p> <p><b>300.</b> Researcher Okay. And does Juno know?</p> <p><b>301.</b> Lee: Yeah. He knows that she's his mom.</p> <p><b>302.</b> Researcher: Alright. So, a biological connection for these guys, is it something really important?</p>	<p>Adoption arrangement</p> <p>Adoption arrangement</p> <p>Adoption arrangement</p>
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<p><b>303.</b> Michael: Not for me.</p> <p><b>304.</b> Lee: Not for me.</p> <p><b>305.</b> Researcher: Okay. And also in terms of your role, in terms of being with the boys,</p> <p><b>306.</b> what type of roles do you feel you play in terms of being the parent? Is it different</p> <p><b>307.</b> from being... when it's a female who's the mother role? What sort of roles do you</p> <p><b>308.</b> think you play in their lives?</p> <p><b>309.</b> Michael: We have changed over time depending on our work situations because at</p> <p><b>310.</b> the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything but I needed to have fulltime</p> <p><b>311.</b> help because I was working and that can be a bit challenging because you also want</p> <p><b>312.</b> to bond with the kid but you do need full time day care because that's what working</p> <p><b>313.</b> parents need and I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom</p> <p><b>314.</b> and be like "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a</p> <p><b>315.</b> choice so not only do you need full time day care, you need full time day care plus a</p> <p><b>316.</b> back-up system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that</p> <p><b>317.</b> other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding.</p> <p><b>318.</b> It can be nervous. You know it's hard to feel like... you know, basically the nanny</p> <p><b>319.</b> would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of</p> <p><b>320.</b> things but to be honest those things seem important at the moment but a few years</p> <p><b>321.</b> later it's like... At the time it's a really big deal but then you realise you have a more</p> <p><b>322.</b> complex relationship later.</p> <p><b>323.</b> But then when we got to South Africa Lee wasn't... Lee was working but he was trying</p> <p><b>324.</b> to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come</p> <p><b>325.</b> here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He end</p> <p><b>326.</b> up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot and I was at work</p> <p><b>327.</b> a lot and I work for 24 hour news so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend and</p> <p><b>328.</b> things like that and then when my contract finished and we decided to stay, it switched</p> <p><b>329.</b> because I was home and then my job here gave me full parental leave so I had</p> <p><b>330.</b> sixteen weeks of paid leave so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby and</p> <p><b>331.</b> Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business.</p> <p><b>332.</b> Lee: Yeah, I already started my business. Like Michael decided to quit the job,</p> <p><b>333.</b> because of... otherwise we had to move to another country, so I pushed all my time</p> <p><b>334.</b> and energy into my new business and that's how we carried on living and not move.</p> <p><b>335.</b> So, it was a transition between, you know, business and like full time parents so I was</p>	<p>No desire for a biological connection</p> <p>Adjustment to parenthood</p> <p>Adjustment to parenthood</p>
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<p><b>370.</b> own but I think Michael was able to do it so then I decided to be helping him and I can</p> <p><b>371.</b> contribute my physical, my ability in terms of you know to be with Will while Michael</p> <p><b>372.</b> was working because later on he offered to... and asking to move in with them That's</p> <p><b>373.</b> how I thought I think I could, you know jump into the board and then raising Will</p> <p><b>374.</b> together with Michael. Even though at the time I didn't have a job, because I had to</p> <p><b>375.</b> quit a job in Thailand.</p> <p><b>376.</b> Researcher Okay.</p> <p><b>377.</b> Lee: So that's why I felt I could help Michael to raise Will together.</p> <p><b>378.</b> Researcher: And what would come of your personal factors, like for example did you</p> <p><b>379.</b> feel ready to be a parent? Did you feel you had the willing, the strength, you know,</p> <p><b>380.</b> some of the factors, like the maturity to have a child, like at that time like trying to</p> <p><b>381.</b> think of some of those things also?</p> <p><b>382.</b> Lee: No, because for me I had a chance to see Will how he's growing up, because</p> <p><b>383.</b> he came home on four months and at the time in two years I didn't decide to be a</p> <p><b>384.</b> parent while he is there so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I've</p> <p><b>385.</b> seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night.</p> <p><b>386.</b> Even though I didn't live with them, so I felt for him because I bonded with him very,</p> <p><b>387.</b> very nicely and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent</p> <p><b>388.</b> even though from the bottom of my heart I felt loving him, both of them.</p> <p><b>389.</b> Researcher Okay, I'm not sure if we should wait for him, but for you: what were some</p> <p><b>390.</b> of the challenges you encountered with raising children or what was some of the</p> <p><b>391.</b> challenges in obtaining which you encountered?</p> <p><b>392.</b> Lee: To be honest, I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially for Will.</p> <p><b>393.</b> I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves and I would cry, I have to call my mom,</p> <p><b>394.</b> you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy and</p> <p><b>395.</b> he's just like, you know, and I took it very personal, I thought like "oh, I didn't raise</p> <p><b>396.</b> my child well at that point that's why they would behave like this" but my mom called</p> <p><b>397.</b> me and said "listen, you did the fine thing". She explained it to me like, you know,</p> <p><b>398.</b> when I was young like... I was also like screaming and shouting to my parents so</p> <p><b>399.</b> that's why I thought "oh, so this is normal to be three years old, two years old to not</p> <p><b>400.</b> listening to parents. So that's how I told myself and just to let them be and also like,</p> <p><b>401.</b> you know, trying to discipline them in the way it should be.</p> <p><b>402.</b> Researcher: Yeah, okay. And how do you think it was for Michael? How do you think</p> <p><b>403.</b> the experience was for Michael? The challenges that he also went through you</p>	<p>Process to become a parent</p> <p>Being a parent while in the relationship</p> <p>Social support</p>
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<p>438. Lee: I feel like... because I look at my father and to be honest I have a memory about  439. my father had disappeared and somehow it came back. It came back and I remember  440. that my dad... he always be there for me and whatever I needed he always done,  441. you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like  442. to give the best and love to both of them.</p> <p>443. Researcher Okay. Alright. And, the process of becoming a father: was it easy? Slow?  444. How was it for you?</p>	<p>What  parenthood  means</p>
<p>445. Lee: It was difficult. It was difficult for me. Like I say, I... from my family, we were  446. more like relaxed, I try to comfort. I used to do a lot for them like pick up their clothes  447. and try to really discipline them but somehow I've seen that that was wrong so I  448. started to show them how to do, instead of doing it for them and then that worked.</p> <p>449. Researcher So I was talking to Lee regarding some of the challenges in being a father  450. and he mentioned me so I want to also know some of the challenges.</p> <p>451. Lee: I think with both of them it was a challenge for me.</p> <p>452. Michael: Yeah, I mean also I guess we come from different backgrounds so...</p> <p>453. Researcher Which is nice, eh?</p>	<p>Discipline</p>
<p>454. Michael: ...so different expectations and just different experiences the way that you  455. rep yourself, so... <i>Ja</i>, I mean the discipline thing is hard because it's got a part to  456. know where the line is sometimes, you know. You think you know but then afterwards  457. there's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline  458. is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent, you know. So  459. they need a chance to fail and they have to take the consequence for that. So I'm  460. pretty happy to give like for Will that we could have a lot of back to school. It was hard  461. to get back into the routine. He struggled a little bit, he forgot a lot of things you know,  462. he doesn't know what his done, things got lost, it wasn't great coming back and all  463. that stuff but, so... that was part of the conversation yesterday. It's like you have a lot  464. of freedom to manage your own time and clearly it's not that well because clearly you  465. can do better than that, I mean if I intervene you have to follow my routine, which  466. means you're giving me time and salary to do your maths homework, you know. You  467. don't get your screen time, you don't get to do other things, stuff like that. That's hard  468. but it's also hard like... kind of realising that they are their own little people and have  469. their own internal life that we're actually not part of at that time and that's truly difficult  470. because I get on my mind as an adult what I remember being five, six, seven, eight  471. that clearly. I still remember things that happened and I still remember the stories that</p>	<p>Discipline</p>

472. my parents tell, but my home memories, about myself and how I'm feeling. At that  
473. young age they don't really remember.  
474. Researcher Yes.  
475. Michael: I remember being in high school and what that was like, so it's actually  
476. interesting to see on how much emotional challenges you have at this point and it's  
477. hard to know like it's very different, you know, like how to really shine, staying really  
478. calm because Will is very aggressive and very bold, you know. Will had some bullying  
479. problems at school and it was kind of hard to figure out because he didn't really talk  
480. about it, you know, so he went through this long process where he was in like very...  
481. carrying this very dark place emotionally. It just seemed like inappropriate for an  
482. eight-year-old. It was too dark, you know. But then once we realised what was  
483. happening at school then it was clear because the school was giving us support in  
484. terms of... you know it's... he was at a government school, which was a very good  
485. performing government school but even at this school the classes get quite big to be  
486. more thirty fiveish which for Second Grade or Third Grade is still a lot of kids. It just  
487. felt like the teachers didn't really... wasn't able to observe the dynamics within the  
488. kids very well or appreciate the need that maybe, you know, that if these kids were  
489. out at another adopted boy who was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and  
490. having an international family. Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two  
491. dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then it's hard to...  
492. Michael: ...it's always hard to know whether you're doing the right thing and at some  
493. degree learn what parenting is all about because you get some confidence, you know,  
494. search yourself. On the other hand, if you learn to do that in an environment that is  
495. supportive and where you're not being blocked up to try, it shouldn't be particularly  
496. threatening, you know. At least you learn to do things patiently. So we put the children  
497. in another school, which was a big thing, you know.  
498. Lee: For one year.  
499. Researcher: Okay. And now, how are they settling in the new school?  
500. Michael: This is his third year in this school. We changed him mid-year in Grade 3  
501. and now he's in Grade 5.  
502. Researcher: And the bullying?  
503. Lee: Yeah, I find it's still there but it's been less, you know, from previous school.  
504. Michael: Yeah, I mean, for example, last year there was a thing where the boys heard  
505. where's your mamma jokes.

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peers

506. Researcher Oh yes.

507. Michael: Your momma's so fat, she's ironing her pants on the driveway. You know,

508. like, this kind of thing? Which is horrible, but happens, and you know, whatever, I

509. guess, so they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at

510. least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right?

511. And I mean... and I am not sure if it's well to be good friends but, you know, I chatted

512. to the teacher about it once, he came to us right away that was a first. That he told

513. us it didn't happen and he was really upset. He was crying and all that stuff and...

514. you know. It kind of brought back memories of being beat up at the old school and I

515. chatted to the teacher and it's like "hey, these things happen. I'd just like to see you

516. tomorrow morning" and we can discuss what we can do and she was super-proactive

517. so by the time that I went to see her after school the next day, she's gotten the two

518. boys together and it's like... "hey, you know, so...it's happened and why did you say

519. that?" And it's like "well, you know, we were just like talking and then one kid says

520. something and then it's all these mama jokes and then I couldn't think of one so the

521. only thing I could think of I said that to Will but by now it's my friend and I didn't mean

522. to hurt him" and, you know, and he was really... that was kind of one of the most

523. positive outcomes you can expect and they are still friends. They go out and do stuff.

524. So I think that's good and the school is very... he's going to Crawford in Sandton now

525. and it's very, you know he's a president like the parental form says like parents /

526. guardians or parents he has no mother and father and they are very... I would say

527. that was really hard and then the little kids stuff is hard with the babies, toddlers and

528. all this parts. I mean that stuff is hard in a sort of physical endurance kind of way to

529. begin with. It's the not sleeping. You don't really... you have to work the next day and

530. you're exhausted and then you get home and It's like "oh there's poo on the floor", I

531. mean honestly. You're angry at me so you're gonna piss on me, like actually piss on

532. me, how you're going to respond, you know. But once they get a language and they

533. can do more things and all that gets better. I expected that the bullying and all that

534. stuff would start later. I thought it would happen more like when he got into high

535. school. And I also underestimated the racial issues. Frankly, which I think is partly

536. South Africa and I love South Africa and I thought its part of staying in South Africa

537. and I thought there would be different issues like when you're in America or Thailand

538. or whatever.

539. Lee: Thailand would be the same thing.

Challenges  
with school  
peers

<p>540. Michael: But it's quite... it started very early and it comes from parents, which is just</p> <p>541. jaw dropping I mean like the first week, you see what I mean: the child is three and a</p> <p>542. half years old he's not a dash for, you know, we're doing the parents thing and it's</p> <p>543. just like a parade of... you know like nice white production moms, you know and other</p> <p>544. nice whites, moms or dads or whatever so it's not like slam packed either as a thing,</p> <p>545. you know or whatever it is what it is. But this mom comes out she's like "oh, you're</p> <p>546. not from here". I'm like "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I</p> <p>547. go "This is mine".</p> <p>548. Michael: Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he"? and I say "He's a boy, he's an</p> <p>549. American too" and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know and then</p> <p>550. someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy.</p> <p>551. Michael: And so finally like the third person asking in a course of like fifteen minutes</p> <p>552. and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like,</p> <p>553. "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like "and what are they"? And I was like, well...</p> <p>554. Lee: We need a map and then we will show you Geography. Stuff that.</p> <p>555. Michael: And then it's like well actually Guatemala is a very small country in central</p> <p>556. America where there are 11 different indigenous groups plus the Spanish who</p> <p>557. conquered them and now everyone is sort of mixed up because it's a very small place</p> <p>558. and you know things happen over hundreds years and she's like "oh", and I guess</p> <p>559. like for me, I don't – well anyway if you are racial it is nothing to discuss your home</p> <p>560. amongst yourselves and you are like really that never, you don't throw in the house</p> <p>561. hing like "I'm white".</p> <p>562. Researcher Yes.</p> <p>563. Michael: Lee is Asian. You know, like you don't have that kind of conversations, you</p> <p>564. know, but then they would come home from school and I could see that he was – well</p> <p>565. perhaps in pre-schools you draw self-portraits and stuff...</p> <p>566. Researcher Yes.</p> <p>567. Michael: That's part of development in life how you draw yourself and you would</p> <p>568. experiment with the colours and some days you will colour in the same colours ... he</p> <p>569. would draw the white kinds, which is always like a weird pink colour, it is not actually</p> <p>570. like a natural colour.</p> <p>571. Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>572. Michael: And some days he would colour over it and do it and do it again and it's like</p> <p>573. oh he is trying to redo it and it made him so upset ... and the kids would be like; well</p>	<p>Challenges with members of society</p> <p>Challenges with members of society</p> <p>Challenges with school peers</p>
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574. you are not white and you are not black so you are nothing, you know.

575. Researcher: Okay.

576. Michael: And that is also sort what you are told that you are nothing you know and

577. anyway so my mom when he was like 4 or something got the ... I don't think they sell

578. them here, I don't know why but like – in America you get this box of Crayola's that

579. come in skin tones.

580. Researcher: Okay.

581. Michael: And it's like 36 skin tones from very light-skinned to very dark-skinned and

582. every shade of brown in between because ultimately we are all sort of shades of

583. brown.

584. Researcher: Yes.

585. Michael: You know for ...with the Crayola box right and I mean... like 36 Crayola's

586. colour until he found his you know and he's like; dad I found my colour.

587. Researcher Yes.

588. Michael: It's like; what colour am I ... and I'm like burnt sienna. That's the name on

589. the Crayola.

590. Researcher Yes.

591. Michael: Like you are burnt sienna... and he's like "oh, I'm burnt sienna".

592. Researcher Yes.

593. Michael: But of course you don't go and tell everyone I am burnt sienna you know.

594. Researcher: Yes.

595. Michael: It is like when you are telling people I am beige.

596. Researcher Yes.

597. Michael: I am ... you know.

598. Researcher: Yes.

599. Michael: But quite hard and then the teachers, when he got to primary school were

600. also like- they were insistent that you must fit in one of the squares you know. Like

601. "oh, you are a little Indian boy". d he would get so frustrated because he would tell people

you know and

602. would tell the

603. Researcher Oh.

604. Michael: And I think it was meant in a – Indian teachers would say that.

605. Researcher: Yes.

606. Michael: And you see what you expect to see as well, you have all these choices

607. when you are in South Africa.

Challenges  
with school  
teachers

608. Michael: An

609. kids. You know, they would ask where he is from and which is a normal

610. "getting to know you" question, right, but it is quite hard to answer actually.

611. Researcher: Yes.

612. Michael: If you were born in Guatemala and you are adopted by an American and

613. you .... And you stayed there for 3 years and now you are in South Africa. It is not a

614. straight forward answer.

615. Researcher Yes.

616. Michael: Like you know; I am from Jo'burg, I am from Pretoria, I am from ... you know.

617. Lee: It's hard to open the... show him the music video from ... when you are growing

618. up you will look exactly like him.

619. Researcher Yes.

620. Michael: He would cry about it all the time you know, not every day but then to show

621. like how much it is. Kids and their personalities when they would interact with you

622. ...last year...

623. So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were 2 new kids

624. in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school, you know we are having

625. supper and he's like ehm, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I

626. was like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like; dad I'm a

627. different colour than you. They don't like my colour.

628. And it's like oh, what did you tell them? He's like, I said well you are a stinky pooh

629. pooh head and I don't want to play with you. [laughing]- and I was like well that is the

630. correct response.

631. Researcher And what were your feelings, your emotions going through that?

632. Michael: I mean it is very frustrating because you want your kids to love who they are.

633. Researcher: Yes.

634. Michael: And to be proud of who they are and to be proud of their family and it is very

635. hard like it is twice as hard because they- especially ... primary school people, the

636. kids will say I like that is so gay. I don't actually have any real understanding of what

637. they are saying, you know.

