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Experiences of social workers with children reared in same-gender families in Johannesburg

By

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Management.

21 December 2012

ABSTRACT

Some social workers are concerned with children raised in same-gender families. They argue that this may result in children suffering from gender identity crisis. Some, however, perceive this as being prejudice and unfounded. The purpose of this paper was to explore the experiences (practices) of social workers in placing children in same-gender families in relation to their gender identity challenges. This study was qualitative in nature. It was conducted in the Johannesburg area. In-depth interviews were used as a method of gathering data from social workers to answer the research questions. The findings indicate that it is true that most social workers are concerned with the placement of children in same-gender family structures. However, the study revealed that there are many factors that influence the formation and development of gender identity. The study concludes that while social workers have different experiences in handling same-gender placements, their experiences are predominantly negative. It recommends that there should be an improvement in the implementation of the South African Constitution, Children's Act coupled with its rules and regulations. Finally, the study also recommends that the Department of Social Development, Child Protection Organisations (CPOs) and Child Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) should design a programme to train and support social workers in dealing with same-gender cases.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Management in Public and Development Management in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Jabulile Jessie Mdluli

21 December 2012

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Mr Aaron Themba Mdluli, who sponsored my studies. My biological mother, Mrs Johanna Mitah Mdluli, who has served as my pillar of my strength. My spiritual mother, Edith Daisy Tladi, for her continuous prayer, unwavering support and encouragement. Yolanda Ndyindila who took care of my children and household while I was pursuing my studies. My brothers and sister for their support during trying times. To my children, Mbali and Lehlohonolo: let this achievement be engraved in your hearts and be a challenge to you to do more.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
ANC	African National Congress
CPO	Child Protection Organisation
CYCC	Child Youth Care Centre
DSD	Department of Social Development
DHSD	Department of Health and Social Development
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
GLOW	Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand
IGLHRC	International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersexual
NASW	National Association for Social Workers
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SRS	Sex Reassignment Surgery
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This paper intends exploring social workers' experiences (practices) with children reared by same-gender parents. Social workers form part of a group of practitioners who are role-players in the protection and upbringing of children. Several studies have been conducted on children raised by same-gender parents, considered non-traditional families. The advent of democracy in South Africa ushered in disclosure and openness of the homosexual (lesbigay) community to the broader community. According to Lubbe (2008:325) "there appears to be an increasing openness and visibility of same-gender relationships and families in South Africa". Lesbigay people enjoy the right to marry spouses of the same sex. The natural challenge experienced in those marriages is the inability of the couple to procreate (biological model of reproduction), leaving them with the option of adopting or fostering a child or children. In the case of lesbians the other alternative would be through medical insemination of donated sperm. Various scholars in the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and medicine (obstetrician and gynaecologists) have conducted research on their experiences of the effects of same-gender parenting.

Some of the findings from these studies indicated that children growing in same-gender families may develop an identity crisis, while others had contrary findings. According to Greenfeld (2005:309) "findings in the literature supports the notion that children of lesbian mothers and gay fathers are not more likely to become homosexual and are not measurably different from children raised by heterosexual parents in terms of

personality development". This notion was also supported by Renaud (2007:1), who stated that "research on children of lesbian mothers has indicated that having lesbian parents does not hamper child development or child psychosocial functioning".

In this study the focus will be on social workers' experiences (practices) with children reared in same-gender families and the effect of this on gender identity. According to Bales (1994:57), "sexual identity has been identified as being made up of three components which are gender identity, gender role behaviour and sexual partner choice". There is very little literature on this subject; hence most of the discussions will be based on related issues. The three components (gender identity, gender role behaviour and sexual partner choice), however, are important to help understand sexual identity. In this paper the focus will be on gender identity. This chapter introduces the overall research report. It consists of the background, the research problem, the purpose statement, research questions for the study and the report structure.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In this paper the researcher will focus on social workers' experiences (practices), which refer to the models, theories and techniques used by social work practitioners. It is imperative to note that in their practice they are guided by social work professional values. Professional values are not different from societal values through their supportive legislation, funding and delegation of responsibility for certain societal functions. Johannesburg as part of South Africa is largely dominated by the Christian value system; however, there are other forms of religions such as Hindu, Muslim and other emerging religions. Furthermore, the study will examine the social worker's role in relation to children.

In this study, the researcher acknowledges that social workers practise in different settings such as privately owned businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while others are in the public sector. This research will be based on social workers' experiences (practices) in the public sector. The researcher's experience as a practising social worker in the monitoring of placement of children identified the difference in objectivity in the intervention of social workers in the public sector. The researcher observed that some social workers who practise privately are influenced by the commercial or business element in their intervention. This, according to the researcher, may negatively impact the report. By contrast, social workers in NGOs and private practice are specialists in cases of placing children in same gender experiences. Furthermore, their extensive involvement in such cases displays deeper understanding through knowledge as they read extensively on issues. The other aspect for discussion in this paper will be the legislative framework.

South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, and in 1996 its Constitution Act 108 of 1996 became the first in the world to include provisions on non-discrimination. This implied that all South African citizens have the right to choose their sexual orientation. South Africa's constitution guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination to all people, and includes a special prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This guarantee is found in the Equality Clause of the Bill of Rights, as contained in Chapter two, Section 9 which reads as follows:

9(1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

9(2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other

measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken".

9(3) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly
against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection

(3) National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

9(4) Discrimination on one or more grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that it is fair.

It is on this basis of provisions in the constitution that people from heterosexual families understand the rights of the lesbigay communities. As a means of carrying out this mandate six state institutions were designed: the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Public Protector, the Commission for the promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the Auditor-General and the Independent Electoral Commission. These are meant to guard democracy as well as support it (Constitution of South Africa 106, Chapter 9). There were other laws that were repealed such as the sodomy law. Louw (2005:145) stated that the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality jointly with the South African Human Rights Commission applied to the Witwatersrand High Court for an order declaring three crimes inconsistent with the constitution. The three crimes were the two common law offences of sodomy, the unnatural sexual acts and the statutory crime contained in section 20A of the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957. The applicants argued that the crimes discriminated against gay men and was, therefore, contrary to the equality provision in the Bill of Rights.