638. Researcher: Yes.

639. Michael: I just think it is really sad. I mean and I really wonder like it almost makes

640. me sad for the other kids at school but. And it's not like only the white kids who do it,

641. only the black kids who do it. It's like quite the...

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with school  
peers

<p><b>642.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>643.</b> Michael: And it makes me sad for them too because they are being brought up with</p> <p><b>644.</b> these very kind of specific about people ... you must be like this, you must be like</p> <p><b>645.</b> that. And that is so unfortunate to be 2015 and 2016 and that.</p> <p><b>646.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>647.</b> Michael: And you just don't... I don't know. Like I think when you are- it's just sad but</p> <p><b>648.</b> only think is I don't know if it's necessarily different from what we would have</p> <p><b>649.</b> experienced in America and in Thailand certainly other things came up, you know,</p> <p><b>650.</b> because adoption is a very foreign concept and so in Thailand people would come</p> <p><b>651.</b> up to me all the time and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is</p> <p><b>652.</b> the mom? How can there be no mom?" So it was like I think those options are clear</p> <p><b>653.</b> right. I mean that is like is not really a question.</p> <p><b>654.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>655.</b> Michael: All you need is just to think about it for a few minutes and you will understand</p> <p><b>656.</b> what would have happened. At the end of the day it will be revealed at the school</p> <p><b>657.</b> play and they call me a nice dad you know, a friendly dad. And they always go; how</p> <p><b>658.</b> do you know that he loves you [remark- because you are not the dad] because you</p> <p><b>659.</b> are not related.</p> <p><b>660.</b> So it would be different things [kids talking] ... and I don't know. I also just thought</p> <p><b>661.</b> those things would happen earlier because I didn't expect preschool children to be</p> <p><b>662.</b> racially conscious in that way.</p> <p><b>663.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>664.</b> Michael: You know I just didn't really think that in my mind ... Sesame Street and that</p> <p><b>665.</b> wouldn't be an issue until later when they learned how to do those things so I wasn't</p> <p><b>666.</b> really prepared for it and I think also like when you grow up why am I kind of in a</p> <p><b>667.</b> majority kind of white environment you don't have to think about those things very</p> <p><b>668.</b> much because those are never issues that anyone ever confronted me with.</p> <p><b>669.</b> Researcher: Okay.</p> <p><b>670.</b> Michael: And so you kind of know it happens, you know, the reality is different.</p> <p><b>671.</b> Researcher: Okay, and I also asked Lee regarding disagreements between the two of you.</p> <p><b>672.</b> Michael: We never disagree.</p> <p><b>673.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>674.</b> Lee: We did but we don't have big arguments.</p> <p><b>675.</b> Researcher: And how do you handle them if there are any?</p>	<p>Challenges with members of society</p> <p>Challenges with members of society</p>
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<p><b>676.</b> Michael: Yeah, I mean, I don't know... Lee and I will end up having a little argument</p> <p><b>677.</b> and then you take a little break, chill out for a while and then you try it again later, you</p> <p><b>678.</b> know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or... you know.</p> <p><b>679.</b> Michael: Yeah, and I mean. I think my parents did a very good job of hiding their</p> <p><b>680.</b> disagreements all the time so I didn't even know if they had any because it was only</p> <p><b>681.</b> when I was in University that they told me they had a therapist and that they went to</p> <p><b>682.</b> couples' counselling and that they've done all that stuff, you know, over the years</p> <p><b>683.</b> through their marriage and that was total revelation to me that they've ever argued</p> <p><b>684.</b> because they would never ever do it in front of us, you know. The right intention but</p> <p><b>685.</b> not, you know, an actual argument which I think is very good, and on the other hand</p> <p><b>686.</b> you have to be prepared for understanding how to argue. I am not very good at it still.</p> <p><b>687.</b> Researcher: And we asked another question in terms of what it means to be a father</p> <p><b>688.</b> to you?</p> <p><b>689.</b> Michael: Yeah, I'm very... for me it makes me feel very complete. I feel very much</p> <p><b>690.</b> like this is the way that I always wanted things to be in terms of me and the kids and</p> <p><b>691.</b> I think what's complicated is balancing that would being a husband, a professional of</p> <p><b>692.</b> some sort where you have some of your own creative life and your own mental</p> <p><b>693.</b> engagement and I mean being a... it makes me feel very full and at the same time</p> <p><b>694.</b> it's interesting like how that is one part of life, you know, and feeling like this you will</p> <p><b>695.</b> always be fathers but each day is different. They all ask a really long time. People</p> <p><b>696.</b> say that you've got so far to really make it happen. It's really hard, I mean it's not a</p> <p><b>697.</b> easy buck house. You don't just fly by, I mean, every day is very challenging and</p> <p><b>698.</b> very... which doesn't mean that it's bad, but it means that it does takes a lot from your</p> <p><b>699.</b> engagement with life and these relationships and it's not easy and it doesn't fly by,</p> <p><b>700.</b> it's not like you have a great time and then you're done, you know. Yeah, but, it all</p> <p><b>701.</b> ends up differently.</p> <p><b>702.</b> Lee: What do they go through? What is it like to come back to normal?</p> <p><b>703.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>704.</b> Michael: And they're changing all the time. You think you got it figured out then there's</p> <p><b>705.</b> something new.</p> <p><b>706.</b> Lee: And they're not attached like there are any emotions, like, you know. You have</p> <p><b>707.</b> to, okay, let them be. Each day, each month, each year, they're not the same.</p> <p><b>708.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>709.</b> Michael: But it is funny like when they're very little. First come those first couple of</p>	<p>Less conflict</p> <p>What parenthood means.</p>
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<p><b>710.</b> days, it is not like babysitting. You know, like bonding is real. Especially when I went</p> <p><b>711.</b> to visit Will's orphanage the first time. They just hand you this little baby and you go</p> <p><b>712.</b> off to their little chalet in the back. It really just feels like babysitting at first. It's like</p> <p><b>713.</b> "hey, I've never seen this kid before. I mean you sent an e-mail and I've seen photos</p> <p><b>714.</b> but I don't know who it is, he doesn't know who I am". But it's amazing the bonding is</p> <p><b>715.</b> real and we just spent time together and that bonding happened and I think actually</p> <p><b>716.</b> that's a magical process. That is something very special.</p> <p><b>717.</b> Researcher: And were there times that you felt uncertain of to be a parent or when</p> <p><b>718.</b> you felt like I'm not sure what am I doing here or uncertainty is coming up.</p> <p><b>719.</b> Michael: I never felt uncertain about being a parent but I felt uncertain about my skill</p> <p><b>720.</b> on parenting all the time [laughter] and an excellent opportunity has worked itself out.</p> <p><b>721.</b> And I think the results about what you're doing manifests so far into the future. So it's</p> <p><b>722.</b> like we did this today, and we did it yesterday, it's like wow, I have to deal with those</p> <p><b>723.</b> school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours</p> <p><b>724.</b> and these things but you don't really know if that works until like months later when</p> <p><b>725.</b> you see if the behaviour has shifted, you know, and all that stuff that happens when</p> <p><b>726.</b> they're really little, you know. And especially if a lot has freaked you out about babies</p> <p><b>727.</b> you know. And they can't communicate so you really don't know. It's like "well, we</p> <p><b>728.</b> decided to pervorise. Was that a good thing?" I mean, you've been screaming for an</p> <p><b>729.</b> hour now and you don't eat until later and don't know if they'll be happy adults. Well,</p> <p><b>730.</b> they're not really happy adults, happy, healthy, well-adjusted people until they get to</p> <p><b>731.</b> be adults. It's a very long way still.</p> <p><b>732.</b> Researcher: Okay, and in terms of, you know, you're a father. But now you're a gay</p> <p><b>733.</b> father, also your sexual identity. You noticed as a father with another person who's a</p> <p><b>734.</b> woman. You now have your sexual identity in terms of 'I am a gay father'. Were there</p> <p><b>735.</b> conflicts in terms of your sexual identity when it came to it? Were there some</p> <p><b>736.</b> challenges with regards to that?</p> <p><b>737.</b> Michael: I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the</p> <p><b>738.</b> time and I find it slightly offensive to go to like a parents meeting that is not a parents</p> <p><b>739.</b> meeting but it's been called that, it's a mom's meeting. I think for class moms and</p> <p><b>740.</b> you'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know and</p> <p><b>741.</b> we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't</p> <p><b>742.</b> want to braai? And what if "serving" is not really how we want to describe the activity</p> <p><b>743.</b> of, you know, providing the meal to the children. There's a different way to formulate</p>	<p>Desire to become a parent.</p> <p>Discipline techniques</p> <p>Challenges with members from society</p>
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744. this for class. And, you know, I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 64,

745. I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me. And it will be a "good

746. morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like... First of all, I find that offensive for

747. the women because they are using this sweetie cute little tone of voice with adult

748. women who have like real jobs, or like do serious work and even if they're working at

749. home, they're doing a lot, like don't talk to them like they're five year olds, who's going

750. to keep moving. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this

751. process? You know.

752. But I find that annoying and I find it a little bit... I feel it's like a shared sensibility with

753. other gay people and gay men in particular that, I do get a little bit lonely for when

754. you're surrounded by the moms all the time and I find that dads are all very cool and

755. very nice. I've never really related that well with straight boys, I don't think you know,

756. so... and even we have lots of good straight coupled friends. I mean lovely, lovely

757. people. And good friends whom I trust and miss and, you know, all that stuff. But, I

758. don't know, it is nice. I mean we have the other gay dads who I do find it really useful

759. to like have a hangout every now and then. You know just come over and have like

760. coffee or whatever.

761. Researcher: Yes, yes.

762. Michael: Because I mean, really, I don't want to be... I don't want to go to a bar. I really

763. have no desire to do that.

764. Lee: Or watch rugby. Or cricket.

765. Michael: Or braai or do any of that stuff. But I don't want to go to a gay party either. I

766. don't want to be... because we wake up early. There is no scenario where we sleep

767. until ten. It's not going to happen.

768. Lee: It's not happening.

769. Researcher: Okay. So now. We're on becoming a parent. We are on family identity.

770. What is your view of a gay parented family in terms of the identity? Your family

771. identity. What is your view on that?

772. Michael: I think it's... especially at the beginning when you are say, changing schools

773. or entering school for the first time, and with two kids with the age gaps that we have.

774. Basically that is all the time. You are kind of shifting into new classes and the way

775. hat South African schools tend to mix the kids from year to year, that means you have

776. a new pool of parents every year, too, so you have kind of this constant process

777. coming out...

778. Researcher: Okay.

779. Michael:...All the time and that's okay. I mean it doesn't... it is a bit tiresome after a

780. while but that is what it is, you know. I don't in particular feel that we're the gay

781. family that other people probably do and I'm sure it's the topic of the conversation,

782. you know, but that doesn't bother me in any way. And I think they talk about other

783. things too because we conduct our lives in a very different way than a lot of people

784. and I mean... and also because we're all foreign, so... We have different expectations

785. and different... and we're not only at a point where we're all from different places and

786. we navigate different things trying to find ways that work for everyone together and I

787. think a lot of families don't have to do that because they're a single nationality, often

788. has a single race, often have very similar upbringings, you know, so they don't have

789. those differences to reconcile, which means that we end up on a different path, which

790. is also fine. We're all very happy with those paths.

791. But I do think that, at school, for the kids to... like Will gets tired to explain hard and

792. he finds it very tedious. He doesn't like kids all the time asking "where's your mom?".

793. And that's just gonna be life, I'm afraid. I mean, I agree with him, you know, I get it.

794. But that's just gonna be life, because people will always be asking that question.

795. Researcher: For everyone, everywhere.

796. Michael: And I feel that's different from being parents because people assume that

797. there's gonna be a mom. It's very rare to have a single dad in general and I think for

798. a woman to show up with a child especially a child that looks more or sort of like her

799. in some way. No one ever questions that. They'll never... very rarely will people

800. come out and think "where's the dad?". Because people know all kinds of things can

801. happen. They wouldn't be so blunt about it necessarily because they would see there

802. was a divorce and there was custody or he passed or he left or all the things that

803. happen are pretty well pretty clear.

804. Researcher: Yes.

805. Michael: But when you show up and there's no mom, that is a thing that people feel

806. they need to figure out. *Ja*.

807. Researcher: And what makes your family unique? What is it different from other

808. families? Whether it's from gay parenting...

809. Michael: Much better looking than the other families [laughter]. From a different

810. point... I think, yeah, we're in fashion, we're a very international family, right, and for

811. us, part of that is bringing us out our own cultural and international identities, whether

<p><b>812.</b> for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered where they came</p> <p><b>813.</b> from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots, and how do you</p> <p><b>814.</b> incorporate those things in different ways and then, I think in certain ways we are a</p> <p><b>815.</b> very modern family because the world is moving so fast, people are moving and</p> <p><b>816.</b> mixing in different ways so quickly so for a child like Will it was have a... I mean, back</p> <p><b>817.</b> to the racial thing.</p> <p><b>818.</b> Researcher: Yes.</p> <p><b>819.</b> Michael: You know, neither of them knows what it's clear about. So for Juno in South</p> <p><b>820.</b> Africa, people are like "oh, you're coloured." You know, he is sort of, you know. I mean, that's a very broad category and he's dad is Pygmalion, so that is correct but it's not entirely correct either.</p> <p><b>821.</b> Lee: People's just like... putting them in a box.</p> <p><b>822.</b> Michael: And yeah. And so everybody's got their own things to figure out. I mean, to</p> <p><b>823.</b> think about the way that they were brought up, in terms of... they're very international,</p> <p><b>824.</b> and they're very well-travelled and they have very international friends and yet are</p> <p><b>825.</b> very South African in many ways that we are not. And we can't relate to sometimes</p> <p><b>826.</b> because it's very important. And Will is learning a second language at school and it's</p> <p><b>827.</b> not like Thai and brings Thai home and I think it's also interesting for, like... I don't</p> <p><b>828.</b> think either of us were especially sporty in school. I didn't know sport at all. It wasn't</p> <p><b>829.</b> important. Will is extremely athletic and loves it, and loves soccer and loves</p> <p><b>830.</b> basketball. That's all it's about learning how to support each other's actions.</p> <p><b>831.</b> Lee: We learned to accept who we are and then we learned to accept the way like,</p> <p><b>832.</b> you know, they are. That's how we are. We became family so I think that's our</p> <p><b>833.</b> support, you know, for the family. And then, being different.</p> <p><b>834.</b> Researcher Okay.</p> <p><b>835.</b> Michael: Biologically, you know. Like being their own children in that way. Sometimes</p> <p><b>836.</b> there is an expectation like I did this when I grew up. Dad did that or you know,</p> <p><b>837.</b> whatever, and therefore you're gonna love those things too. I love soccer so you're</p> <p><b>838.</b> gonna love soccer. I went to this school and loved it, so you're gonna go to this school</p> <p><b>839.</b> and love it and especially in this Northern suburbs where that's all very corn for me</p> <p><b>840.</b> too, you've been going to this school like forever and that it has a real identity to it for</p> <p><b>841.</b> now.</p> <p><b>842.</b> Lee: Not like Thailand do.</p> <p><b>843.</b> Michael: Yeah, I just grew up in a very small town so I went to the same school as</p> <p><b>844.</b> my father and my grandfather because there were only two schools.</p>	<p>Teaching about diversity</p>
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845. Researcher: Yes. [laughter]
846. Michael: It was gonna be one or the other, either way, there was a fifty-fifty chance
847. no matter what, you know. A different environment, but yeah. But I think that's also
848. the big city it's just kind of new to me but... I think it's nice that they're free to identify
849. themselves and figure out what they love.
850. Researcher: How do you communicate family identity therein? How do you tell them
851. In which way do you tell them to say "look we are"?
852. Michael: I tell them to decide. I don't blame them. But there was a moment for me
853. when Will went to the Third Grade and he came back saying "that's okay" and he just
854. went weird, you know he meant in that way. I mean THAT way.
855. Researcher: From friends at school.
856. Michael: I'll say "Oh yeah, that's right". But dad you're so gay and I'll say "yeah, that's
857. correct". So we had a conversation about what that means and it's like you're a man
858. and you fell in love with another man and so that's how you decided to have... Your
859. family was with somebody like themselves who's also a man, or like our friends who
860. are women and they fell in love with another woman, that means we're gay.
861. Researcher: Yes.
862. Michael: And if you're a guy or a girl who falls in love with someone who's not the
863. same, then you're straight. And that's what that means. And then there was a review
864. in the car a few days later and he was like "so... Sue and Carrin are gay, am I
865. correct?" "They are gay. As are me and Pappa". But it's interesting that they also, I
866. think, growing up in a very mixed environment with a, you know, lots of different kinds
867. of friends at school.
868. Lee: Just like Bella. We also have like stressed couples, but they also adopted two
869. children. Basically we have a family who are different like their families left them.
870. Michael: But they don't know it until their friends at school starts pulling it out of them.
871. Sort of outside the circle.
872. Lee: The kids are black but the parents are white. So we're trying to point to Will "look,
873. this is an example."
874. Michael: And our friends who have, our friends who are in interracial marriages, like
875. one is black and one is white, or the one is inhuman or you know, whatever. They
876. don't think about it. Will often felt like he was the only one. It's like, "oh no, what about
877. Cigar?" You know, I mean, he's got a white mom and a black dad.
878. Lee: To point out it out.

879. Michael: I mean, he knows that, he knows that. He plays with that kid every day. So

880. you're the parents, then very well. He doesn't think about it. So people they would

881. tease him. He's like: "I am the only one; no one else has two dads". Like: "oh well,

882. remember Patrick and Paul? We went to their wedding and they have a family that

883. they can play with. They're gay. Because we went to their wedding they are two male

884. adults, I mean, we know that. But you have to actually sit there and actually point out.

885. These are the people and that's what that means. But... *ja*. I think at school it's hard

886. to define, define too much, you know.

887. Researcher: And another thing challenging to your family identity – was there

888. anything there that might have happened to challenge you? Your family identity –

889. anything that happened recently to might have challenged your family identity or to

890. question your family identity?

891. Michael: I mean randomly when we're in public and there's just one of us, I think

892. people always thinks that there's a wife somewhere, you know. There's that kind of

893. thing so we're "where's mom?", you know, that kind of things but it's always like little

894. stuff. I mean it's not like people are being intentionally upstairs there's just not that

895. many heads turning around relative to the numbers of heads turning around. So, I

896. don't think so. I mean actually at the new school they bent over backwards for us.

897. Researcher: And how do you perform when they "Where's the mom?", "is your wives

898. around"?

899. Michael: Hmm, you know, there's no mom. We have a lot of kind of things like "oh,

900. mom's got the day off? How's dad doing managing with the boys?" Well, dad

901. manages everyday thank you very much, you know. But it is just a few little stuff, I

902. mean there's always strangers, but I'm sure the kids get it more at school than we

903. necessarily realise.

904. Researcher: Okay. And we now will be talking about support. Do you receive support

905. from family, neighbours, friends, society? And how was the support or how did they

906. support you, how were you feeling during the support, were there mixed feelings and

907. what engagement your roll was and what was some other comments by your family

908. members, your friends now that you are parents?

909. Michael: Well, we had very different family experiences.

910. Lee: For me, my family wasn't there from the beginning. They didn't accept the way

911. I'm gay so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay. This is who

912. I am. I could be better, I could become success, I could be a dad and my sons, both

Experiences with family of origin during coming out phase.

913. of them, love me as a dad. So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown  
914. them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents  
915. have seen like, this is my actions and this is results from both of them. So then, the  
916. questions that they ask, it have been answered by actions. So now they are happy,  
917. they...

918. Michael: Improvised a lot of support when we were in Bangkok. They do a lot and  
919. they're wonderful parents.

920. Researcher: And was there other support from legal authorities like a lawyer in terms  
921. of you getting adoption? Were there other people involved?

922. Michael: Yeah, I mean there are, like I am not seeing South Africa as an issue now,  
923. I've been dealing with the questions in South Africa. Straight forward. I've never... I  
924. actually don't know anyone which had a bad experience. As opposed to, when I and  
925. Will were up in America, to...I had a cat and mouse thing, like constantly trying to  
926. check it in the box over here and check it in the box over there and kind of answering  
927. questions in a weird way, you know, so I... because the social worker, my social  
928. workers from Virginia, didn't have their marriage and she probably felt... so she knew  
929. I was gay because she could tell, I mean she's not stupid. But she wouldn't ask. She  
930. wasn't suspicious, she was very supportive in that way. I mean she helped me work  
931. the system so she would ask me in very general terms. So she never asked "what if  
932. you get a girlfriend?" and "what happens if you get married?" or something else. She's  
933. a mother. There were no questions like that. It's like "So how are you going to manage  
934. dating?" And it was all kind of wink, wink, nod, nod. "Well, I don't really plan to date  
935. for a while because I have a full time job that's quite serious and that I take seriously  
936. and take pride in and if I wanna be a good dad, it's gonna take a lot of my time an  
937. so I don't really expect to date for a long while". And we would always kind of do this  
938. and it was like that. She was very supportive in that way with the restrictions never in  
939. place at the time in the U.S. Then you get here, I mean you end up the whole thing  
940. with a Visa for Lee which was such a head ache.

941. He went to South Africa at Home Affairs and I mean, and they had like, they have  
942. their issues, right? Which you can imagine but then he applied for the Visa, after  
943. the U.S. would not give him a Visa, and he kind of, he would go to the South African  
944. guys and they're like, where... I'm like "and then what do we have to do?" You sign  
945. at the bottom of the page. I'm like "and then what do we have to do?" And then you're  
946. done. "Oh". Now, I mean it was just that easy and I mean of course like Home Affairs



947. screwed up other things like... but on the gay issue they're super good and we finally  
 948. did get married and I mean like, we did it at Home Affairs, the guy came to our living  
 949. room, we did it here, I mean all of that is great and when you go through... I mean,  
 950. I've had some really... some snarky American immigrations officials at the airports  
 951. and things who weren't being super jerks but they were being kind of assholes. But  
 952. we never had those issues here. Not at Home Affairs, at the airport, or at the border  
 953. post or whatever.  
 954. Lee: It's a  
 955. Michael: And I mean honestly the... you know like Mark Gavistor's story about getting  
 956. married, you know, when... it's like eight years ago or something now. He actually  
 957. got a partner and they were moving to Paris because that's part of his work so they  
 958. were moving up there. And they go to Home Affairs to get married just for the Visa.  
 959. They thought "well, they're in Paris why don't they get married" and the woman at the  
 960. counter is like "well, when is your wedding gonna be? " It's like "the third". Just sign  
 961. your papers here at Home Affairs. The woman stopped, put the papers away and it's  
 962. just like, "you know, this is the new South Africa and you need to celebrate your love".  
 963. It's like "Aw, how sweet" you know.  
 964. And we went to the police one time for a separate thing and just like we're making  
 965. our way to report, you know, stupid stuff and she's like "well, actually this is the  
 966. poorest woman ever, she got shot like three years ago but anyway she's like "you  
 967. know, we have a beautiful democracy and everyone should feel safe and important".  
 968. It's like "aw!" I mean really, that's so sweet. But I promise you no one in America ever  
 969. said that to me ever on purpose, you know.  
 970. Researcher: And your family,  
 971. Michael, were your family supportive in terms of the adoption?  
 972. Michael: Yeah, I mean, my family were great. My family had the... I came out when I  
 973. was eighteen and actually that was one of the things like, you know "what about  
 974. kids"? I was sort of like, I don't understand the connection actually, I can still have  
 975. children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second,  
 976. I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the  
 977. idea.  
 978. Researcher: Okay.  
 979. Michael: And then when it was time I just feel like they thought it would come at some  
 980. point, but my mom was like "I never thought you can't give me a grandchild" Even

Experiences with family of origin during coming out phase.

981. though the storm was coming...

982. Michael: Hmm, you know, even when if the storm was coming and all that stuff, she

983. sent out printed invitations to the baptism, she invited the entire town, there were

984. tables set up in their garden, it's like, everybody came. I thought it was very sweet. It

985. was very conservative, small type of town, Louisiana. Everyone was really, really

986. great. When I came up to my grandmother, she's quite old you know, she cried a

987. little bit and she's like... then she dried her tears, she's like "I just want you know that

988. this will not be a problem for anyone". It's like, wow, now you've decided, it's great,

989. that's gonna make the rest of it so much easier.

990. Researcher: Okay. And we're now gonna go to religious affiliations, you had Will baptised... and,

991. tell me more about that. When it's supportive? Some comments or so.

992. Michael: The church is weird, you know, you may say. It's all wink, wink, nod, nod

993. because, for me it's not right. I grew up in a small town. You know, my

994. grandmother she and her family, were to live in the same area, don't move

995. or leaving and my dad, you know, my dad and grandfather moved into his town in the

996. 1920's, they all lived in the same house, or in the house next door, on the same piece

997. of property, going to the same church since the 1920's. I just have a very long history

998. with the particular pattern. The priest was there when Will was baptised was actually

999. quite but basically and you kind of chat with the bishops on what the

1000. limits was on... you know, were to be done, and... I really, I was single at that point,

1001. there were less to hide, or whatever. So they did it, but they didn't do the baptism

1002. during a regular service, they didn't do it during mass, they had a special thing, we

1003. felt that the church was more...

1004. Anyway, there were 120 there I'm sure. But you wouldn't do your regular service that

1005. other people would do, and even that, which was a ridiculous thing because it was a

1006. small town and my mother sent out printed invitations to half of the city, it's like

1007. everyone knew, but anyway... And they came when Lee and I were together

1008. there was a new priest who was actually nice and whatever, but is more

1009. conservative and all that stuff and older and generational issues and all that

1010. stuff. He was willing to do it, there was the printed invitations and it was very

1011. small and just about Lee got home, which was fine being able to also agree

1012. that which I don't go to church, that's the thing, I don't actually... I sort of resent

1013. the church in many ways more than anything.

1014. Researcher: Yes.

Religious  
teaching

**1015.** Michael: I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child and that's a  
**1016.** chance to welcome your child into the community and your family and my mother,  
**1017.** she is a seamstress and spent her whole life making beautiful baptismal gowns for  
**1018.** other people's babies and it's like look at mine, it's your first grandchild and you don't  
**1019.** get to make a baptismal gown for your own grandchild. You know, I'm not an asshole,  
**1020.** you know, I'm not gonna do that and the thing is and the rest of them is like we don't  
**1021.** do it, you know. We go with my parents for Christmas or for Easter, we go to church  
**1022.** and the other way around because they like to go and we support them but I don't  
**1023.** need to go to a church that's not gonna support me back and I don't really think it's  
**1024.** appropriate after explaining to my kids like "oh, we're Catholic and we go to Catholic  
**1025.** Church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services  
**1026.** or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do and I don't actually  
**1027.** care enough to be a bothered or something. It just doesn't interest me, I mean,  
**1028.** whereas Lee is having interest. You were less interested in the beginning, but now  
**1029.** you are more religious so it's a different thing now.  
**1030.** Lee: Yeah.  
**1031.** Researcher: And there are supporters at school?  
**1032.** Lee: You mean at the temple?  
**1033.** Michael: Lee's Buddhist.  
**1034.** Researcher: Oh, okay. But how was your experience with the guys to find out you  
**1035.** were a gay dad and...  
**1036.** Lee: No they are... I mean, at the temple, I mean, they don't mind if you are gay  
**1037.** or straight, you know, they did give support, and you know... yeah.  
**1038.** Researcher : Okay. There's not any disapproval or...  
**1039.** Lee: No. Not at all.  
**1040.** Michael: But they wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are  
**1041.** supportive but there is a line.  
**1042.** Researcher: So when you guys got married, who married you?  
**1043.** Michael: Home Affairs.  
**1044.** Researcher|:Home Affairs. So there was no support from...  
**1045.** Michael: From church? No. But we don't... like Lee explained to the kids about  
**1046.** Buddhism, and he tends to meditate and things like that. I only explain as it comes  
**1047.** up, you know. And I try to unexplain, that's one of the biggest adjustments for me is

Challenges with religious officials

Challenges with religious officials

**1048.** that religion is part of school in South Africa. So I feel I have to unexplain a lot of what  
**1049.** they talk at school, you know. Because they'll come back with some very unusual  
**1050.** ideas in my opinion about God and Jesus and stuff like that.  
**1051.** Researcher: So it seems religion is there but also it's not strong and if they want to know more and how do you do that?  
**1052.** Michael: I will not let my church teach my children about first of all. That would terrify  
**1053.** me a little bit to be totally honest because for me the Catholic Church is a  
**1054.** fundamentally clause vision of human love and for me that's a big thing, like if you  
**1055.** don't understand what human love is like, which you see in the way they play it in  
**1056.** homosexuality. I mean, if you don't understand the difference between  
**1057.** those two things, that's actually a large problem, I mean that's not a small thing. You  
**1058.** don't understand how adult humans relate to each other and therefore I don't very  
**1059.** clear on that boundary. You don't be around children, you know, as my but... the rest  
**1060.** is a lot different, I think.  
**1061.** Researcher: Yes.  
**1062.** Lee: Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is not I've talked to them about  
**1063.** reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know,  
**1064.** so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being  
**1065.** gay and you not being a Buddhist and...  
**1066.** Researcher: You may intensify in regards to karma, but I also want to find out where  
**1067.** you're living life, in your community. I can see that you're very suburban but how is  
**1068.** the feelings there in terms of the area that you're in?  
**1069.** Michael: I mean, for me there's no danger for being gay, relatively for Johannesburg, you  
**1070.** know. You don't hear of it every day in Johannesburg. There's quite a lot of homo's  
**1071.** running around. So I don't think that we're necessarily feeling out in any of  
**1072.** that way. And I do feel that in South Africa broadly there is an idea that like, even if  
**1073.** maybe people are conservative or religious or something and might be a little  
**1074.** homophobic in different ways. There is a study that you're not supposed to be and  
**1075.** therefore people would never express that in public.  
**1076.** And so, the kinds of things that like in America it was kind of common I mean it wasn't  
**1077.** that unusual for people to drive past a car and "hey faggits, and stuff like that". I mean  
**1078.** that doesn't happen here, partly because people are always in cars so you don't walk  
**1079.** that much. On the other hand, I do like find I do a lot of work in CBD  
**1080.** and one of my... I just want to protect all there, you know, because I don't know where  
**1081.** everyone is coming from so one of the guys that's a jerk and I know this

Religious teaching

**1082.** jerk is barely homophobic and so I just don't engage with him about family very much,  
**1083.** you know.  
**1084.** Researcher: Okay.  
**1085.** Michael: As soon as he has children, he'll ask me about my wife and my children  
**1086.** Because I really don't want to be ordered, you know.  
**1087.** Researcher: And for Lee?  
**1088.** Michael: We did come out of the school, though, when we go to the school every  
**1089.** time.  
**1090.** Researcher: And park? Do you go to park?  
**1091.** Michael: Yeah, I mean whatever. People don't even look. I just thought that they  
**1092.** would look more.  
**1093.** Researcher: Okay. We can move both back and just wanted to get your opinion. Now,  
**1094.** the important thing is about a pro-active family identity. Okay. Lee, I was asking  
**1095.** Michael regarding society, which is your neighbourhood, when you go to park, how  
**1096.** has that been for you? Have you had any conversation from anyone saying "oh,  
**1097.** you're from a different family" or something like that?  
**1098.** Lee: For me I never have.  
**1099.** Researcher: So, it's the same. Nothing much of that. Okay. Now we're coming to the  
**1100.** last part, which is family identity. Now this is about how you guys as a family create  
**1101.** a pro-active identity also for the boys. What are some of the things you do in terms  
**1102.** of you have rituals, you have specific things that you do as a family. Do you go to  
**1103.** movies together? What are some of the things you do as a family which are sort of  
**1104.** special and... *ja*, what do you do as a family?  
**1105.** Michael: We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies  
**1106.** together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home. We both like  
**1107.** movies anyway so we'll probably do it more often than other people because we enjoy  
**1108.** that. I don't know. What other things do we do? We go to the park relatively often.  
**1109.** Lee: We're travelling.  
**1110.** Michael: Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah.  
**1111.** Lee: We travel a lot, *ja*.  
**1112.** Michael: And we like to do, say we go to the market and just check it out and stuff or  
**1113.** go to the farm and see the cows and the pigs and the goats and eat at the farm stall,  
**1114.** just do something, you know. Which honestly even there which is pretty raw, I mean  
**1115.** like no one says anything or look or...