Furthermore, this was filtered through to the legal and social work fraternities through legislation. Social workers as implementers of some

pieces of legislation face the challenge of effecting placement of children in same-gender families. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has prescripts stipulating aspects such as adoption and foster care processes where there is direct involvement by social workers through preparation of court reports. It is the social workers' mandate to render these services and to consider whether or not such placements are in the best interests of the child. This notion is influenced by the nexus test that the court would have, which includes the harm of a potential gay or lesbian identity in the child. It is imperative to understand the importance of the political and legal background of the homosexual communities, since this provides the terms of reference for the lesbigay struggle. As such, it legitimises the placement of children in same-gender families. The following statutes are examples of the social work legislative framework:

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978
2. Social Services Professions Act, 1978
3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 1996, Act 55 of 1988
4. Children's Act 38 of 2005

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978

The Act provides for the registration of welfare organisations on regional bases, the establishment, functions and operations of regional welfare boards, and the establishment of a National Welfare Board.

2. Social Services Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978)

This Act, formerly known as the Social Work Act, provides for the establishment of the South African Council for Social Work and defines its powers and functions. The Act was amended on a number of occasions in 1995 and provided for the establishment of the South African Interim Council for Social Work and for the rationalisation of certain laws relating to social workers that remained in the force in the various areas of the

national territory of the Republic. The Act was also amended in 1996 in order to make the South African Interim Council for Social Work more representative of the people of the country (http://www.socdev.ecprov.gov.za).

3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 55, of 1988

This Act is designed to amend the Child Care ACT, 1983, so as to simplify the procedure for the granting of legal representation for children in children's court proceedings, to provide for the rights of certain natural fathers where adoption of their children born out of wedlock has been proposed and for certain notice to be given to amend the Natural Fathers of Children born out of Wedlock Act 1997, so as to consolidate the law on the adoption under the Child Care Act 1983, and to amend the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1992, so as to afford the father of a child born out of wedlock the opportunity to record his paternity and his particulars in the birth registration of the child and to provide for matters connected therewith (http:/www.info.gov.za).

4. Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005)

The Children's Act was promulgated in 2005. The Act is aligned with government's "First Call for Children" and "Putting Children First" policies. The Act constitutes a comprehensive rewrite of the Child Care Act, 1983, and among other things is aimed at addressing South Africa's international law and constitutional obligations towards children. The abovementioned statutes are examples of legislation in South Africa that ensure that children are placed in protective environments and under proper care by the designated officials (e.g. magistrates and social workers).

In the mid-1990s, Southern African leaders identified a strategy to address shrinking public support and the threat of electoral defeat. There were different approaches which were used by African leaders to ensure that

their constitution excludes the protection of 'homosexuals', claiming that it is un-African. South Africa, however, took a bold stand and included homosexuals in its constitution (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In 1996 the South African Constitution 108 of 1996 included provisions of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation. This embraced among other things the equality of and non-discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. They resonated with the political claims of other constituencies and groups. The constitution also mandated that six state institutions be created, including the Commission for Gender Equality and the South African Human Rights Commission (Human Rights Watch, 2011). According to Human Rights Watch (2003:51), "As the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town Tutu noted, the apartheid regime enacted laws upon the religious convictions of a minority of the country's population, laws which denied gay and lesbian people their basic human rights and reduced them to social outcasts and criminals in their land of birth".

In South Africa these rights are visible in that there are gay and lesbian bars, newspapers and magazines, NGOs and community centres. The following are pieces of legislation protecting non-discrimination based on sexual orientation:

1. The Labour Relations Act (1995) bars unfair dismissals on the basis of sexual orientation.
2. The Employment Equity Act (1998) bars unfair discrimination "in any employment policy or practice," which would include benefits such as pensions and insurance, on all the grounds listed in the Equality Clause, as well as "family responsibility" and "HIV status".
3. The Medical Schemes Act (1998) defines a "dependant" so as to include same-sex partners, as well as unmarried heterosexual partners.

4. The Rental Housing Act (1999) bars discrimination in rental housing on all the grounds prohibited in the Equality Clause, including sexual orientation.
5. The Domestic Violence Act (1999) allows any person in a "domestic relationship" – effectively meaning any cohabitation between people who are not close blood kin but living in the "same residence" – to get a protection order against abuse. It replaced an older Family Violence Act which had stipulated that protection orders were available to only married people. Human Rights Watch (2003).
6. The Children's (2005) Act allows for the adoption and fostering of children by same-gender families.

The various statutes indicate legislative progress and demonstrate the South African government's commitment to and interest in the protection of human rights. These also guide the implementation processes on issues relating to placement of children in same-gender families.

The other phenomenon for consideration in South Africa is the South African Christian culture, which consistently perceives homosexual relationships as being taboo. Undoubtedly, some social workers would have had the experience of having to intervene in such cases and are not in support of same-gender families. Mason-John (1995:123) attested that "those who want to adopt or foster are also confronted by the prejudice among social workers". Needless to say, social workers would also have to face the challenge that some magistrates would refuse to execute such orders.