Recreational  
activities with  
kids

**1116.** Lee: For me I've seen it.

**1117.** Michael: Oh, did you?

**1118.** Lee: For me, I... how do I say? I know this is like people look up at us in a good way

**1119.** and in not a nice way, but for me I try to express my family in the public and then

**1120.** show my kids okay, this is how... we're a gay couple and how we interact in the public

**1121.** like normal, like other families, friends, men or women so I try to show them but for

**1122.** other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to...

**1123.** it's like I know how they look at us but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the

**1124.** way they're looking at us.

**1125.** Researcher: Yes.

**1126.** Michael: But that's the worst thing that could ever happen.

**1127.** Lee: I saw, I saw the look on...

**1128.** Michael: I am oblivious, Lee is more aware.

**1129.** Lee: I am more aware of everything around me, but not to, what can I say, not to

**1130.** attach or conduct or for men. Just let them be and also, we can be the way that we

**1131.** are.

**1132.** Michael: I took them to the pride, at Wonderers last year, and we did march a little

**1133.** away and we did which, we had like, there were three or four gay families together

**1134.** that we were kind of friends with and stuff and there were like five little protestors with

**1135.** their cross and like and it was hard to explain like "why are they shouting

**1136.** at us"?

**1137.** Researcher: Yes.

**1138.** Michael: It's like... well, some people think we shouldn't be a family and this is the

**1139.** way they treat us to express that and it's important to know that some people think

**1140.** we shouldn't be a family and to be able to stand up to that and say that "whatever,

**1141.** we don't really care what you think".

**1142.** Researcher: And your boys? How do they deal with your family identity problems?

**1143.** Lee: Hmm, do we have any chance to have a girlfriend? Because they have like...

**1144.** questions. They have questions in their minds.

**1145.** Michael: We come at a point where people are kissing in a movie or something and

**1146.** it's like... so then like if we're kissing each other it's like a coffee pot, you know, but

**1147.** that's just a general kind of like...

**1148.** Researcher: People doesn't say it's different from other type of families?

**1149.** Lee: No, I think do they have an effect to show how we love each other, how we take

Creating  
positive family  
identity

**1150.** care of each other and I don't explain much to Will but I can see that he...

**1151.** Michael: He's very observant.

**1152.** Lee: He observes, yeah and he accepts who we are and the way he treats us back

**1153.** is the same way as we treat them back.

**1154.** Researcher: And, one thing that is also important is what have you learn about being

**1155.** a family to this boys for you guys?

**1156.** Michael: I think one thing is the decision to be a family. That is a choice that we make

**1157.** to stay together and that we made that decision and we choose to honour that

**1158.** decision and which we're now gonna get some clinical with each other but when it's

**1159.** hard, and when we argue and... those things happen. You know you made a decision

**1160.** and I think we're both confident to respect that decision, you know. And I think it's

**1161.** also valuable that it's a choice and you respect the other person's choice and deals

**1162.** with that you made that choice.

**1163.** Researcher: And you, Lee?

**1164.** Lee: For me you know, I'm sure it's just like every family, every life. One day you are,

**1165.** you know, really committed, you know, hundred percent, that you love each other

**1166.** and some days, you know, it like falls apart, we argue, you know, we fight, we're

**1167.** shouting, or even, you know, my kids say "you're not my dad" and "I don't love you",

**1168.** you know, yeah, I'm a human, I felt down, I felt disappointment but somehow, it

**1169.** overcomes, we care, you know, we're family. I became a dad. I learn not to, what can

**1170.** I say, like hold on the moment that I feel so happy so I try to... I know, you know,

**1171.** that's why we became family because of we love each other. I don't forget about it. I

**1172.** try to... like, you know, but to remind myself "no, they're kids" and Michael, you know,

**1173.** he knows my feelings are steady so then... yeah...

**1174.** Researcher: Okay, what advice, like I've mentioned this is going to other parents.

**1175.** What advice do you have for other gay parents?

**1176.** Michael: I always say like if you, we have friends we are now in our forties so a lot of

**1177.** friends who are in their forties but I think if it's something you want to do, you should

**1178.** just do it and not wait for the perfect moment where the stars are all alive and

**1179.** everything is bright and basically if you have a job or you have enough money to be

**1180.** able to do it, and you have a house, as long as it's a house with a roof and stuff, I

**1181.** mean, like go for it because if it's something you really want to do, there is a point in

**1182.** life where you can't do it before you can't do it anymore. You reach a point where that

**1183.** door is closed. Even if it's not a biological thing like for women to reproduce itself, but

**1184.** like... I mean, to be fifty and start a family, it's like, you're gonna be tired. I mean I  
**1185.** was thirty when Will came home and I was tired at thirty, you know, and often enough  
**1186.** we just heard that it can seem hard or it can seem too much, because ultimately, I  
**1187.** think people's trying to predict everything single thing that will happen along the way.  
**1188.** You kind of rationalise every decision like you don't know what child you're gonna  
**1189.** end up with, you don't know what that child's personality is gonna be like and a lot of  
**1190.** it is going to you as the parent to figure out how you're going to engage with this little  
**1191.** human being and it's like... being really stupid like any other human being. You also  
**1192.** have to make some compromises and change the things that you do to suit them. I  
**1193.** mean, yeah.  
**1194.** And that doesn't mean that you haven't got rules or anything like that but it's like I  
**1195.** personally would never go to a soccer match in my entire life and not care about it in  
**1196.** any way, but I have been to a lot of soccer matches now and you really accommodate  
**1197.** and not just like the easy things like that but for the bigger things. You don't know if  
**1198.** your child is gonna be very independent or very aggressive or... you really don't know  
**1199.** until it comes. Let them be. Learn how to deal with that and you'll never know, and  
**1200.** you can't predict everything that's gonna come, so why bother, you know. If it's  
**1201.** something you really want to do then you should.  
**1202.** Lee: Yeah, I agree with Michael. I'm sure there are a lot of parents that put a lot of  
**1203.** expectations to the kids, like this is the way they should do... they should go to school,  
**1204.** they should study, you know, and then of course like every day is not perfect. Some  
**1205.** days, you know, you fail, so it's learn to be like a day to day... manage day to day.  
**1206.** think it's better, you know.  
**1207.** Michael: Yeah, and maybe not overanalyse every single thing that comes along. We  
**1208.** have a friend who's a single mom, a bi-sexual mom, white mom, black child, adopted  
**1209.** and sometimes she has so much pressure to make everything right, she always  
**1210.** makes sure everything right to make sure nothing is wrong and, you know, does her  
**1211.** son connect with his roots, you know, does he... is he feeling left out because his  
**1212.** friends treat him differently, because I'm white, you know, because his this, or  
**1213.** because his that... And it's like, *ja*, you know they do, but, like us, they do, but so  
**1214.** what, like, honestly you love each other, you take care of each other, your son is  
**1215.** doing well and he is happy and well-adjusted.  
**1216.** So, people will always, you know, you can't trust too much about it and part of him  
**1217.** growing up is learning so long as you're not physically injured or being truly



1218. emotionally like ravage and at some point the kids will stop because his actually a  
1219. very cool little boy who, he knows better than to care too too much about what other  
1220. people think about, you know.  
1221. Researcher: Okay.  
1222. Michael: And then sometimes they come like, how do you manage to do that? It's  
1223. like, we don't do anything. You know if they have really good football tickets and they  
1224. like basketball and sport and stuff. That's what they spend their money on. They  
1225. spend it on sports and doing things like that. We don't do any of that so there's a lot  
1226. of, you know, time and money to do something else. Thank goodness we have time  
1227. and money for that. You need both, Researcher, to make sure that when you get your  
1228. job you have both time and money involved for yourself, you know like...  
1229. Lee: If you have boys and time and money so you don't just attach to one thing.  
1230. Researcher: Yes.  
1231. Michael: Even though it takes like ten years before you have any of those. Those first  
1232. ten years are hard.  
1233. Researcher: There is nothing like that in South Africa, it's never been done. I'm going  
1234. to be the first to publish this, so it's going to be big. It's going to be big, especially also  
1235. within the disadvantaged communities, it's going to be big. You're going to be the  
1236. first people to be within your sexual position. So also be prepared for that. So... yes.  
1237. But, like I say, if you have anything to add, please e-mail me. I will contact you if  
1238. maybe I missed something which I need for my research so I will also contact you.  
1239. My supervisor is also interested in studies of which has an article published from  
1240. going and if she's interested, can she contact you for further engagement?  
1241. Researcher: Just e-mail me.  
1242. Researcher I just wanna thank you very much for allowing your room and your space  
1243. and your lives to share them, all the detailed part of your life and it's just...  
1244. Researcher :Yes. Thank you again. I'll be in contact.

Data Reduction

THEME 1: DECISION TO BECOME PARENTS

DECISION TO BECOME A PARENT	THEME 1
<p>39. Michael: I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd come back from working</p> <p>40. in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist and I was there with my ex; and</p> <p>41. when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of</p> <p>42. like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of life and feeling a little</p> <p>43. bit unsettled.</p> <p>44. I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids and I would like to adopt, and</p> <p>45. after the breakup I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found</p> <p>46. someone, and then decided to adopt together. It was like, well... that was when I was</p> <p>47. 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone</p> <p>48. again and you take a few years to know each other, and then make sure by the time</p> <p>49. you do it you are getting to be older by then", you know; so I decided to start the</p> <p>50. adoption process on my own,</p>	<p><i>I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd come back from working in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist, and I was there with my ex, and when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of my life and feeling a little bit unsettled.</i></p> <p><i>I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt,</i></p> <p><i>After the breakup, I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found someone, and then decided to adopt together.</i></p> <p><i>It was like, well...that was when I was 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone again</i></p>
<p>87. So, on our second date Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like</p> <p>88. "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... [Laughter] So, yeah, but it</p> <p>89. wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting</p> <p>90. him to co-parent or anything, and I had pretty much decided that I wouldn't be dating</p> <p>91. very seriously once the adoption was done; but I also heard that the adoption is going</p> <p>92. to take two years, that is what they told me.</p>	<p><i>So, on our second date, Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... So, yeah, but it wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting him to co-parent or anything</i></p>
<p>153. So, we went back to America. It looked really hard like starting a business or finding</p> <p>154. jobs. We went on interviews, we worked in restaurants, we did all kinds of things but</p> <p>155. they said they wouldn't give Lee a visa, they didn't have a gay marriage in 2008, so</p>	
<p>171. Michael: ... and we didn't have time to come visit or anything because it was all quite</p> <p>172. rushed, but, yeah, then we were coming here. So, we got here; Will was three and a</p> <p>173. half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know it was hard moving</p> <p>174. and so, it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst.</p> <p>175. Lee tried some different things and then finally figured out the massage business</p>	<p><i>So, we got here Will was three and a half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know, it was hard moving, and so it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst. Lee tried some different things, and then finally figured out the massage business would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will (P1, lines 172-177).</i></p>

<p>176. would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and</p> <p>177. adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will.</p> <p>178. Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea but he was going to</p> <p>179. support it and are going to go along with it.</p>	<p><i>We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea, but he was going to support it, and we are going to go along with it</i></p>
<p>219. Lee: No, I think that was a good one. [laughter]</p> <p>220. Michael: I think for Lee it was very different because he was presented with it a choice that was already done.</p> <p>221. Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>222. Michael: And if he hadn't been thinking about that already I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own.</p> <p>223. Lee: No, never thought, ja.</p> <p>224. Michael: Took this long getting to know your process with Will.</p> <p>225. Lee: Ja, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you</p> <p>226. know, if Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent</p> <p>227. but I'm there and I'm for. So I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know, to</p> <p>228. try and then me and Will, we got bonded at the end so that's how I see okay, ja, I</p> <p>229. would like to try and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, ja.</p>	<p><i>If he hadn't been thinking about that already, I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own</i></p> <p><i>No, never thought</i></p> <p><i>Ja, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you know, Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent, but I'm there for him ... so I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know</i></p> <p><i>Then me and Will, we got bonded at the end, so that's how I see okay, ja, I would like to try, and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, ja</i></p>
<p>342. Michael: Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money</p> <p>343. for... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment in</p> <p>344. Washington. The apartment was not huge, I mean it was ninety square meters but it</p> <p>345. wasn't like a massive, fancy place or anything but it was a nice place and it had two</p> <p>346. bedrooms. Small bedrooms, you know, but like fine.</p> <p>347. Michael: So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good</p> <p>348. health care which in the U.S. was a huge thing, you have a good health plan and I</p> <p>349. thought, you know, seeing that I was there a long time and had a lot of friends and I</p> <p>350. didn't realise that I was moving closer from home, my parents were from Louisiana. I</p> <p>351. thought, you know, I never thought I would end up living in Louisiana at some point</p> <p>352. and raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with, and</p> <p>353. my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helps a lot too. I think</p> <p>354. if you don't have family support, even though they are far away, knowing that there</p> <p>355. is family support matters, you know.</p> <p>356. Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up and I just thought if there's something</p>	<p><i>Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money ... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment.</i></p> <p><i>So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good health care</i></p> <p><i>Raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with ... and my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helped a lot too</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up</i></p>

<p>357. in life that you really know you want to do and then you decide to not do it, at some</p> <p>358. point you're just setting yourself up to be unhappy later. So, if you are in the position</p> <p>359. where you can do it now, finish doing it now because loss is never a time in life.</p>	
<p>367. Lee: For me I feel different from Michael. Because I've seen the good things, you</p> <p>368. know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own but for me I wasn't</p> <p>369. able to you know, even, to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my</p> <p>370. own but I think Michael was able to do it so then I decided to be helping him and I can</p> <p>371. contribute my physical, my ability in terms of you know to be with Will while Michael</p> <p>372. was working because later on he offered to... and asking to move in with them That's</p> <p>373. how I thought I think I could, you know jump into the board and then raising Will</p> <p>374. together with Michael. Even though at the time I didn't have a job, because I had to</p>	<p><i>For me, I feel different from Michael because I've seen the good things, you know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own, but for me I wasn't able to, you know, even to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my own, but I think Michael was able to do it, so then I decided to be help him and to contribute with my physical ability in terms of, you know, to be with Will while Michael was working because later on he offered to ... and asked me to move in with them, that's how I thought I think I could, you know, jump on board in raising Will together with Michael, even though at the time I didn't have a job</i></p>
<p>378. Researcher: And what would come of your personal factors, like for example did you</p> <p>379. feel ready to be a parent? Did you feel you had the willing, the strength, you know,</p> <p>380. some of the factors, like the maturity to have a child, like at that time like trying to</p> <p>381. think of some of those things also?</p> <p>382. Lee: No, because for me I had a chance to see Will how he's growing up, because</p> <p>383. he came home on four months and at the time in two years I didn't decide to be a</p> <p>384. parent while he is there so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I've</p> <p>385. seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night.</p> <p>386. Even though I didn't live with them, so I felt for him because I bonded with him very,</p> <p>387. very nicely and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent</p> <p>388. even though from the bottom of my heart I felt loving him, both of them.</p>	<p><i>I had a chance to see Will, how he's growing up, because he came home at four months, and at the time in two years, I didn't decide to be a parent while he is there, so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I have seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night. So ... I felt for him because I bonded with him very nicely, and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt I loved him</i></p>
<p>718. Michael: I never felt uncertain about being a parent but I felt uncertain about my skill</p> <p>719. on parenting all the time [laughter] and an excellent opportunity has worked itself out.</p>	<p><i>I never felt uncertain about being a parent</i></p>
<p>908. Michael: Well, we had very different family experiences.</p> <p>909. Lee: For me, my family wasn't there from the beginning. They didn't accept the way</p> <p>910. I'm gay so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay. This is who</p> <p>911. I am. I could be better, I could become success, I could be a dad and my sons, both</p>	<p><i>Well, we had very different family experiences</i></p> <p><i>For me my family was not there from the beginning, they did not accept the way I'm gay, so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay... this is who I am</i></p>

<p>912. of them, love me as a dad. So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown</p> <p>913. them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents</p> <p>914. have seen like, this is my actions and this is results from both of them. So then, the</p> <p>915. questions that they ask, it have been answered by actions. So now they are happy,</p> <p>916. they...</p>	<p><i>So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents have seen like, this is my actions and this is results from both of them. So then, the questions that they ask, it have been answered by actions. So now they are happy,</i></p>
<p>971. Michael: Yeah, I mean, my family were great. My family had the... I came out when I</p> <p>972. was eighteen and actually that was one of the things like, you know "what about</p> <p>973. kids"? I was sort of like, I don't understand the connection actually, I can still have</p> <p>974. children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second,</p> <p>975. I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the</p> <p>976. idea.</p>	<p><i>I came out when I was eighteen and actually that was one of the things like, you know "what about kids"? I was sort of like, I don't understand the connection actually, I can still have children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second, I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the idea.</i></p>

## THEME 2: CHOOSING A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD

THEME 2	PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD
<p>50. .. which at that time in America it was a little bit challenging,</p> <p>51. especially if you were known to be gay at that time.</p> <p>52. It depended on your jurisdiction, so I was living in Washington DC which you know is</p> <p>53. a very tiny jurisdiction with as a separate entity from the state that surrounds</p> <p>54. it. It has a limited self-government and was very progressive, and I tried to implement</p> <p>55. a lot of ... I tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and tried to do a lot of things,</p> <p>56. but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the congress has to</p> <p>57. approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the congress and live</p> <p>58. in a district they still tell us what to do.</p> <p>59. So, they definitely tried to do a lot but they were unable you implement all the laws</p> <p>60. because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the</p> <p>61. marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck which</p> <p>62. means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our</p> <p>63. jurisdiction over DC, but in Virginia gay marriage was illegal and adoption was legal, a</p> <p>64. marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a problem in terms of finding</p> <p>65. adoption agencies to work with.</p> <p>66. There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state; and at</p>	<p><i>I decided to start the adoption process on my own, which at that time in America, it was a little bit challenging, especially if you were known to be gay at that time.</i></p> <p><i>So, I was living in Washington DC which, you know, is a very tiny jurisdiction as a separate entity from the state that surrounds it. It has limited self-government and was very progressive, and tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and do a lot of things, but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the Congress has to approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the Congress and live in a district ... they still tell us what to do. So, they definitely tried to do a lot, but they were unable to implement all the laws because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck ...</i></p> <p><i>Which means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our jurisdiction over DC. In Virginia, gay marriage was illegal and adoption was illegal, a marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a challenge in terms of finding adoption agencies to work with</i></p>

		<i>There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state</i>	
69.	it kind of fell apart; it actually did fell apart, so	<i>So at the time it was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight</i>	
70.	at the time was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you		
71.	know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you		
72.	are gay or straight.		
73.	So, that time the only country that would allow a single man to do an international		<i>So, at that time, the only country that would allow a single man to do an international adoption was Guatemala.</i>
74.	adoption was Guatemala. I went to workshops in Washington at the Men's Health		
75.	Clinic. They ran kind of so you are going to be a parent sort of workshops which is to		
76.	say you wanna be a dad. There was one for men and one for women because women		<i>But there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight.</i>
77.	has more choices in that department than men do. So that's why I adopted from this		<i>I adopted</i>
78.	orphanage in Guatemala were eventually I found Will. I didn't really have a good		<i>ed from this orphanage in Guatemala</i>
79.	experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I		<i>I didn't really have a good experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Bangkok</i>
80.	started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Bangkok.		
81.	So, I started the paperwork, most of it done and then I ended up in Bangkok. I finished	<i>The orphanage called and said "hey, we have matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details, and if you agree to the match then we will proceed"</i>	
82.	the paperwork while I was there and met Lee online. We had like one date. I didn't talk		
83.	about that then because I was still working on it; you know, it was our first date and in		
84.	between our first and second date the orphanage called and said "hey, we have		
85.	matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details and if		
86.	you agree to the match then we will proceed".		
93.	To be exact it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S.	<i>To be exact, it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months old and they were like, okay, you need to go back and be patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent like a week there.</i>	
94.	citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and		
95.	spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months		
96.	old; not quite three months old; and they were like okay, you need to go back and be		
97.	patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent		
98.	like a week there.		
99.	And then when I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage,		<i>Then I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage, you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back and be patient, you don't have to call us every day, and we will let you know when things are happening.</i>
100.	you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back		
101.	and be patient, you don't have to call us every day and we will let you know when things		
102.	are happening. So, I was in the transit lounge in the United States going back to		