It is not only social workers who may not be in favour of placing children in same-gender families. Some magistrates, as role-players in the placement of children in such families, have similar views. According to

Card (1994:188) "the best interests of a child test is often applied as if it is the best interest of the state test, especially when judges disclose reasons such as it is in the best interest of the child to grow up in a conventional state-approved family". It is clear that social workers are confronted with the dilemma of placing children in same-gender family structures, since they cannot prescribe for the clients what is perceived to be serving the best interests of the child for the clients. According to several authors cited in Bales (1994), there have been concerns in litigation procedures where lesbian mothers have been denied custody or visitation rights, it being argued that awarding custody would not be in the best interest of the child due to the following concerns:

a) It is feared that being raised by a sexually atypical parent will result in abnormal psychosexual development in the child (Cramer, 1986; Dilapi, 1989; Golombok, Spencer and Rutter, 1983; Hall, 1978).

b) Children reared by lesbian parents will be denied access to male role models (Dilapi, 1989).

c) Children will be isolated and rejected by their peers as a result of the stigma attached to the mother's sexual orientation (Cramer, 1986; Golombok, *et al.*, 1983; Patterson, 1992).

d) Children of lesbian parents will be more vulnerable to developing psychological problems (Golombok, Patterson, 1992).

e) Lesbian women are unfit parents because they are mentally ill, they are less maternal and nurturing than heterosexual women, and due to over-involvement with their partners they will not allow sufficient time for the parent/child relationship.

1.2.1 The selection of the study area

This research was conducted in the Gauteng Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg metro. The total number of functional social workers in this area is 206 and social auxiliary workers 158. Social workers and social auxiliary workers are deployed in different areas and units.

Table 1: Johannesburg Metro Areas

Area	Number of social workers	Number of social auxiliary workers
Soweto	46	46
Lenasia	43	12
Midrand	12	08
Johannesburg East/North	04	07
Johannesburg South	07	06
Alexandra	10	07
Total	**122**	**86**

Source: JHB Metro Human Resource Unit (2012)

Table 2: Johannesburg Metro Units

Units	Number of social workers	Number of social auxiliary workers
Intake	07	04
Canalisation	08	10
Probation	33	28
Child Protection Unit	04	05
Community Dev Unit	32	25
Total	**84**	**86**

Source: JHB Metro Human Resource Unit (2012)

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Some social workers are concerned about children reared in same-gender families and argue that such children face gender identity crises as purported by critics of lesbian parenting (Slatter,1995). Several international studies have been conducted, by authors such as Knoesen, (2003), Mischel, (1966, 1970), and Bandura (1977, 1986, 1989), and some findings concur with this view, while other researchers such as Demo and Allen (1996), Laird, (1994), Tasker and Golombok (1995), Redding (2007) and Greenfeld (2005), have refuted it. Although no study has been specifically conducted on this subject, anecdotal evidence suggests that in South Africa social workers as specialists in the field of monitoring child rearing have different views on this subject. In 1994 same-gender marriages were legalised in South Africa; hence this study focuses on the period between 1994 and 2010.

This study was conducted in the Gauteng Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg metro region. Unless the South African government and the social workers' professional association understands

that social workers' experiences in this matter are of paramount importance, challenges experienced by certain social workers will continue hindering professional interventions. This concern signals the need for this study.

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences (practices) of social workers in the Johannesburg satellite office on the issue of placement of children in same-gender families in relation to their gender identity challenges. The study will also present findings and analyse its findings. The research also seeks to provide recommendations for a review of policies relating to same-gender families, and also to formulate more precise questions that future research may be able to address.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address the research problem, the following research questions are posed:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

1.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined important aspects of this paper which highlight the significance of this study. The problem and purpose of the study was

discussed, as was the area in which the study was conducted: the Johannesburg region, Department of Health and Social Development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for the study. It reviews concepts of same-gender families.

A literature review constitutes a discussion of previous research, and outlines current research. It is in the literature review that one unpacks the key concepts and theory, and discusses the conceptual framework (Badenhorst, 2007: 43). Literature reviews assist researchers in narrowing their focal area in a specific topic and to demonstrate the significance of studying a particular topic. A literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that people learn from and build on what others have done (Neuman, 2006:111). In this section the aim is to evaluate, interpret and discuss the literature on same-gender parenting, social work as a profession and current developments from the social work, legal, sociological and other related perspectives. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the theoretical framework using case studies from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United States of America (USA).

2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Child: Defined by the Children's Act 38-2005 as "a person under the age of 18 yrs".

Homosexuality: Defined by Herdt (1997:12) as "both as a subjective state of individual desire for erotic contact with persons of the same gender and as a significant cultural category of identity involving social, political and economic practices and social institutions that are above and beyond individual actors".

Gays: According to Sullivan (2001:144), "refers to men having sex with men".

Lesbians: According to Sullivan (2001:144), "refers to women having sex with women".

Homophobia: According to Slatter (1995:38), "describes the irrational fear, hatred and intolerance of homosexual men and women".

Past experiences: According to Science Daily (2009:1), "researchers have shown that past experiences really do help when have to make complex decisions based on uncertain or confusing information. They show that learning from experience actually changes the circuitry in our brains so that we are seeing and make a decision or carry out appropriate actions.

2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON LESBIGAY ISSUES

As a discipline, social work is informed by various schools of thought such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and other disciplines. The theoretical perspective on lesbian and gay issues is generally discussed as "queer theory". According to Jackson (2003:72), "queer theory was founded on critiques of heteronormativity, but in contrast to queer activism tends to 'take place at the level of culture and discourse, paying little attention to social structures and material social practices'".

Jolly (2000:84) highlighted that "Queer was to be a new approach to sexuality, open to all those who are oppressed by the binary distinctions and the gender norms which accompany them, whether they are lesbian, gay, straight, bisexual, transsexual, celibate, undecided, or hermaphrodite". The queer theory discourse perceives gender identity issues broadly as opposed to sociological approaches. Lober (2007:2) stated that "Most sociological research designs assume that each person has one sex, one sexuality, and one gender, congruent with each other and fixed for life. Postmodern feminists and queer theorists have been interrogating bodies, desires, and genders, but sociology has not". There are, of course, traditional developmental models used by social workers (Blos, 1979, Erikson, 1950, Marcia, 1980, Newman and Newman, 1987).