<p>103. Bangkok and the orphanage rang on my cell phone and they were like</p> <p>104. congratulations, it has been approved”.</p> <p>105. I was like wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn’t really</p> <p>106. organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn’t really set up for</p> <p>107. kids and I didn’t have a day care lined up</p>	<p><i>I was like, wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn’t really organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn’t really set up for kids and I didn’t have a daycare lined up, I had to deal with my job, and my company didn’t give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract even though I was working in Bangkok, and Hong Kong is quite conservative for any sort of social policy like that, you know</i></p>
<p>111. So, basically dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like well, you only</p> <p>112. get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala</p> <p>113. and, you know that stuff... I said okay, great, so I really needed to have like fulltime</p> <p>114. help and all that. I went back; I was like I can only come back in a couple of weeks</p> <p>115. and back to Bangkok, I hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and</p> <p>116. so everything came together pretty quickly; and my mom and her best</p> <p>117. friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks.</p> <p>118. That was good; but it was still more dramatic when I got back, we picked up Will, my</p> <p>119. dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will’s godmother, went back with me, went</p> <p>120. back to Guatemala; stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church</p>	<p><i>So, basically, dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like, well, you only get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala and, you know, that stuff ... I said okay, great</i></p> <p><i>I hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and so everything came together pretty quickly and my mom and her best friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks</i></p> <p><i>We picked up Will, my dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will’s godmother, went back with me to Guatemala</i></p>
<p>122. Will’s passport was in the passport office in New Orleans.</p> <p>123. We couldn’t get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and</p> <p>124. destroyed, so we ... anyway, it was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted</p> <p>125. out. Finally, the Thai Embassy in Washington is like “oh, you can bring him back and</p> <p>126. pick up his visa at the embassy in Bangkok”. I said, okay, that would be great, thanks.</p> <p>127. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana</p> <p>128. where my parents lived to get to Thailand. We get there and the immigration officials</p> <p>129. were like well, he can’t come in because he doesn’t have a Guatemalan passport.</p> <p>130. Even though he is an American citizen, you haven’t got a proof of that yet, and I was</p> <p>131. like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and</p> <p>132. then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in. We went to the</p> <p>133. US Embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking</p>	<p><i>We stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church and then as that was happening, Hurricane Katrina hit, so the city was shut down. Will’s passport was in the passport office in New Orleans. We couldn’t get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and destroyed</i></p> <p><i>It was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted out. Finally, the Thai Embassy in Washington is like “oh, you can bring him back and pick up his visa at the embassy in Bangkok”. I said, okay, that would be great, thanks. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana where my parents lived to get to Thailand</i></p> <p><i>We get there and the immigration officials were like, well, he can’t come in because he doesn’t have a Guatemalan passport. Even though he is an American citizen, you haven’t got a proof of that yet, and I was like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in</i></p> <p><i>We went to the US embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get</i></p>

<p>134. they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane.</p> <p>135. They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was</p> <p>136. like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back. So in the end they</p> <p>137. agreed we take a plane to Singapore. So we flew to Singapore, which was like an</p> <p>138. hour and a half away, I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport out, turned</p> <p>139. around, right back into the queue, stamped back out of Singapore, got back onto the</p> <p>140. same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up and then it was fine,</p> <p>141. they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport</p> <p>142. with the resident fees and all that. But while that was going on, Lee and I were still</p> <p>143. just kind of been dating because that was quite quick, so we were matched up. I</p> <p>144. would say we were matched up the first week of May and he was home with me by</p> <p>145. the end of August. So, it was really unusually fast and ... yeah; so basically we dated</p> <p>146. for a couple of years like that.</p>	<p><i>onto the plane. They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back (</i></p> <p><i>So in the end they agreed we take a plane to Singapore ... so we flew to Singapore, which was like an hour and a half away. I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport, turned around, right back into the queue, walked back out of Singapore, got back onto the same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up, and then it was fine, they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport with the resident fees and all that</i></p>
<p>So, we did an application here which was</p> <p>180. also sort of traumatic because we did an application at Jo'burg Child Welfare but they</p> <p>181. lost it and then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the</p> <p>182. government introduced the new Child Welfare Law; and rather than grandfathering</p> <p>183. and afraid she doesn't know anything. I think grandfathering at the end of the</p> <p>184. applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they</p> <p>185. just stopped processing adoptions, from the moment the Bill was introduced to</p> <p>186. Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year almost,</p> <p>187. which just made everything on hold and so we were like well, honestly, you know, to</p> <p>188. wait, you know, because at that time you don't know it is going to be one year ...</p> <p>189. What if it's gonna be many years before they finalise the law? Which is a horrible</p> <p>190. thing for South African orphans actually to wait indefinitely, you know a year in a</p> <p>191. child's life is a very long time. So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not</p> <p>192. meant to be, it's whatever we're happy with the next family that's no good but then</p> <p>193. one night a Thai woman called up and hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm</p> <p>194. pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how</p>	<p><i>We did an application at Johannesburg Children Welfare, but they lost it.</i></p> <p><i>Then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the government introduced the new Child Welfare Law</i></p> <p><i>I think rather than grandfathering instead the applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they just stopped processing adoptions from the moment the Bill was introduced to Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year</i></p> <p><i>So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not meant to be, it's whatever we're happy</i></p> <p><i>One night a Thai woman called up and said, "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so,</i></p>



<p>195. we end up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's... but at least it's</p> <p>196. worth it in the end. So Juno was born here but he's half Thai. He's born in South</p> <p>197. Africa and it was sort of a different process but it was very easy actually. I think it's</p> <p>198. about adoption and it's sort of like, it's just paperwork that you have to do and I think</p> <p>199. or some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know</p> <p>200. it's very tense but it's very intimidating into your life and to answer a lot of questions</p> <p>201. and be having a home study but I mean, you know, I think anything else I personally</p> <p>202. have been through once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect and</p> <p>203. then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process</p>	<p><i>that's how we ended up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's ... but at least it's worth it in the end</i></p> <p><i>He's born in South Africa, and it was sort of a different process, but it was very easy actually. I think it's about adoption and it's sort of like ..., and I think for some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know, it's very tense, it's very intimidating ... and to answer a lot of questions and be having a home study, but I mean, you know</i></p> <p><i>It's just paperwork that you have to do</i></p> <p><i>I think if anything else, I personally have been through it once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect, and then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process</i></p>
<p>205. Michael: Well, probably a year actually but that's also because you like, by the time</p> <p>206. you're done... there's only a few months actually between of actually doing things</p> <p>207. and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court,</p> <p>208. because the papers' going to the court and you just wait for your hearing and in the</p> <p>209. end we sort of pushed them after a while as we weren't sure if Juno's gonna go or is</p> <p>210. he gonna stay, and can he just see her and there were these questions and if she</p> <p>211. actually went back to Thailand and we couldn't find her again or anything, you know,</p> <p>212. then it would be a problem. But it was all done without too much drama.</p> <p>213. And then our housekeeper had a... my housekeeper from Zimbabwe came down</p> <p>214. when we moved here because she was, you know, starving in Zimbabwe at that time.</p> <p>215. She came down, she ended up getting pregnant shortly after that, so her son was</p> <p>216. also coming and Lee's business was growing so we moved up here about two years</p> <p>217. ago, two and a half years ago. Yeah, so that's how it all happened.</p> <p>218. Researcher Okay. Anything you want to add on that, Lee</p>	<p><i>Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because ... by the time you're done, there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court</i></p>
<p>230. Researcher: Okay, so I can see also the motive was adoption and what made you decide for adoption? Was it because it's easy or one or other method for adoption?</p> <p>231. Michael: For me I'm comfortable with surrogacy if you have another choice and I think</p> <p>232. especially if you spend time and in this region where there are so many orphans</p>	

<p>233. especially at that time before people came into retroviral, you know, and I think it's</p> <p>234. not that you would go everywhere you would go, you know. I spent a lot of time doing</p> <p>235. farm stories at that time, land perform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go</p> <p>236. to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty</p> <p>237. or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about all these kids you meet</p> <p>238. each one personally and to choose, to leave one of them behind. Even if there's sort</p> <p>239. of a community they wouldn't really be into me because the farms are being resettled,</p> <p>240. so all the workers had to leave too so they were also being approved. For me it was</p> <p>241. kind of hard and my brother used a surrogate. My brother used a surrogate with</p> <p>242. their second child so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it. But if</p> <p>243. you don't have to do that, it's actually usually expensive, very complicated and it's</p> <p>244. surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother, because you know</p> <p>245. if there's multiple birth a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes</p> <p>246. you uncomfortable if you think of having... I think another option is you sort of creating</p> <p>247. these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be</p> <p>248. aborted or... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by... you know, it's not bad but I</p> <p>249. also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation</p> <p>250. with another person. Not that a relationship with another person is complex, but like...</p> <p>251. so I think having a child with a surrogate mother it can be challenging in different</p> <p>252. ways and for the cause of the adoption is maybe at that time about one fifth the cost</p> <p>253. of doing surrogacy assuming that the surrogate mother had no health problems</p> <p>254. along the way and that the pregnancy proceeded perfectly smoothly.</p> <p>255. So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive I think twenty thousand dollars for his</p> <p>256. adoption which I think is a medium price and at that time the government would</p> <p>257. reimbursed you about half the cost on your taxes, that's how the U.S. government</p> <p>258. works, so it's not outrageous. Less than buying a new car, right?</p>	<p><i>I spent a lot of time doing farm stories at that time, land reform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about ... all these kids you meet each one personally and to choose to leave one of them behind</i></p> <p><i>My brother used a surrogate with their second child, so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it ... but if you don't have to do that.</i></p> <p><i>It is actually usually expensive (P1, line 243).</i></p> <p><i>Very complicated, and it's surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother because, you know, if there's multiple births, a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes you uncomfortable, if you think of having surrogacy. I think another issue is that you are creating these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be aborted or ... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by, you know, it's not bad, but I also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation with another person</i></p> <p><i>So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive, I think twenty thousand dollars for his adoption, which I think is a medium price</i></p>
<p>260. Michael: But to do a surrogate starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand</p>	<p><i>To do a surrogate ... starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send a child to university ... and a child who already exists</i></p>

<p>261. dollars and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send</p> <p>262. a child to university and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these</p> <p>263. things. So to me it's just a different thing. I also think that if you're a woman it can be</p> <p>264. different in depending on your personal background. People make different choices,</p> <p>265. so I know people as adults that were adopted themselves and it was never important</p> <p>266. to them to have a biological connection and they went through the surrogacy process</p> <p>267. or they just... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason but for me I</p> <p>268. didn't really see the point and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is gonna</p> <p>269. run out or something, you know. It's not the end of the world.</p>	<p><i>and needs a home and all these things. So to me it's just a different thing</i></p> <p><i>I know people as adults that were adopted themselves, and it was never important to them to have a biological connection, and they went through the surrogacy process or they just ... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason, but for me I didn't really see the point, and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is going to run out or something, you know</i></p>
<p>275. Michael: It's quite different the two of them, I think, because with Will was left at an</p> <p>276. orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the</p> <p>277. DNA-testing and she did home studies and you know all those things so he wasn't</p> <p>278. completely abandoned but Will was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I don't make</p> <p>279. any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year but we</p> <p>280. couldn't find her again. It was just very different because it's very much that you are</p> <p>281. dealing with. Social workers and doctors and professional people, you know, there's</p> <p>282. not that kind of emotional difficulty with a woman whose making a very difficult choice.</p> <p>283. Whereas with Juno's adoption, because she called us and we know her and we see</p> <p>284. her still and have a different kind of arrangement so he has a monthly playdate with</p> <p>285. his birth mom and we had to experience all of her emotional difficulties and she was</p> <p>286. not in a great place.</p>	<p><i>Will was left at an orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the DNA testing, and she did home studies and, you know, all those things, so he wasn't completely abandoned, but he was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I did not make any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year, but we couldn't find her again.</i></p> <p><i>So he has a monthly playdate with his birth mom</i></p>
<p>299. Lee: Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month.</p> <p>300. Researcher Okay. And does Juno know?</p> <p>301. Lee: Yeah. He knows that she's his mom.</p> <p>302. Researcher: Alright. So, a biological connection for these guys, is it something really important?</p> <p>303. Michael: Not for me.</p> <p>304. Lee: Not for me.</p>	<p><i>Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month</i></p>

### THEME 3: EXPERIENCES OF PARENTHOOD

SUBTHEME 3.1	ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD
<p>107. I had to deal with my job, and my 108. company didn't give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract 109. even though I was working in Bangkok, and Hong Kong is quiet conservative for any 110. sort of social policy like that, you know.</p>	<p><i>I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave</i></p>
<p>309. Michael: We have changed over time depending on our work situations because at 310. the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything but I needed to have fulltime 311. help because I was working and that can be a bit challenging because you also want 312. to bond with the kid but you do need full time day care because that's what working 313. parents need and I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom 314. and be like "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a 315. choice so not only do you need full time day care, you need full time day care plus a 316. back-up system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that 317. other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. 318. It can be nervous. You know it's hard to feel like... you know, basically the nanny 319. would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of 320. things but to be honest those things seem important at the moment but a few years 321. later it's like... At the time it's a really big deal but then you realise you have a more 322. complex relationship later. 323. But then when we got to South Africa Lee wasn't... Lee was working but he was trying 324. to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come 325. here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He end 326. up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot and I was at work 327. a lot and I work for 24 hour news so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend and 328. things like that and then when my contract finished and we decided to stay, it switched 329. because I was home and then my job here gave me full parental leave so I had 330. sixteen weeks of paid leave so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby and 331. Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business. 332. Lee: Yeah, I already started my business. Like Michael decided to quit the job,</p>	<p><i>At the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything, but I needed to have full-time help because I was working ... that can be a bit challenging because you also want to bond with the kid, but you do need full time daycare because that's what working parents need</i></p> <p><i>I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom and say like, "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a choice</i></p> <p><i>Not only do you need a full-time day nanny, you need full-time daycare plus a backup system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. It can be nervous ... you know it's hard</i></p> <p><i>Basically the nanny would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of things, but to be honest those things seem important at the moment, but a few years later it's like ... at the time it's a really big deal, but then you realise you have a more complex relationship later.</i></p> <p><i>When we got to South Africa Lee wasn't ... Lee wasn't working but he was trying to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He ended up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot</i></p> <p><i>I was at work a lot, and I work for 24 hour news, so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend It switched because I was home, and then my job here gave me full parental leave, so I had sixteen weeks of paid leave, so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby, and Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business</i></p>

<p>333. because of... otherwise we had to move to another country, so I pushed all my time and energy into my new business and that's how we carried on living and not move.</p> <p>334. So, it was a transition between, you know, business and like full time parents so I was struggled but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have day care and also Michael came out from work as well.</p> <p>335. Researcher Okay, this business of you becoming parents. We spoke about you both have the time now that you basically wanted to become a parent but what are some of the factors that you took into consideration when you said "now I want to be a parent"?</p> <p>336. Researcher: Okay, this business of you becoming parents. We spoke about you both have the time now that you basically wanted to become a parent but what are some of the factors that you took into consideration when you said "now I want to be a parent"?</p>	<p><i>It was a transition between, you know, business and like full-time parents, so I struggled, but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have daycare and also Michael came out from work as well</i></p>
<p>384. I've seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night.</p> <p>385. Even though I didn't live with them, so I felt for him because I bonded with him very, very nicely and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt loving him, both of them.</p> <p>386. Researcher Okay, I'm not sure if we should wait for him, but for you: what were some of the challenges you encountered with raising children or what was some of the challenges in obtaining which you encountered?</p> <p>387. Lee: To be honest, I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially for Will.</p> <p>388. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy and he's just like, you know, and I took it very personal, I thought like "oh, I didn't raise my child well at that point that's why they would behave like this" but my mom called me and said "listen, you did the fine thing". She explained it to me like, you know, when I was young like... I was also like screaming and shouting to my parents so that's why I thought "oh, so this is normal to be three years old, two years old to not listening to parents. So that's how I told myself and just to let them be and also like, you know, trying to discipline them in the way it should be.</p>	<p><i>I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially Will. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves, and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy</i></p>
<p>427. Researcher: Okay. How did you handle these disagreements in terms of you disagreeing for example your disciplinary side? How did you handle these disagreements?</p> <p>428. Researcher: Okay. How did you handle these disagreements?</p> <p>429. Researcher: Okay. How did you handle these disagreements?</p>	

<p>430. Lee: We didn't have disagreements in terms of arguing or disagreement. We didn't</p> <p>431. really have that but usually when I disagreed I just let Michael deal the way he thinks</p> <p>432. he should do then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him</p> <p>433. doing it his own way and that's how we're working as a team because of I respect</p> <p>434. Michael's opinion and the way he read both of them so then let him do his own thing</p> <p>435. and I then I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed</p> <p>436. it and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it.</p>	<p><i>When I disagreed, I just let Michael deal the way he thinks he should do, then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him doing it his own way, and that's how we're working as a team because I respect Michael's opinion and the way he reads to both of them, so then let him do his own thing ... I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed it, and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it</i></p>
<p>676. Michael: Yeah, I mean, I don't know... Lee and I will end up having a little argument</p> <p>677. and then you take a little break, chill out for a while and then you try it again later, you</p> <p>678. know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or... you know.</p> <p>679. Michael: Yeah, and I mean. I think my parents did a very good job of hiding their</p> <p>680. disagreements all the time so I didn't even know if they had any because it was only</p> <p>681. when I was in University that they told me they had a therapist and that they went to</p> <p>682. couples' counselling and that they've done all that stuff, you know, over the years</p> <p>683. through their marriage and that was total revelation to me that they've ever argued</p> <p>684. because they would never ever do it in front of us, you know. The right intention but</p> <p>685. not, you know, an actual argument which I think is very good, and on the other hand</p> <p>686. you have to be prepared for understanding how to argue. I am not very good at it still.</p>	<p><i>Yeah, I mean, I don't know ... Lee and I will end up having a little argument and then you take a little break, chill out for a while, and then you try it again later, you know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or ... you know</i></p>

<b>SUBTHEME 3.2</b>	<b>CHALLENGES</b>
<p>475. Michael: I remember being in high school and what that was like, so it's actually</p> <p>476. interesting to see on how much emotional challenges you have at this point and it's</p> <p>477. hard to know like it's very different, you know, like how to really shine, staying really</p> <p>478. calm because Will is very aggressive and very bold, you know. Will had some bullying</p> <p>479. problems at school and it was kind of hard to figure out because he didn't really talk</p> <p>480. about it, you know, so he went through this long process where he was in like very...</p> <p>481. carrying this very dark place emotionally. It just seemed like inappropriate for an</p> <p>482. eight-year-old. It was too dark, you know. But then once we realised what was</p> <p>483. happening at school then it was clear because the school was giving us support in</p>	

<p>484. terms of... you know it's... he was at a government school, which was a very good</p> <p>485. performing government school but even at this school the classes get quite big to be</p> <p>486. more thirty fiveish which for Second Grade or Third Grade is still a lot of kids. It just</p> <p>487. felt like the teachers didn't really... wasn't able to observe the dynamics within the</p> <p>488. kids very well or appreciate the need that maybe, you know, that if these kids were</p> <p>489. out at another adopted boy who was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and</p> <p>490. having an international family. Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two</p> <p>491. dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then it's hard to...</p>	<p><i>The teachers weren't really able to observe the dynamics within the kids very well, you know that these kids were out at an adopted boy. He was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and having an international family</i></p> <p><i>Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then, it's hard</i></p>
<p>499. Researcher: Okay. And now, how are they settling in the new school?</p> <p>500. Michael: This is his third year in this school. We changed him mid-year in Grade 3</p> <p>501. and now he's in Grade 5.</p> <p>502. Researcher: And the bullying?</p> <p>503. Lee: Yeah, I find it's still there but it's been less, you know, from previous school.</p>	<p><i>Yeah, I find it's still there, but it's been less, you know, than at the previous school</i></p>
<p>507. Michael: Your momma's so fat, she's ironing her pants on the driveway. You know,</p> <p>508. like, this kind of thing? Which is horrible, but happens, and you know, whatever, I</p> <p>509. guess, so they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at</p> <p>510. least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right?</p> <p>511. And I mean... and I am not sure if it's well to be good friends but, you know, I chatted</p> <p>512. to the teacher about it once, he came to us right away that was a first.</p>	<p><i>Guess so, they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right</i></p>
<p>540. Michael: But it's quite... it started very early and it comes from parents, which is just</p> <p>541. jaw dropping I mean like the first week, you see what I mean: the child is three and a</p> <p>542. half years old he's not a dash for, you know, we're doing the parents thing and it's</p> <p>543. just like a parade of... you know like nice white production moms, you know and other</p> <p>544. nice whites, moms or dads or whatever so it's not like slam packed either as a thing,</p> <p>545. you know or whatever it is what it is. But this mom comes out she's like "oh, you're</p> <p>546. not from here". I'm like "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I</p> <p>547. go "This is mine".</p> <p>548. Michael: Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he"? and I say "He's a boy, he's an</p> <p>549. American too" and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know and then</p>	<p><i>This mom comes out and she's, like, "oh, you're not from here". I'm like, "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I go, "this is mine". Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he"? and I say, "he's a boy, he's an American too", and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know, and then someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy. And so, finally, like the third person asking in the course of like fifteen minutes, and it's not really like I</i></p>

<p>550. someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy.</p> <p>551. Michael: And so finally like the third person asking in a course of like fifteen minutes</p> <p>552. and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like,</p> <p>553. "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like "and what are they"? And I was like, well...</p> <p>554. Lee: We need a map and then we will show you Geography. Stuff that.</p>	<p><i>have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like, "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like, "and what are they"?</i></p>
<p>572. Michael: And some days he would colour over it and do it and do it again and it's like</p> <p>573. oh he is trying to redo it and it made him so upset ... and the kids would be like; well</p> <p>574. you are not white and you are not black so you are nothing, you know.</p>	<p><i>The kids would be, like, well you are not white, and you are not black, so you are nothing, you know</i></p>
<p>599. Michael: But quite hard and then the teachers, when he got to primary school were</p> <p>600. also like- they were insistent that you must fit in one of the squares you know. Like</p> <p>601. "oh, you are a little Indian boy". d he would get so frustrated because he would tell people you know and</p> <p>602. would tell the</p>	<p><i>When he got to primary school the teachers were insistent that he must fit in one of the squares, you know. Like "oh, you are a little Indian boy</i></p>
<p>620. Michael: He would cry about it all the time you know, not every day but then to show</p> <p>621. like how much it is. Kids and their personalities when they would interact with you</p> <p>622. ...last year...</p> <p>623. So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were 2 new kids</p> <p>624. in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school, you know we are having</p> <p>625. supper and he's like ehm, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I</p> <p>626. was like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like; dad I'm a</p> <p>627. different colour than you. They don't like my colour.</p> <p>628. And it's like oh, what did you tell them? He's like, I said well you are a stinky pooh</p> <p>629. pooh head and I don't want to play with you. [laughing]- and I was like well that is the</p> <p>630. correct response.</p>	<p><i>So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were two new kids in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school. You know we are having supper, and he's, like, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I was, like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like ... dad I'm a different colour than you. They don't like my colour</i></p>
<p>646. Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>647. Michael: And you just don't... I don't know. Like I think when you are- it's just sad but</p> <p>648. only think is I don't know if it's necessarily different from what we would have</p> <p>649. experienced in America and in Thailand certainly other things came up, you know,</p> <p>650. because adoption is a very foreign concept and so in Thailand people would come</p> <p>651. up to me all the time and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is</p>	<p><i>So in Thailand people would come up to me all the time, and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is the mom? How can there be no mom?"</i></p>



<p>652. the mom? How can there be no mom?" So it was like I think those options are clear</p> <p>653. right. I mean that is like is not really a question.</p> <p>654. Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>655. Michael: All you need is just to think about it for a few minutes and you will understand</p> <p>656. what would have happened. At the end of the day it will be revealed at the school</p> <p>657. play and they call me a nice dad you know, a friendly dad. And they always go; how</p> <p>658. do you know that he loves you [remark- because you are not the dad] because you</p> <p>659. are not related.</p>	<p><i>They always go; how do you know that he loves you, because you are not the dad, because you are not related</i></p>
<p>737. Michael: I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the</p> <p>738. time and I find it slightly offensive to go to like a parents meeting that is not a parents</p> <p>739. meeting but it's been called that, it's a mom's meeting. I think for class moms and</p> <p>740. you'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know and</p> <p>741. we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't</p> <p>742. want to braai? And what if "serving" is not really how we want to describe the activity</p> <p>743. of, you know, providing the meal to the children. There's a different way to formulate</p> <p>744. this for class. And, you know, I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 64,</p> <p>745. I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me. And it will be a "good</p> <p>746. morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like... First of all, I find that offensive for</p> <p>747. the women because they are using this sweetie cute little tone of voice with adult</p> <p>748. women who have like real jobs, or like do serious work and even if they're working at</p> <p>749. home, they're doing a lot, like don't talk to them like they're five year olds, who's going</p> <p>750. to keep moving. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this</p> <p>751. process? You know.</p> <p>752. But I find that annoying and I find it a little bit... I feel it's like a shared sensibility with</p> <p>753. other gay people and gay men in particular that, I do get a little bit lonely for when</p> <p>754. you're surrounded by the moms all the time and I find that dads are all very cool and</p> <p>755. very nice. I've never really related that well with straight boys, I don't think you know,</p> <p>756. so... and even we have lots of good straight coupled friends. I mean lovely, lovely</p> <p>757. people. And good friends whom I trust and miss and, you know, all that stuff. But, I</p> <p>758. don't know, it is nice. I mean we have the other gay dads who I do find it really useful</p>	<p><i>I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the time, and I find it slightly offensive to go to, like, a parents' meeting that is not a parents' meeting, but it's been called that, it's a moms' meeting</i></p> <p><i>You'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know, and we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't want to braai?</i></p> <p><i>I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 6.4, I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me, and it will be a "good morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like ... first of all, I find that offensive for the women because they are using this sweetie, cute little tone of voice with adult women who have, like, real jobs. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this process? You know</i></p>

<p>759. to like have a hangout every now and then. You know just come over and have like 760. coffee or whatever.</p>	
<p>1014. Michael: I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child and that's a 1015. chance to welcome your child into the community and your family and my mother, 1016. she is a seamstress and spent her whole life making beautiful baptismal gowns for 1017. other people's babies and it's like look at mine, it's your first grandchild and you don't 1018. get to make a baptismal gown for your own grandchild. You know, I'm not an asshole, 1019. you know, I'm not gonna do that and the thing is and the rest of them is like we don't 1020. do it, you know. We go with my parents for Christmas or for Easter, we go to church 1021. and the other way around because they like to go and we support them but I don't 1022. need to go to a church that's not gonna support me back and I don't really think it's 1023. appropriate after explaining to my kids like "oh, we're Catholic and we go to Catholic 1024. Church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services 1025. or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do and I don't actually 1026. care enough to be a bothered or something. It just doesn't interest me, I mean, 1027. whereas Lee is having interest. You were less interested in the beginning, but now 1028. you are more religious so it's a different thing now. 1029. Lee: Yeah. 1030. Researcher: And there are supporters at school? 1031. Lee: You mean at the temple? 1032. Michael: Lee's Buddhist. 1033. Researcher: Oh, okay. But how was your experience with the guys to find out you 1034. were a gay dad and... 1035. Lee: No they are... I mean, at the temple, I mean, they don't mind if you are gay 1036. or straight, you know, they did give support, and you know... yeah. 1037. Researcher : Okay. There's not any disapproval or... 1038. Lee: No. Not at all. 1039. Michael: But they wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are 1040. supportive but there is a line.</p>	<p><i>We're Catholic, and we go to the Catholic church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do, and I don't actually care enough</i></p> <p><i>They [Buddhist church]; wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are supportive, but there is a line</i></p>

<b>SUBTHEME 3.3</b>	<b>CREATING POSITIVE FAMILY IDENTITY</b>
<p>407. Lee: Michael read lots of books on how to raising kids but they are not the same.</p>	

<p>408. They are not the same as in the book because they have their own... they are very different from other families as well. Even my niece is different from my sister, so...</p> <p>410. you can read from the book 'how to' like a guideline, you know, but in reality we have to look at who they are and then how to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important to... for me I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons. And to love Will and Juno. And I will address the best thing for them, you know.</p>	<p><i>How to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important ... for me, I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons</i></p>
<p>417. Lee: No, because obviously we came from different cultures. You know, I grew up in Thailand and when I was young, I was punished by my parents in a challenging way. Discipline, ja. So it's different from Michael. I learnt a lot from Michael. The way he disciplines both of them. So I kind of adopt and apply the content of firm discipline routine and I've seen that it worked with them so that's how I get rid of like how to discipline them by maths at all because I didn't see good results to do that with both of them but discipline them by using naughty corners like half an hour, you know.</p>	<p><i>discipline them by using naughty corners like half for an hour, you know</i></p>
<p>438. Lee: I feel like... because I look at my father and to be honest I have a memory about my father had disappeared and somehow it came back. It came back and I remember that my dad... he always be there for me and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them.</p>	<p><i>I feel like ... because I look at my father, and to be honest I have a memory about my father which disappeared, and somehow it came back. It came back, and I remember that my dad ... he was always there for me, and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them</i></p>
<p>445. Lee: It was difficult. It was difficult for me. Like I say, I... from my family, we were more like relaxed, I try to comfort. I used to do a lot for them like pick up their clothes and try to really discipline them but somehow I've seen that that was wrong so I started to show them how to do, instead of doing it for them and then that worked.</p>	
<p>454. Michael: ...so different expectations and just different experiences the way that you rep yourself, so... Ja, I mean the discipline thing is hard because it's got a part to know where the line is sometimes, you know. You think you know but then afterwards there's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent, you know. So</p>	<p><i>There's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent</i></p>

459. they need a chance to fail and they have to take the consequence for that.	
<p>688. Michael: Yeah, I'm very... for me it makes me feel very complete. I feel very much</p> <p>689. like this is the way that I always wanted things to be in terms of me and the kids and</p> <p>690. I think what's complicated is balancing that would being a husband, a professional of</p> <p>691. some sort where you have some of your own creative life and your own mental</p> <p>692. engagement and I mean being a... it makes me feel very full and at the same time</p> <p>693. it's interesting like how that is one part of life, you know, and feeling like this you will</p> <p>694. always be fathers but each day is different. They all ask a really long time. People</p> <p>695. say that you've got so far to really make it happen. It's really hard, I mean it's not a</p> <p>696. easy buck house. You don't just fly by, I mean, every day is very challenging and</p> <p>697. very... which doesn't mean that it's bad, but it means that it does takes a lot from your</p> <p>698. engagement with life and these relationships and it's not easy and it doesn't fly by,</p> <p>699. it's not like you have a great time and then you're done, you know. Yeah, but, it all</p> <p>700. ends up differently.</p>	<i>It makes me feel very complete</i>
<p>720. And I think the results about what you're doing manifests so far into the future. So it's</p> <p>721. like we did this today, and we did it yesterday, it's like wow, I have to deal with those</p> <p>722. school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours</p> <p>723. and these things but you don't really know if that works until like months later when</p> <p>724. you see if the behaviour has shifted, you know, and all that stuff that happens when</p> <p>725. they're really little, you know.</p>	<i>I have to deal with those school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours</i>
<p>808. Michael: Much better looking than the other families [laughter]. From a different</p> <p>809. point... I think, yeah, we're in fashion, we're a very international family, right, and for</p> <p>810. us, part of that is bringing us out our own cultural and international identities, whether</p> <p>811. for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered where they came</p> <p>812. from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots, and how do you</p> <p>813. incorporate those things in different ways and then, I think in certain ways we are a</p> <p>814. very modern family because the world is moving so fast, people are moving and</p> <p>815. mixing in different ways so quickly so for a child like Will it was have a... I mean, back</p> <p>816. to the racial thing.</p>	<i>We're a very international family, right, and for us, part of that is bringing out our own cultural and international identities, whether for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered, where they came from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots</i>

<p>991. Michael: The church is weird, you know, you may say. It's all wink, wink, nod, nod</p> <p>992. because, for me it's not right. I grew up in a small town. You know, my</p> <p>993. grandmother she and her family, were to live in the same area, don't move</p> <p>994. or leaving and my dad, you know, my dad and grandfather moved into his town in the</p> <p>995. 1920's, they all lived in the same house, or in the house next door, on the same piece</p> <p>996. of property, going to the same church since the 1920's. I just have a very long history</p> <p>997. with the particular pattern. The priest was there when Will was baptised was actually</p> <p>998. quite but basically and you kind of chat with the bishops on what the</p>	<p><i>The priest was there when Will was baptised. I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child, and that's a chance to welcome your child into the community</i></p>
<p>1061. Lee: Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is not I've talked to them about</p> <p>1062. reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know,</p> <p>1063. so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being</p> <p>1064. gay and you not being a Buddhist and...</p>	<p><i>Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is ... I've talked to them about reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know, so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being gay and you not being a Buddhist</i></p>
<p>1104. Michael: We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies</p> <p>1105. together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home. We both like</p> <p>1106. movies anyway so we'll probably do it more often than other people because we enjoy</p> <p>1107. that. I don't know. What other things do we do? We go to the park relatively often.</p> <p>1108. Lee: We're travelling.</p> <p>1109. Michael: Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah.</p> <p>1110. Lee: We travel a lot, ja.</p>	<p><i>We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home</i></p> <p><i>We go to the park relatively often</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah.</i></p> <p><i>We travel a lot, ja</i></p>
<p>1117. Lee: For me, I... how do I say? I know this is like people look up at us in a good way</p> <p>1118. and in not a nice way, but for me I try to express my family in the public and then</p> <p>1119. show my kids okay, this is how... we're a gay couple and how we interact in the public</p> <p>1120. like normal, like other families, friends, men or women so I try to show them but for</p> <p>1121. other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to...</p> <p>1122. it's like I know how they look at us but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the</p> <p>1123. way they're looking at us.</p>	<p><i>We're a gay couple and how we interact in public like normal families, like other families, friends, men or women, so I try to show them, but for other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to ... it's like I know how they look at us, but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the way they're looking at us</i></p>

## Data Display

## THEME 1: DECISION TO BECOME PARENTS

THEME 1 DECISION TO BECOME A PARENT
<p><i>I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd come back from working in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist, and I was there with my ex, and when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of my life and feeling a little bit unsettled.</i></p> <p><i>I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt,</i></p> <p><i>After the breakup, I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found someone, and then decided to adopt together.</i></p> <p><i>It was like, well...that was when I was 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone again</i></p>
<p><i>So, on our second date, Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... So, yeah, but it wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really going into a second date expecting him to co-parent or anything</i></p>
<p><i>So, we got here Will was three and a half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know, it was hard moving, and so it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst. Lee tried some different things, and then finally figured out the massage business would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will (P1, lines 172-177).</i></p> <p><i>We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will</i></p> <p><i>Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea, but he was going to support it, and we are going to go along with it</i></p>
<p><i>If he hadn't been thinking about that already, I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own</i></p> <p><i>No, never thought</i></p> <p><i>Ja, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you know, Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent, but I'm there for him ... so I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know</i></p> <p><i>Then me and Will, we got bonded at the end, so that's how I see okay, ja, I would like to try, and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, ja</i></p>
<p><i>Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money ... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment.</i></p> <p><i>So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good health care</i></p> <p><i>Raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with ... and my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helped a lot too</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up</i></p>
<p><i>For me, I feel different from Michael because I've seen the good things, you know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own, but for me I wasn't able to, you know, even to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my own, but I think Michael was able to do it, so then I decided to be help him and to contribute with my physical ability in terms of, you know, to be with Will while Michael was working because later on he offered to ... and asked me to move in with them, that's how I thought I think I could, you know, jump on board in raising Will together with Michael, even though at the time I didn't have a job</i></p>
<p><i>I had a chance to see Will, how he's growing up, because he came home at four months, and at the time in two years, I didn't decide to be a parent while he is there, so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I</i></p>

have seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night. So ... I felt for him because I bonded with him very nicely, and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt I loved him

I never felt uncertain about being a parent

Well, we had very different family experiences

For me my family was not there from the beginning, they did not accept the way I'm gay, so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay... this is who I am

So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents

have seen like, this is my actions and this is results from both of them. So then, the questions that they ask, it have been answered by actions. So now they are happy,

I came out when I was eighteen and actually that was one of the things like, you know "what about kids"? I was sort of like, I don't understand the connection actually, I can still have children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second, I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the idea.