According to Mallon (2005:12) "traditional development models posit concepts of sex-role identifications that are concerned only with heterosexual development and presume heterosexual identity as an eventual outcome". The psychoanalytic school of thought is most often utilised by social workers in their analysis of lesbigay issues.

Markowitz (1996:28) remarked that "some social workers, particularly those from a psychoanalytically oriented perspective, believe that somewhere in the gay or lesbian person's system you can find the roots or causes of homosexuality and that it secretly has something to do with family dysfunction". However, it is clear that lesbigay issues are complex and need a lesbigay perspective. This in turn suggests that a social worker should adopt a holistic perspective. Some perspectives relate to environment which may be disempowering health, and social wellbeing, and as such imposes enormous adaptive tasks on lesbigays (Germain and Gitterman, 1996). Social workers who subscribe to other theoretical perspectives consider the heuristic practice.

According to Mallon (2005:4), "heuristic practice, which can be described as principles to guide patterns of professional behavior and which has shaped and refined practice, may also serve as a theoretical model for practitioners". There appears to be a plethora of theoretical models from which social work practitioners can draw. It is, however, the task of individual social workers to adapt these practices according to various case scenarios.

When considering the legal rather the law perspective Ross (2004:8) remarked that "same-gender is viewed as a jump from the profane to the sacred tools big a jump". For decades same-gender marriages and lesbigay issues were not recognised and gay and lesbian organisations waged a legal battle in various courts and in the constitution-making process. However, it is important to note that South Africa is the first country in the world to include gays and lesbian rights in its constitution. Gay and lesbian marriages were viewed as non-traditional marriages. Furthermore, Ross (2004:114) noted that "the biggest barrier to same-gender marriage is the notion that gay relationships are a sexual rather than committed form of love, though in reality heterosexual couples have as much variety in a quantity of sex as do gays and lesbian couples".

In the legal fraternity a social worker's role is one of advocacy, in particular in divorce cases and custody battles between spouses (who are either same-gender or opposite sex spouses). Previously, lesbians experienced prejudice levelled against them on various levels. Tasker and Golombok (1995:24) highlight that "one of the most commonly voiced assumptions in child custody cases involving a lesbian mother is that the children will grow up to be homosexual, an outcome that is generally considered to be undesirable by those involved in decision-making in courts of law". This view emanates from the point that social workers

function with other practitioners in establishing a multidisciplinary approach.

It is also vital to note that gender theory provides political guidance. Gender theory seeks to outline how politics, policies structure and constructive gender differences and inequalities. Since the 1980s, gender differences and gender relations have been developed as a category which structures societies, economics and politics (Scott, 1980). Political science gender studies are located in institutionalised approaches to theories of democracy and the state (Phillips, Squires and Sauer, 2003) and in discursive approaches to policy-making (Bacchi, 2005).

2.4 SOCIAL WORK AND RELATED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

According to Payne (1997:40), "Social work is a professional service, rendered by a registered social worker, to promote, enhance or restore the capacity and social functioning of individuals, groups and communities". This, therefore, indicates that social work as a profession has the obligation to protect same-gender families and to assist in their acceptance by the communities in which they live. It is imperative to understand the background and establishment of social work in South Africa. Poverty in South Africa has been part of social illness which exists irrespective of racial groups.

For Gray (1998:7), "Social work in South Africa started in 1929 as an outcome of the Carnegie Commission of Enquiry into the poverty of white people". As a predominantly Christian country, South Africa engages in community uplift activities through its various churches. One such church is the Dutch Reformed Church, which, according to Drower (2002:8), trained white social workers in 1938. Pieterse (1976:46) highlighted the fact that the government was the first to lead social service delivery,

which was established in 1937 and focused on the needs of the minority population. The scourge of poverty was later discovered not only to affect white people but also other racial groups. During the apartheid era different departments had to care for their own social groups; hence the fragmented overall delivery of social work services. Social work practices in the state departments then became regulated and some policies and acts were promulgated in the sphere of social welfare and social security. The following statutes are examples of the social work legislative framework:

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978
2. Social Services Professions Act,1978
3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 1996,Act 55 of 1988

The above statutes provide guidance on social work practices as well as procedures on the placement of children through adoption. These are aligned with National Association for Social Workers (NASW) international policies. Internationally, the social work profession upholds policies advocated by the National Association for Social Workers (NASW). Crispy (1996:2) refers to the NASW's policy on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues: the NASW believes that same-gender sexual orientation should be afforded the same respect and rights as other gender sexual orientation. The NASW is committed to working towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, both inside and outside the profession. In social work education and the professional environment, the NASW expects schools of social work to address the issue of discrimination.

On the one hand, the NASW acknowledges that social workers are homophobic or heterosexist and that this may have an effect on the social support of gays and lesbians. According to Brown (1996), Mc Henry and

Johnson (1993) and Peterson (1996), homophobia and/or heterosexism may cause social workers either to belittle or exaggerate the importance of sexual orientation in gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals, and perpetuate the self-hatred experienced by some gay and lesbian clients. Taken to the extreme, homophobia in social workers and other practitioners can lead to the use of conversion or reparative therapies, which are explicitly condemned by the NASW, the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Counselling Association (ACA) and the American Psychiatric Association (NASW, 2000b). It is imperative to note that as a discipline social work is eclectic in nature, since it is informed by different schools of thoughts (such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminology, law and other fields of study). This study will draw its information from various sources, focusing on what different authors have asserted on the subject of same-gender parenting.

2.5 SOCIAL WORKER INTERVENTIONS IN SAME-SEX FAMILIES

The intervention of a social work practitioner is guided by values, norms, professional ethics, codes of conduct and principles. However, the stipulated provisions do not guarantee maximum objectivity in a social worker's interventions with issues relating to same-gender families. It is imperative also to understand the level at which they intervene, which is that of street-level bureaucrats. Social workers need to provide support for gay, lesbian and transgender families to counteract and cope with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions from society. Social workers must be advocates and must fight prejudice, discrimination and oppression in all its forms regardless of personal values and beliefs (Janca and Johnson, 2008).