## THEME 2: CHOOSING A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD

### THEME 2: PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD

I decided to start the adoption process on my own, which at that time in America, it was a little bit challenging, especially if you were known to be gay at that time.

So, I was living in Washington DC which, you know, is a very tiny jurisdiction as a separate entity from the state that surrounds it. It has limited self-government and was very progressive, and tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and do a lot of things, but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the Congress has to approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the Congress and live in a district ... they still tell us what to do. So, they definitely tried to do a lot, but they were unable to implement all the laws because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck ...

Which means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our jurisdiction over DC. In Virginia, gay marriage was illegal and adoption was illegal, a marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a challenge in terms of finding adoption agencies to work with

There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state

So at the time it was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight

So, at that time, the only country that would allow a single man to do an international adoption was Guatemala.

But there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight.

I adopted from this orphanage in Guatemala

I didn't really have a good experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Bangkok

The orphanage called and said "hey, we have matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details, and if you agree to the match then we will proceed

To be exact, it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months old and they were like, okay, you need to go back and be patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent like a week there.

*Then I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage, you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back and be patient, you don't have to call us every day, and we will let you know when things are happening.*

*I was like, wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn't really organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn't really set up for kids and I didn't have a daycare lined up, I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract even though I was working in Bangkok, and Hong Kong is quite conservative for any sort of social policy like that, you know*

*So, basically, dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like, well, you only get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala and, you know, that stuff ... I said okay, great*

*I hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and so everything came together pretty quickly and my mom and her best friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks*

*We picked up Will, my dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will's godmother, went back with me to Guatemala*

*We stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church and then as that was happening, Hurricane Katrina hit, so the city was shut down. Will's passport was in the passport office in New Orleans. We couldn't get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and destroyed*

*It was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted out. Finally, the Thai Embassy in Washington is like "oh, you can bring him back and pick up his visa at the embassy in Bangkok". I said, okay, that would be great, thanks. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana where my parents lived to get to Thailand*

*We get there and the immigration officials were like, well, he can't come in because he doesn't have a Guatemalan passport. Even though he is an American citizen, you haven't got a proof of that yet, and I was like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in*

*We went to the US embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane. They wanted to deport him back to America and then fly us all the way back. I was like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back (*

*So in the end they agreed we take a plane to Singapore ... so we flew to Singapore, which was like an hour and a half away. I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport, turned around, right back into the queue, walked back out of Singapore, got back onto the same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up, and then it was fine, they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport with the resident fees and all that*

*We did an application at Johannesburg Children Welfare, but they lost it.*

*Then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the government introduced the new Child Welfare Law*

*I think rather than grandfathering instead the applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they just stopped processing adoptions from the moment the Bill was introduced to Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year*

*So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not meant to be, it's whatever we're happy*

*One night a Thai woman called up and said, "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how we ended up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's ... but at least it's worth it in the end*

*He's born in South Africa, and it was sort of a different process, but it was very easy actually. I think it's about adoption and it's sort of like ..., and I think for some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know, it's very tense, it's very intimidating ... and to answer a lot of questions and be having a home study, but I mean, you know*

*It's just paperwork that you have to do*

*I think if anything else, I personally have been through it once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect, and then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process*



Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because ... by the time you're done, there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court

I spent a lot of time doing farm stories at that time, land reform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about ... all these kids you meet each one personally and to choose to leave one of them behind

My brother used a surrogate with their second child, so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it ... but if you don't have to do that.

It is actually usually expensive (P1, line 243).

Very complicated, and it's surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother because, you know, if there's multiple births, a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes you uncomfortable, if you think of having surrogacy. I think another issue is that you are creating these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be aborted or ... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by, you know, it's not bad, but I also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation with another person

So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive, I think twenty thousand dollars for his adoption, which I think is a medium price

To do a surrogate ... starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send a child to university ... and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these things. So to me it's just a different thing

I know people as adults that were adopted themselves, and it was never important to them to have a biological connection, and they went through the surrogacy process or they just ... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason, but for me I didn't really see the point, and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is going to run out or something, you know

Will was left at an orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the DNA testing, and she did home studies and, you know, all those things, so he wasn't completely abandoned, but he was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I did not make any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year, but we couldn't find her again.

So he has a monthly playdate with his birth mom

Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month

### THEME 3: EXPERIENCES OF PARENTHOOD

#### SUBTHEME 3.1: ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD

I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave

At the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything, but I needed to have full-time help because I was working ... that can be a bit challenging because you also want to bond with the kid, but you do need full time daycare because that's what working parents need

I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom and say like, "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a choice

Not only do you need a full-time day nanny, you need full-time daycare plus a backup system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. It can be nervous ... you know it's hard

Basically the nanny would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of things, but to be honest those things seem important at the moment, but a few years later it's like ... at the time it's a really big deal, but then you realise you have a more complex relationship later.

*When we got to South Africa Lee wasn't ... Lee wasn't working but he was trying to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He ended up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot*

*I was at work a lot, and I work for 24 hour news, so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend*

*It switched because I was home, and then my job here gave me full parental leave, so I had sixteen weeks of paid leave, so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby, and Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business*

*It was a transition between, you know, business and like full-time parents, so I struggled, but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have daycare and also Michael came out from work as well*

*I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially Will. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves, and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy*

*When I disagreed, I just let Michael deal the way he thinks he should do, then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him doing it his own way, and that's how we're working as a team because I respect Michael's opinion and the way he reads to both of them, so then let him do his own thing ... I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed it, and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it*

*Yeah, I mean, I don't know ... Lee and I will end up having a little argument and then you take a little break, chill out for a while, and then you try it again later, you know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or ... you know*

### **SUBTHEME 3.2: CHALLENGES**

*The teachers weren't really able to observe the dynamics within the kids very well, you know that these kids were out at an adopted boy. He was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and having an international family Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then, it's hard*

*Yeah, I find it's still there, but it's been less, you know, than at the previous school*

*Guess so, they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right*

*This mom comes out and she's, like, "oh, you're not from here". I'm like, "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I go, "this is mine". Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he?" and I say, "he's a boy, he's an American too", and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know, and then someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy. And so, finally, like the third person asking in the course of like fifteen minutes, and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like, "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like, "and what are they"?*

*The kids would be, like, well you are not white, and you are not black, so you are nothing, you know*

*When he got to primary school the teachers were insistent that he must fit in one of the squares, you know. Like "oh, you are a little Indian boy*

*So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were two new kids in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school. You know we are having supper, and he's, like, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I was, like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like ... dad I'm a different colour than you. They don't like my colour*

*So in Thailand people would come up to me all the time, and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is the mom? How can there be no mom?"*

*They always go; how do you know that he loves you, because you are not the dad, because you are not related*

<p><i>I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the time, and I find it slightly offensive to go to, like, a parents' meeting that is not a parents' meeting, but it's been called that, it's a moms' meeting</i></p> <p><i>You'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know, and we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't want to braai?</i></p> <p><i>I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 6.4, I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me, and it will be a "good morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like ... first of all, I find that offensive for the women because they are using this sweetie, cute little tone of voice with adult women who have, like, real jobs. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this process? You know</i></p>
<p><i>We're Catholic, and we go to the Catholic church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do, and I don't actually care enough</i></p> <p><i>They [Buddhist church]; wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are supportive, but there is a line</i></p>

<p><b>SUBTHEME 3.3: CREATING POSITIVE FAMILY IDENTITY</b></p>
<p><i>How to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important ... for me, I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons</i></p>
<p><i>discipline them by using naughty corners like half for an hour, you know</i></p>
<p><i>I feel like ... because I look at my father, and to be honest I have a memory about my father which disappeared, and somehow it came back. It came back, and I remember that my dad ... he was always there for me, and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them</i></p>
<p><i>There's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent</i></p>
<p><i>It makes me feel very complete</i></p>
<p><i>I have to deal with those school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours</i></p>
<p><i>We're a very international family, right, and for us, part of that is bringing out our own cultural and international identities, whether for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered, where they came from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots</i></p>
<p><i>The priest was there when Will was baptised. I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child, and that's a chance to welcome your child into the community</i></p>
<p><i>Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is ... I've talked to them about reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know, so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being gay and you not being a Buddhist</i></p>
<p><i>We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home</i></p> <p><i>We go to the park relatively often</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah.</i></p> <p><i>We travel a lot, ja</i></p>
<p><i>We're a gay couple and how we interact in public like normal families, like other families, friends, men or women, so I try to show them, but for other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to ... it's like I know how they look at us, but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the way they're looking at us</i></p>

Data Drawing/Verifying Conclusions

Theme 1

Data presented under this theme relate to the process the participants in this study went through during their decision to become parents. This covers their childhood and coming-out experiences leading up to the point when they decided to become parents (Sub-theme 1.1). Under this theme, data are presented on the factors that influenced the gay male couple’s decision to become parents (Sub-theme 1.2).

DECISION TO BECOME A PARENT	SUBTHEMES
<p><i>I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt (P1, line 44).</i></p> <p><i>I never felt uncertain about being a parent (P1, line 718).</i></p> <p><i>I was single when I was living in Washington DC. I'd come back from working in Zimbabwe for two years working as a journalist, and I was there with my ex, and when we got back to Washington we broke up, and I was sort of having a moment of like just doubt about what was going to happen with the rest of my life and feeling a little bit unsettled. I always had it in my mind that I wanted to have kids, and I would like to adopt, and after the breakup, I just felt like maybe I would be waiting a long time before I found someone, and then decided to adopt together. It was like, well...that was when I was 29, which was not very old. I was like "well, maybe it takes few years to find someone again and you take a few years to know each other, and then make sure by the time you do it you are getting to be older by then", you know (P1, lines 39-49).</i></p> <p><i>I came out when I was 18 and actually that was one of the things like, you know, "what about kids"? I was sort of, like, I don't understand the connection actually, and I can still have children. First of all, I'm not telling you I'm infertile, I'm telling you that I'm gay. Second, I mean, I can adopt and all that stuff. So they had a long time to kind of adjust to the idea (P1, lines 971-976).</i></p> <p><i>Well, we had very different family experiences (P1, line 908).</i></p> <p><i>For me my family was not there from the beginning, they did not accept the way I'm gay, so it was a bit challenging for me to prove to them that this is gay... this is who I am (P2, lines 909-911).</i></p> <p><i>So instead of explaining to them, for me I have shown them. I have proven to them by actions, but not just one. And then, when my parents have seen like, this is my actions, and this is results from both of them. So then, the questions that they ask, they have been answered by actions, so now they are happy (P2, lines 912-915).</i></p> <p><i>I think for Lee it was very different because he was presented with a choice that was already done (P1, line 220-),</i></p> <p><i>If he hadn't been thinking about that already, I don't think that you would ever have that idea of being a parent on your own (P1, line 222).</i></p> <p><i>No, never thought (P2, line 223).</i></p> <p><i>So, on our second date, Lee was celebrating because he had a new job, and I was like "hey, I am going to be a dad", and Lee was sort of like ... [Laughter] So, yeah, but it wasn't really ... I mean I would say I wasn't really</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 1.1:</b> <b>Process of becoming parents</b></p>

<p>going into a second date expecting him to co-parent or anything (P1, lines 87-90).</p> <p>Ja, the thing is for me, you know, what can I say? He is there, he was there, you know, Will was there, at the time, like you know, I didn't think to become a parent, but I'm there for him ... so I kind of didn't have the chance, chances, you know (P2, lines 225-227).</p> <p>Then me and Will, we got bonded at the end, so that's how I see okay, ja, I would like to try, and so it's my challenge to accept to be a parent, ja (P2, lines 228-229).</p> <p>I had a chance to see Will, how he's growing up, because he came home at four months, and at the time in two years, I didn't decide to be a parent while he is there, so that's like for that two-year period I bonded with him, I have seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night. So ... I felt for him because I bonded with him very nicely, and then it was difficult to say no to Michael that I don't want to be a parent even though from the bottom of my heart I felt I loved him (P2, lines 382-388).</p> <p>We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will (P1, lines 176-177).</p> <p>Lee wasn't so sure about, you know, two was the best idea, but he was going to support it, and we are going to go along with it (P1, lines 178-179).</p>	
<p>Well, I decided I had a good job. I was making actually quite a lot of money ... I mean I was 29 and was making decent money, I had my apartment (P1, lines 342-343).</p> <p>So I thought, you know, like I had a job with really good benefits, I had good health care (P1, lines 347-348).</p> <p>Raising him much closer to home and having the family support to go with ... and my family was very supportive and very excited about it, so that helped a lot too (P1, lines 352-353).</p> <p>Yeah, so I kind of felt like everything was set up (P1, line 356).</p> <p>For me, I feel different from Michael because I've seen the good things, you know. He was in the position that to take care of Will on his own, but for me I wasn't able to, you know, even to have my own kids at the time or decide to adopt on my own, but I think Michael was able to do it, so then I decided to be help him and to contribute with my physical ability in terms of, you know, to be with Will while Michael was working because later on he offered to ... and asked me to move in with them, that's how I thought I think I could, you know, jump on board in raising Will together with Michael, even though at the time I didn't have a job (P2, lines 367-375).</p> <p>So, we got here [South Africa]; Will was three and a half years old, and we got settled and it was kind of long, you know, it was hard moving, and so it only took a year before we got settled in. We bought a house in Parkhurst. Lee tried some different things, and then finally figured out the massage business would be a good one, so he started the massage business. We decided to try and adopt again because for me it was important to have a sibling for Will (P1, lines 172-177).</p>	<p><b>Subthemes 1.2:</b></p> <p><b>Factors that influenced the decision to become parents</b></p>

## Theme 2:

Data presented under this theme related to adoption as a pathway (Sub-theme 2.1) and covered also the positive experiences and the challenges the participants in this study encountered during the adoption process (Sub-theme 2.2).

CHOOSING A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD	SUBTHEMES
<p><i>I spent a lot of time doing farm stories at that time, land reform stuff, but, you know, every farm you would go to there would be fifty, sixty orphans. You know, every school you go to there's fifty or sixty orphans and that's very hard to kind of think about ... all these kids you meet each one personally and to choose to leave one of them behind (P1, lines 234-238).</i></p> <p><i>My brother used a surrogate with their second child, so there's nothing in particular, I mean I'm not offended by it ... but if you don't have to do that (P1, lines 241-243).</i></p> <p><i>It is actually usually expensive (P1, line 243).</i></p> <p><i>To do a surrogate ... starts at about hundred, hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars you can raise a child and send a child to university ... and a child who already exists and needs a home and all these things. So to me it's just a different thing (P1, lines 260-263).</i></p> <p><i>So even if Will's adoption was fairly expensive, I think twenty thousand dollars for his adoption, which I think is a medium price (P1, lines 255-256).</i></p> <p><i>Very complicated, and it's surrendering a certain amount of power to the surrogate mother because, you know, if there's multiple births, a mother has the right to decide how many to keep. It makes you uncomfortable, if you think of having surrogacy. I think another issue is that you are creating these embryos knowing that some of them would probably never make it or be aborted or ... I'm very pro-choice, I'm not offended by, you know, it's not bad, but I also think why would you put so much effort and create this very complex situation with another person (P1, lines 243-250).</i></p> <p><i>I know people as adults that were adopted themselves, and it was never important to them to have a biological connection, and they went through the surrogacy process or they just ... you know for different reasons, there's not just that reason, but for me I didn't really see the point, and I have a huge family. It's not like my bloodline is going to run out or something, you know (P1, lines 265-269).</i></p> <p><i>I decided to start the adoption process on my own, which at that time in America, it was a little bit challenging, especially if you were known to be gay at that time (P1, lines 49-51).</i></p> <p><i>But there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight (P1, lines 71-72).</i></p> <p><i>So, at that time, the only country that would allow a single man to do an international adoption was Guatemala (P1, lines 73-74).</i></p> <p><i>I adopted from this orphanage in Guatemala (P1, lines 77-78).</i></p> <p><i>It's just paperwork that you have to do (P1, line 198).</i></p> <p><i>There was a social worker from one state, the lawyer was from another state (P1, line 66).</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 2.1:</b></p> <p><b>Adoption as a pathway to parenthood</b></p>

<p><i>Will was left at an orphanage and his mother never came back. Well, she did, she came back to do the DNA testing, and she did home studies and, you know, all those things, so he wasn't completely abandoned, but he was left at an orphanage. I never met her. I did not make any contact with her. We actually tried to make contact with her last year, but we couldn't find her again (P1, lines 278-280).</i></p> <p><i>I think if anything else, I personally have been through it once before with Will, so you kind of know what to expect, and then the process is actually very straight forward, I mean it's not a horrible process (P1, lines 201-203).</i></p> <p><i>We did an application at Johannesburg Children Welfare, but they lost it (P1, lines 180-181).</i></p> <p><i>One night a Thai woman called up and said, "hi, I heard you were trying to adopt and I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby so would you adopt my child?" And so, that's how we ended up getting Juno through another sort of law process that's ... but at least it's worth it in the end (P1, lines 193-196).</i></p> <p><i>He's born in South Africa, and it was sort of a different process, but it was very easy actually. I think it's about adoption and it's sort of like ... it's just paperwork that you have to do, and I think for some people it can feel that you're being evaluated as a human being, you know, it's very tense, it's very intimidating ... and to answer a lot of questions and be having a home study, but I mean, you know (P1, lines 196-201).</i></p> <p><i>Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because ... by the time you're done, there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court (P1, lines 205-207).</i></p> <p><i>So he has a monthly playdate with his birth mom (P1, line 284-285).</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, she still sees Juno once a month (P2, line 299).</i></p>	
<p><i>So, I was living in Washington DC which, you know, is a very tiny jurisdiction as a separate entity from the state that surrounds it. It has limited self-government and was very progressive, and tried to implement a gay marriage ordinance and do a lot of things, but the district doesn't have its own budgeting authority, so the Congress has to approve the budget for the district even though we don't vote for the Congress and live in a district ... they still tell us what to do. So, they definitely tried to do a lot, but they were unable to implement all the laws because they weren't given funding to do it, even for things as simple as changing the marriage forms to say spouse 1, spouse 2, you know. They were sort of stuck ... (P1, lines 52-61).</i></p> <p><i>Which means that you had to go to the neighbouring state to find social workers to our jurisdiction over DC. In Virginia, gay marriage was illegal and adoption was illegal, a marriage was a different set of rules, so it is a bit of a challenge in terms of finding adoption agencies to work with (P1, lines 61-65).</i></p> <p><i>So at the time it was important for me to adopt from a developing country because I felt like that was going to restore the balance, you know; but there are not many countries that allow single men to adopt, whether you are gay or straight (P1, lines 69-72).</i></p> <p><i>I didn't really have a good experience since there was sort of a lot of paperwork, but between the time that I started the paperwork and finished, my company transferred me to Bangkok (P1, lines 78-80).</i></p> <p><i>I ended up in Bangkok. I finished the paperwork while I was there (P1, lines 81-82).</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 2.2:</b>  <b>Experiences of the gay male parents during adoption</b></p>

The orphanage called and said "hey, we have matched you with a boy. Check your email and you will see all of these details, and if you agree to the match then we will proceed" (P1, lines 84-86).

To be exact, it could be about 24 months. In reality, so then basically to get his U.S. citizenship it goes much more smoothly if you go to visit him in the orphanage and spend time with him and then go back. I went to visit when he was about three months old and they were like, okay, you need to go back and be patient, and my mom and my dad and my brother all came down with me and spent like a week there (P1, lines 93-98).

Then I was leaving to go back to Bangkok, go back to work, the orphanage, you know, when I left, they told me there is going to be another 20 months, like go back and be patient, you don't have to call us every day, and we will let you know when things are happening (P1, lines 99-102).

So, I was in the transit lounge in the United States going back to Bangkok, and the orphanage rang on my cell phone, and they were like congratulations, it has been approved (P1, lines 102-104).

I was like, wow, because you told me it will be 20 more months, I didn't really organise my life yet, you know, because my apartment wasn't really set up for kids and I didn't have a daycare lined up, I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave, so I was on a Hong Kong contract even though I was working in Bangkok, and Hong Kong is quite conservative for any sort of social policy like that, you know (P1, lines 105-110).

So, basically, dads get one day of leave in Hong Kong. They were like, well, you only get one day and you used up all your vacations going back and forth to Guatemala and, you know, that stuff ... I said okay, great (P1, lines 111-113).

I hired a nanny, moved, got a crib, got stuff, you know; and so everything came together pretty quickly and my mom and her best friend flew back with me, helped me for a couple of weeks (P1, lines 115-117).

We picked up Will, my dad and my aunt and my cousin, who is Will's godmother, went back with me to Guatemala (P1, lines 118-120).

We stopped in Louisiana to have a baptism in my hometown church and then as that was happening, Hurricane Katrina hit, so the city was shut down. Will's passport was in the passport office in New Orleans. We couldn't get to New Orleans because everything was closed and flooded and destroyed (P1, lines 120-124).

It was kind of a lot of drama getting his paperwork sorted out. Finally, the Thai Embassy in Washington is like "oh, you can bring him back and pick up his visa at the embassy in Bangkok". I said, okay, that would be great, thanks. We got onto the plane, we fly all the way back. It takes four flights from Louisiana where my parents lived to get to Thailand (P1, lines 124-128).

We get there and the immigration officials were like, well, he can't come in because he doesn't have a Guatemalan passport. Even though he is an American citizen, you haven't got a proof of that yet, and I was like oh, my gosh, you know. So, I had to call everyone in the Foreign Ministry and then he got like an emergency temporary visa for 24 hours to go in (P1, lines 128-132).

We went to the US embassy. It was great; they gave him a visa; went back to the airport thinking they would just stamp him in, but they deported him, so we had to get onto the plane. They wanted to deport him back to America



<p><i>and then fly us all the way back. I was like that is sort of crazy, just to fly, turn around and come back (P1, lines 132-136).</i></p> <p><i>So in the end they agreed we take a plane to Singapore ... so we flew to Singapore, which was like an hour and a half away. I walked into Singapore, stamped the passport, turned around, right back into the queue, walked back out of Singapore, got back onto the same plane that flew me from Bangkok and flew me back up, and then it was fine, they understand it's a new passport and that's okay. It's just like a regular passport with the resident fees and all that (P1, lines 136-142).</i></p> <p><i>Then between the time of them losing it and completing it again, the government introduced the new Child Welfare Law (P1, lines 181-182).</i></p> <p><i>I think rather than grandfathering instead the applications or continuing the process of adoption under the previous system, they just stopped processing adoptions from the moment the Bill was introduced to Parliament even though it wasn't signed into law for basically another year (P1, lines 183-186).</i></p> <p><i>So we sort of gave up on it and, like you know, it's not meant to be, it's whatever we're happy (P1, lines 191-192).</i></p> <p><i>There's not that kind of emotional difficulty with a woman who's making a very difficult choice. Whereas with Juno's adoption, because she called us, and we know her and we see her still. We had to experience all of her emotional difficulties, and she was not in a great place (P1, lines 282-286).</i></p> <p><i>Well, probably a year actually, but that's also because. like, by the time you're done ... there's only a few months actually between doing things, and it's probably another six months or maybe a little bit more for waiting for the court because the papers are going to the court, and you just wait for your hearing, and in the end we sort of pushed them after a while as we weren't sure if Juno's gonna go or is he gonna stay ... and can he just see her, and there were these questions, and if she actually went back to Thailand, and we couldn't find her again or anything, you know, then it would be a problem. But it was all done without too much drama (P1, lines 205-212).</i></p>	
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### Theme3

#### Experiences of Parenthood

The data presented under this theme related to how the participants in the study adjusted to parenthood (Sub-theme 3.1). Data are presented also on the opposition the participants faced from members of society (Sub-theme 3.2) and how the gay male parents created a positive family identity with their children (Sub-theme 3.3).

ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD	SUBTHEME
<p><i>I had to deal with my job, and my company didn't give me any parental leave (P1, lines 107-108).</i></p> <p><i>At the beginning when I was a single parent I did everything, but I needed to have full-time help because I was working ... that can be a bit challenging because you also want to bond with the kid, but you do need full time daycare because that's what working parents need (P1, lines 309-313).</i></p> <p><i>I wasn't living in my own country, I couldn't just like call my mom and say like, "hey, would you watch out for the day", you know, that's just never a choice (P1, lines 313-315).</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 3.1:</b> <b>Adjustment to parenthood</b></p>

<p><i>Not only do you need a full-time day nanny, you need full-time daycare plus a backup system because people get sick, people need holidays, people need all that other stuff when you pay and, you know, you fulfil that role so that's quite demanding. It can be nervous ... you know it's hard (P1, lines 315-317).</i></p> <p><i>Basically the nanny would watch Will's first step while I was at the office, you know, like all those kinds of things, but to be honest those things seem important at the moment, but a few years later it's like ... at the time it's a really big deal, but then you realise you have a more complex relationship later (P1, lines 318-322).</i></p> <p><i>I've seen him cry, change his bath, I'd change his nappies and make bottle at the night, even though I didn't live with them (P2, lines 384-386).</i></p> <p><i>I don't have any experience to look after a kid, especially Will. I didn't know what to do. The way he behaves, and I would cry, I have to call my mom, you know, how to react and how to deal with him because he is a discipline boy (P2, lines 392-394).</i></p> <p><i>When we got to South Africa Lee wasn't ... Lee wasn't working but he was trying to put out work. He was trying to create his own business because he didn't come here with a job lined up, so he had to figure it out. So you were at home a lot. He ended up doing a lot of the stuff that happens when you are at home a lot (P1, lines 323-326).</i></p> <p><i>I was at work a lot, and I work for 24 hour news, so I was on call a lot and it becomes weekend (P1, lines 326-327).</i></p> <p><i>It switched because I was home, and then my job here gave me full parental leave, so I had sixteen weeks of paid leave, so I was home with Juno when he was a little baby, and Lee was working a lot because he had started his own business (P1, lines 328-331).</i></p> <p><i>It was a transition between, you know, business and like full-time parents, so I struggled, but I managed at the end. I have a helper, I have daycare and also Michael came out from work as well (P2, lines 335-337).</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, I mean, I don't know ... Lee and I will end up having a little argument and then you take a little break, chill out for a while, and then you try it again later, you know. And we try not to do that when the kids are around or ... you know (P1, lines 676-678).</i></p> <p><i>When I disagreed, I just let Michael deal the way he thinks he should do, then I just leave him, you know, and observe, you know, observe him doing it his own way, and that's how we're working as a team because I respect Michael's opinion and the way he reads to both of them, so then let him do his own thing ... I kind of observe and then when that is the way it should be done, I grabbed it, and if I don't agree, I just leave, you know, and that's it (P2, lines 431-436).</i></p>	
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**Theme 3:2**

<b>CHALLENGES FROM SOCIETY</b>	<b>SUBTHEME</b>
<p><i>I've been to meetings where I'm the only dad. I am 6.4, I know that they see me. I know that they're looking at me, and it will be a "good morning, ladies. How are you, moms?" I'm like ... first of all, I find that offensive for the women because they are using this sweetie, cute little tone of voice with adult women who have, like, real jobs. I know you see me, so why are you actively excluding me from this process? You know (P1, lines 743-750).</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 3.2:</b> <b>Challenges from society</b></p>

*I personally get really annoyed with being identified with the moms all the time, and I find it slightly offensive to go to, like, a parents' meeting that is not a parents' meeting, but it's been called that, it's a moms' meeting (P1, lines 737-739).*

*You'll get these newsletters like "we need moms to volunteer to cook". I know, and we need dads to volunteer to braai and moms to volunteer to serve. What if I don't want to braai? (P1, lines 739-741).*

*When he got to primary school the teachers were insistent that he must fit in one of the squares, you know. Like "oh, you are a little Indian boy" (P1, lines 599-601).*

*So Juno comes home from the first day of school last year and there were two new kids in his class. It's like; hey, how was the first day of school. You know we are having supper, and he's, like, there's two new girls and they don't like my colour. And I was, like, what do you mean they don't like your colour? And he's like ... dad I'm a different colour than you. They don't like my colour (P1, lines 623-627).*

*The kids would be, like, well you are not white, and you are not black, so you are nothing, you know (P1, lines 573-574).*

*Guess so, they got into this kind of bravado thing and one of the boys said "well, at least I have a mamma", you know, and that kind of stuff is bound to come up, right? (P1, lines 509-510).*

*Why don't you like your dads? Why do you have two dads? Where's your mom? You know, and this kind of stuff then, it's hard (P1, lines 490-491).*

*The teachers weren't really able to observe the dynamics within the kids very well, you know that these kids were out at an adopted boy. He was getting bullied a lot about being adopted and having an international family (P1, lines 487-490).*

*Yeah, I find it's still there, but it's been less, you know, than at the previous school (P2, line 503).*

*So in Thailand people would come up to me all the time, and we would be like at the school play and be like "where is the mom? How can there be no mom?" (P1, lines 649-651).*

*This mom comes out and she's, like, "oh, you're not from here". I'm like, "oh yeah, I'm an American", so which one is your kid?" And I go, "this is mine". Yeah, she's like, "oh so, hmmm what is he?" and I say, "he's a boy, he's an American too", and I just didn't think there was another answer, you know, and then someone else comes and asks me the exact same thing and it's like, he's a boy. And so, finally, like the third person asking in the course of like fifteen minutes, and it's not really like I have figured it out now, like I am not that dense. So I'm like, "oh he's Guatemalan" and she's like, "and what are they"? (P2, lines 545-553).*

*They always go; how do you know that he loves you, because you are not the dad, because you are not related (P1, lines 656-658).*

*We're Catholic, and we go to the Catholic church". Like, they won't marry us, you know, they won't provide us with any services or pastoral support or any of those things they're supposed to do, and I don't actually care enough (P1, lines 1023-1026).*

*They [Buddhist church]; wouldn't marry us either, if it really comes to it. I mean, they are supportive, but there is a line (P1, lines 1039-1040).*

CREATING A POSITIVE FAMILY IDENTITY	SUBTHEME
<p><i>We're a gay couple and how we interact in public like normal families, like other families, friends, men or women, so I try to show them, but for other people, for looking at us, for me I choose not to interact with them but try to ... it's like I know how they look at us, but I try to ignore rather than go to focus on the way they're looking at us (P2, lines 1119-1123).</i></p> <p><i>We're a very international family, right, and for us, part of that is bringing out our own cultural and international identities, whether for the kids, they are often able to have their questions answered, where they came from, and what does that mean, and how do you respect your roots (P1, lines 809-812).</i></p> <p><i>The priest was there when Will was baptised. I think baptism is lovely because you're going to have a child, and that's a chance to welcome your child into the community (P1, lines 997-1015).</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, for me, I've just shown them that Buddhism is ... I've talked to them about reincarnation, karma, you know, good action, good speech, good thought, you know, so this kind of to get fundamental and to be a good person. It's not about you being gay and you not being a Buddhist (P2, lines 1061-1064).</i></p> <p><i>We do a movie night on a Friday or a Saturday, we're watching movies together. Usually we have a pizza night where we just stay at home (P1, lines 1104-1105).</i></p> <p><i>We go to the park relatively often (P1, line 1107).</i></p> <p><i>We travel a lot, ja (P2, line 1110).</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, we travel a lot, yeah. (P2, line 1109).</i></p> <p><i>There's a great space, it's not always like something is so clear cut, a lot of discipline is really about encouraging them by teaching them to be independent (P1, lines 457-458).</i></p> <p><i>I discipline them by using naughty corners like half for an hour, you know (P2, lines 423).</i></p> <p><i>I have to deal with those school and behaviour issues by dealing with the screen time and homework hours (P1, lines 721-722).</i></p> <p><i>How to deal with them individually. But love, you know, I think love is very important ... for me, I don't address myself as female or male or dad or mom. I just address myself as Lee for love, you know, my sons (P2, lines 411-413).</i></p> <p><i>It makes me feel very complete (P1, line 688).</i></p> <p><i>I feel like ... because I look at my father, and to be honest I have a memory about my father which disappeared, and somehow it came back. It came back, and I remember that my dad ... he was always there for me, and whatever I needed he always done, you know, for me and my brother and sister. That's how I felt, you know, I would like to give the best and love to both of them (P2, lines 438-442).</i></p>	<p><b>Subthemes 3.3:</b> <b>Creating a positive family identity</b></p>

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