- Mallon (2005:8) argued that "if one were to look exclusively within the social work professional literature to develop knowledge base of

practice, one would find a very circumscribed discussion of gay and lesbian practice issues in the mainstream social work literature". The following are examples of social work values (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Gottfried and Larsen, 2010):

1. Social workers value service to others and commit to social justice in helping clients get deserved and needed resources.
2. Social workers value the inherent dignity and worth of others
3. Social workers value the privacy of human relationships.
4. Social workers behave with integrity.
5. Social workers are responsible for practising with competence.

Social work values stated above play a significant role in ensuring that social workers act professionally in dealing with same-gender family cases. In this study the researcher has focused on discussing social workers' experiences with children raised in same-gender families, since it would make a significant contribution to the knowledge base for social workers. Mallon (2005:4) cited that "the personal experience of practitioners is the second powerful force that guides knowledge development. Social workers are guided not only by their personal experiences but by a professional values and code of ethics". There appears to be very little practical experience of social workers in dealing with lesbigay issues. Although some may be deemed as being 'politically correct' they lack the experience of dealing with deeper prejudices and heterosexual privileges (Mallon, 2005).

Mallon (2005:14) also indicated that "since most professionals continue to have an inadequate knowledge base about the real lives of gay men and lesbians this causes them to be in many cases more homoignorant than homophobic". There are various intervention services social workers are required to render to families. These vary from counselling services to

statutory services. In the case of lesbigay families, social workers assist in the placement of children who are either in foster care or adoption. It is significant to note that there are various forms of adoptions which vary from a step parent/second parent adoption to a stranger application for adoption. Social workers assume the role of expert witnesses in the different courts; hence they are subpoenaed by the court to prepare reports outlining the circumstances of the prospective foster parent, or prospective adoptive parent, and the prospective foster child in the home with the aim of determining the level of suitability adoption. It is from the recommendations put forward by social workers that the court will make a decision/ruling. According to Hill (2009:47), "after the preparation course the social worker will carry out a so-called 'home study' or assessment. This involves a social worker visiting you at home once or twice for about six months".

Since the legalisation of lesbigay adoptions in South Africa social workers are bound to process these applications positively. However, this might not always be the case, since social workers have their preconceived ideas about experiences with these family structures. This study will attempt to ascertain the level of genuineness or hypocrisy in their interventions. Social workers' concerns are mostly informed by some research studies conducted on such children and family structures.

In a research study presented by Peterson (2006), findings on children raised by same-gender parents suggested that this family structure has psychological effects on children. Children in such families were found to be more sensitive to issues related to homosexuality, received more teasing (but with no long-term effects) were more tolerant to diversity and were more nurturing of young children.

Furthermore, these children are said to suffer social marginalisation and harassment by other children. Children can also be harassed by adults who disapprove of such relationships. Gays and lesbians are seen to be unstable, and children brought up in such families are said to have identity confusion, as they have no choice but to align with the family lifestyle that they are exposed to. The Peterson study (2006) was mostly influenced by ideologies from the psychological school of thought, and social workers' experiences and perceptions are mostly a product of inputs drawn from it.

2.6 TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES

South Africa is historically a colonial country in which family structures were predominantly heterosexual. Citizens upheld Christian belief systems, which were informed by the three truths as identified by Stott (1999:1) "that heterosexual gender is the product of divine will that heterosexual marriage is a divinely ordained institution and that heterosexual fidelity is a divine intention". Stott (1999) then explains that a homosexual liaison was considered to represent a rupturing of all three divine purposes. This became prevalent when the ACDP contested the legalisation of same-gender families in the 1990s. The ACDP held that same-gender relationships are not a "… notion of African tradition, Christianity and normalcy". Similarly, the then Western Cape Premier, Peter Marais, attacked the clause by saying that "Christians must choose between the Constitution and the Bible, because the former was written by communists under disguise of democracy" (*Mail and Guardian*, December 22, 2002). These debates took place at different levels and at different times within the ANC. According to Thatchell (1987:2), Ruth Mompati, who was not supportive of gays and lesbians, observed in the National Executive Committee of the ANC in 1987, "I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They

have nice homes, and plenty to eat. I do not see them suffering. No one is persecuting them. We haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently". Furthermore, she saw the gay issue as a "red herring", distracting attention from the main struggle against apartheid, and justified the ANC's lack of policy on lesbian and gay rights by stating, "We don't have a policy on flower sellers either" (Thatchell, 1987). After extensive debates and engagements the Constitution included gay and lesbian rights. The transformation was cascaded down for further implementation. This resulted in the amendment of various statutes, including the Child Care Act, now the Children's Act. In 2001, a Pretoria High Court judge ruled that the Child Care Act of 1983 and the Guardianship Act of 1968 which prevented lesbian couples from jointly adopting their children, was unconstitutional, and ruled that the legislation should be amended to include same-sex life partners (Cock, 2003). The above necessitates a background being provided about homosexual practices in South Africa.

Historically, homosexual practices have been experienced among migrant mine workers. According to Moodie and Ndatshe (1994:134) "same-gender sexual practices among migrant older and younger male mine workers in South Africa provide an example of the circumstances in which they occur today". During the colonial/apartheid era such behaviour was punishable by the state and severe penalties were incurred. It was only in 1994 that South Africa became a democracy and with it came the freedom to openly practise homosexuality. Gevisser and Cameron (1995:38) argued that "Boys in the mines did household chores, such as cooking, and joined the men in bed at night, serving as their 'wives' or sexual partners for considerable periods of time". Thus homosexuality was widespread in various communities irrespective of race, although it was previously viewed as a white (European) adopted lifestyle. Picture 1 below depicts the extent to which such freedom can be exercised in South Africa

whereas previously gay and lesbian people were subjected to violence and intolerance levelled against them in some communities.

In order for the writer to discuss issues of same-gender families in South Africa it is important to outline the phases of development of homosexuality as a source of development of same-gender families. It is apparent that the struggle waged against lesbigay rights and the transitions in this struggle were concurrent with the political transition in South Africa. As a centre for development, Johannesburg is the place where gay movements were largely formed in the "new" South Africa post-1994, as Robertson (2005:269) explains: "First was the founding of the multiracial gay rights organisation in the Johannesburg area in the 1980's namely GLOW".

The increasing activism in the lesbigay rights movement gained political support from the African National Congress (ANC). Robertson noted that "ANC members in exile were being exposed to what the Pan-Africanist Congress's (PAC) Alexander calls 'the European Leftist position on the matter'". Liberal European notions of gender rights and the political legitimacy of gay rights had an immense impact on senior ANC figures like Albie Sachs and Kader Asmal, who henceforth became the strongest lobbyists for gay issues in the ANC (Robertson, 1994:75). The 1990 gay march that took place in Johannesburg was benchmarked against those held in places like New York and San Francisco, which celebrated the Stonewall riots of 1969.

South Africa has a Human Rights Watch structure which represents the rights of gays and lesbians internationally. According to Human Rights Watch (2011) "lesbians and transgender men face extensive discrimination and violence in their daily lives, both from private individuals and government officials". Furthermore, the report emphasises that "legal

rights are important and can be empowering, but they are meaningless in the face of the abuse, intimidation and violence that people with unconventional gender and sexual expression face on a daily basis" (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

Currently, South Africa is gradually becoming more accepting of gays and lesbians. This has advanced to the level of practical implementation of lesbigay liberation; hence the freedom to adopt and foster children with the notion of establishing functional families. Needless to say, South African media (newspaper and television) is openly discussing lesbigay issues and challenges. However, despite these efforts there are acts of discrimination and hate levelled against such communities. The prominent lead role South Africa assumed was recently observed in the United Nations debate in March 2012 (*Mail and Guardian*, 2012). The Human Rights Commission consists of members from different countries such as Europe Russia, North and Latin America, Asian states and African states. The debate on the report was on "how international rights law can be used to end violence and human rights violation based on sexual orientation and gender identity". However, it appeared that the debate on lesbigay issues was not embraced by all the states. At this gathering, South Africa as a leading state experienced the challenge of a walkout being staged by some of the other states. Amongst several countries present, the Muslim including Pakistan walked out, while Asian giants China and India were silent. South Africa was then supported by Europe (*Mail and Guardian*, 2012).

2.7 SAME-GENDER FAMILIES EFFECTS ON CHILD-REARING

2.7.1. Gender identity development and expressions

Gender identity development is deemed to be significant by social workers in the course of nurturing children who are reared in same-gender families. The discourse on gender identity is encapsulated by the concept of gender development. Gender development consists of three components: gender identity, gender role and sexual orientation. According to Zucker and Green (1992:204), "gender identity is the concept of self as male or female, gender role concerns the types of behaviour and attitudes considered to be appropriate for females and males in a particular culture, and sexual orientation refers to sexual attraction to the opposite gender". In this study the focus is on gender identity and on the findings of several studies conducted previously on children raised by same-gender parents. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002:7) argued that "gender identity can be seen as a multiple and never fluid, and never complete: the emergence and re-emergence of the self". There are various theoretical models in sociology about the formation of gender identity, including the cognitive-development model and the social learning model. Social workers use these theories as a point of reference in determining their intervention in cases of same-gender families.

Davidson and Gordon (1979:14) remarked that according to the "cognitive-development model articulated by Kohlberg, children learn their own genders in much the same way that they learn the identity of physical objects and recognize that these physical objects retain identity over time". Furthermore, Davidson and Gordon (1979:15) explained that the "social learning model view of gender-identity formation emphasizes the idea that children enjoy being rewarded if they are for doing boy or girl

things, they will come to want to be boys or girls and will identify themselves as such". According to Tasker and Golombok (1995:204) the gender identity of children raised by lesbian mothers appears to be in line with their biological sex. None of the children studied to date, estimated by Patterson (1992) to be more than 300, had shown evidence of gender identity confusion: "all the of the boys were sure that they were male and all girls were sure that they were female".

Gender identity and sexual identity are concepts that are used interchangeably. Posel (2002:56) argued that "the urge to consume [sexuality] has become the fulcrum of interesting political interests, economic imperatives, cultural aspirations and notions of selfhood". South Africa has political structures such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which advocates for sexuality issues in the political domain. Ratele (2004:142) noted that "racism is kinky politics as it always involves a sexual wrapping of identity politics. Racism, together with (hetero) sexism, then, is what keeps us in awe, or fear or ignorance of black and white, male and female bodies and sexualities in this society".

Regarding the formation of identities (sexual/gender), certain historical constructs are considered to play a pivotal role, and history may form the foundation of how we perceive ourselves. According to Butler (in Reddy, 2004a:17), "Even if our identities are fluid, discourse presents us with a mirror images–identities through which we may achieve (temporary) closure by 'coming out', and in so doing identify with others whom we perceive to be like us". In relation to the formation of gender identity Cameron (1997:49) holds that "the media, and magazines in particular, play a large constituting in this process rather than simply reflecting or representing such differences, and by our consumption of such media texts, so do we".

According to Human Rights Watch (2003:203) "gender norms are as powerful in South Africa as they are elsewhere in the region, and the abuse directed at people who transgress against them can be as severe". The upholding of these norms is prevalent in most public spaces such as malls, universities, and state institutions, where bathrooms are separated according to gender. This sometimes leads to abuse of gays and lesbians. Human Rights Watch (2003:204) states that "South Africa is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa where hospitals offer sex reassignment surgery (SRS)". Such people acquire transgender legal identity papers. This was addressed by the South African Law Commission in a report on the Legal Consequences of Sexual Realignment and Related Matters. In the USA there have been various reports on sexual orientation in the last three years: the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, and American Psychoanalytic Association have reviewed the research on sexual orientation, and identity, and each has confirmed that sexual orientation and gender identity do not correlate with mental illness or immorality (O'Halan and Kathrine, 2006).

2.7.2. Family structures (traditional and non-traditional)

Families are part of social structures in which children are reared. There are key focal areas where critiques of gay and lesbians base their arguments (such as the family theory). The ideal would be to define what an ideal family structure is, but the court and public discourse will always bring about controversy. According to Lubbe (2007:270), "the concept family depends on the cultural assumptions about families and gendered relations within families themselves". Parenting is a skill that most parents need to possess in order to nurture appropriate and desirable social behaviour.

The historical discrimination levelled against lesbian mothers and gay fathers has mostly been experienced in the courts of law, where if the mother or father was said to have a certain sexual orientation she/he would not be granted custody of the children. There are several debates on what constitutes a family; some authors such as Lubbe (2007) hold that a family should possess a structure in which there is a mother and a father – hence "family" is largely defined as being heterosexual. However, with the recent developments, homosexual family structures are beginning to enjoy the status of being considered acceptable.

Social workers' interventions have previously been understood to be hindering adoptions by lesbian and gay parents. According to Golombok (2007:11), "social workers argued that since children who have been put up for adoption are particularly vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems they should be placed in as traditionally a family environment as possible". The prevalence of prejudice on the part of social worker is mostly felt by gays and lesbians in the matching process. According to Hill (2009:42-43) "Sometimes the birth parents may object or it might be prejudice on the part of the social worker".

However, in South Africa there are changes that are in favour of the placement of children with lesbigay parents. A study was conducted on the differences found in children reared by heterosexual mothers and those who were born through donor insemination. The findings were that there were no differences in either the cognitive functioning or behavioural adjustment between children who had been conceived by donor insemination and raised by lesbian couples and a control group of children from heterosexual two-parent families (Flaks, Fischer, Masterpasqua, and Joseph, 1995).

There are aspects identified as being critical assessment areas in the child's social and emotional well-being and adult sexual orientation. With regard to the emotional aspect, the mother-child relationship is conceptualised on the basis of attachment theory. According to Golombok (2007:17) "another aspect of parenting that influences the social and emotional well-being of the child is parenting style". Parenting skills play an important role in that parents who are neglectful do not foster appropriate psychosocial adjustment in their children. The other factor that may influence children's behaviour is the environment. This therefore refutes the notion that those children who are brought up in a lesbian household are for example more likely to be gay or lesbian themselves. Other scholars of the classical social learning theory claim that children model behaviours exhibited by their same-gender parent and that parental reinforcement for such behaviour encourages children's imitations (Mischel, 1966, 1970; Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989).

As a proponent of same-gender family structures Lubbe (2007) indicated that "same-gender families are exemplars of the increasingly rich and diverse forms that modern Western societies are allowing to emerge". The different schools of thought have different perceptions and findings about the influence of a family structure; however, social workers are advised to remain objective in their interventions.

2.8 EXPERIENCES OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (ZIMBABWE)

The discourse on homosexuality in some southern African countries is that it is deemed as being unAfrican. This is prevalent in most African countries, among them Zimbabwe, which will be used as a case study. Zimbabwe's legislative framework provides for the legitimacy of marriages in the Zimbabwe Marriage Act. Although it refers to opposite sex types of

marriages and polygamous marriages no provision was made for same-sex marriages. It appears that under the leadership of President Mugabe, the Zimbabwean government abhors homosexuality. For this reason same-gender families are deemed to be a farfetched ideal, since there is still a battle against the discrimination against homosexuals. The Human Rights Watch (2003:13) highlighted one of President Mugabe's speeches, in which he stated that "if we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts what moral fibre our society shall ever have to deny organised drug addicts". The moral fibre of Zimbabwe is underpinned by the country's Christian belief system. According to Gher (2004:44) "Zimbabwe has a secular government, but seventy to eighty percent of its populace belongs to mainstream Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic Anglican and Methodist churches".

As a champion of lesbigay rights, South Africa's own agenda lies in ensuring that other African countries are on par with it. This has led to the formation of a human rights organisation in Zimbabwe (GALZ). In an attempt to address this issue the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) was used to campaign against discrimination (Human Rights Watch 2003). While states are transforming and scrapping laws on "sodomy", Zimbabwe is found to be largely enforcing these laws, which mainly viewed as being discriminatory. According to Human Rights Watch (2003:124) "in many places, non-state actors continue to act out the mandates given by the state leaders: to 'eliminate' gays and lesbians, to treat them like 'animals', to 'fight against the enemy', to 'condemn' and 'reject' homosexuals". The above discussion makes it clear that, at this stage, there is a clear need to discuss same-gender families in other parts of the African continent. The struggle of same-gender families is still at its early stages of ensuring mere recognition of gays and lesbians. President Mugabe holds that

homosexual behaviour is being "thrust" on Africa by the West. He has condemned homosexuals as being lower creatures than "dogs" and "pigs".

2.9 EXPERIENCES OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The notion of lesbigay families is explained by different authors in the USA, which makes it subject to many analogies. According to Appell (2007:289) "United States family law is largely based on the modern family in that the foundation of family law is the patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family and biology and marriage define family relationships, and regulate rights, privileges, and benefits among family member and against the state". Furthermore, he explained that gays and lesbian families are viewed in the light of "post-modern family structures". Lesbian and gay issues are viewed as complex and unstable family constellations. He argues that "post-modern families are pushing away from biological connectivity, a movement which is not entirely unproblematic, but provides significant benefits".

This background assists in painting a picture from sociological and legal aspects which play a role in the discourse of placement of children in same-gender families. Social workers in the USA are also governed by pieces of legislations when placing children legally in same-gender families either through adoption or foster care. Globally, same-gender issues are a challenge, hence the picture below shows gays in a protest in USA, advocating that gay and lesbian marriages be legalised, that they be afforded equal rights in children custody battles, and that they be given rights to adopt or foster children. This implied the normalisation of a same-gender family structure.

Same-gender families are legalised in some parts of USA such as California, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Washington. Florida is the only state with an outright law banning gays and lesbians from adopting children (Same-Sex Adoption Laws). Studies on the topic in the USA have largely been conducted by psychologists. Lesbians and gays have historically been classified as abnormal (abnormal behaviour). In 1957 the psychologist Evelyn Hooker conducted her first study. In 1972 the first gay studies programme began at Sacramento State University. A transition also occurred in the APA, which removed homosexuality from the handbook of disorders. Late in the 1970s research was conducted on the children of lesbian and gay parents. In 1990 Simon Le Vay observed that the male brain could take two different forms depending on one's sexual preferences. In 2000 a national census was conducted and the findings were that over 600,000 same-gender households were counted in the USA. Furthermore, research was conducted on such family structures, and the findings were that 60% of Americans disapprove of legally sanctioning gay couples to adopt. And, according to Peterson (1996), 42% oppose allowing gays or lesbians to teach.

According to Tiffany (2003) same-sex couples are changing the stock image of the American family and the landscape of family law, since most children in these families are a product of reproductive technologies. This legal intervention was also extended to the relationship that both parents have with the adopted child, who would then automatically be their biological child. These include among other things the right to financial support or inheritance. In South Africa no such household census has been conducted. However, there can be no doubt that gay and lesbian households are on the increase. Furthermore, lesbian and gay families in the US are the prime but not the only the examples of post-modern families. Post-modern families are pushing us away from biological

connectivity, a movement which is not entirely heterosexual but provides significant benefits (Tiffany, 2003).

In the USA criticisms levelled against same-gender adoption were as follows:

1. The gay community cannot biologically reproduce without the help of outside parties, thereby resulting in many feelings regarding their lifestyle as unfit and negatively affecting children (Sullivan, 2001).
2. Children raised under the gay lifestyle often encounter struggles with mental breakdowns and social disorder as a result of their childhood growing up with two parents of the same sex (Sullivan, 2001).
3. There is an assumption that one partner plays a female role and one partner plays a male role; however, that is generally not true, resulting in an absence of one important figure in a child's life (Patterson, 1992).
4. It is found that lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women and vice versa for gay men (Sullivan, 2001).
5. Same-sex relationships last only a small proportion of the time of most heterosexual marriages, with most lasting between one to three years and next highest as four to seven "Comparing the lifestyles".
6. Because of those traditional notions of family values and the discussed criteria – relationship longevity/ stability, patterns of fidelity and health and stress – children raised by same-sex couples suffer from health and physical effects resulting in gender identity issues and mental breakdowns. (Tiffany, 2003 in *American Journal of Analysis* of Americans' shifting opinions and beliefs on same-sex families).

2.10 SUMMARY

It is clear from the literature review that there is limited literature on the subject (much of the literature review was drawn from literature indirectly related to the topic). Various practitioners from other schools of thought have their views on same-gender parenting, although social workers have not made much contribution. Despite the South African government's effort to combat homophobia the phenomenon recurs in societies, especially in black communities, as it is regarded as un-African. Furthermore, most exponents of homosexuality conducted their studies in the early 20th centuries, while proponents conducted their studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Their findings indicate that homosexuality is a difference in human sexual orientation and that it has to be accepted. This process is also viewed as part of transition and globalisation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section explains the methodology used in the study, the methods utilised to gather data, the population interviewed and how interview schedules were administered in order to answer the research questions. The gathering of data was done through the use of in-depth interviews with staff from Gauteng Social Development in Johannesburg, 81 Rissik Street Regional Office.

The nature of the study was qualitative, with its intention to focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings and involve studying all the phenomena and their complexity (Leedy and Omrod 2001:147). In-depth interviews have the potential to provide insight which reveals the nature of the phenomenon under study. This is a phenomenological study in that it focuses on the interviewees/respondents and their experiences in dealing with the placement of children in same-gender families. Furthermore, in in-depth interviews, the interviewees are partners in the research enterprise rather than subjects to be tested or examined (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:12).

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The approach used in this study is the qualitative approach. According to Bouma and Atkinson (1995:206) qualitative research can be described as any social science research that produces results that are not obtained by statistical procedures or any other method of quantification.

One advantage of the qualitative method in exploratory research, according to Health International, is that it allows the researcher the flexibility to probe the initial participant's responses – that is, to ask the "why" or "how" questions. Patton (2002) states that qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents. In this study, the researcher focused more on in-depth, open-ended interviews and documents – hence the use of a qualitative approach.

Creswell (2003:181) noted that "qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. The qualitative researcher goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research". In this study social workers were interviewed in office, which is their natural setting, and they were a small number of respondents. The disadvantage of the qualitative research method is that it is time-consuming in terms of gathering and analysing data. Moreover, the findings in qualitative research, unlike the quantitative method, cannot be generalised.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study seeks to establish social workers' experiences with children reared in same-gender families. The approach used in this study is the interpretive qualitative approach. According to Merriam (2002:4), "Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered the interpretative qualitative approach. If you were interested in studying the placement of a child in a foster care, for example, you might focus on understanding the experiences from the perspective of the child, the foster family, the agency involved". This study falls within the ambit of exploratory research. Neuman (2006:33) describes exploratory research "as research in which

the primary purpose is to examine a little understood issue or phenomenon to develop primary ideas and move towards refined research questions by focusing on the 'what' question".

According to Creswell (2003:75) "the concept is 'immature' due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research". In this study the researcher anticipated that information and experiences gathered from social workers would contribute to the baseline information on children raised in same-gender families.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Leedy and Omrod (2005) argued that in order for the researcher to avoid serious problems later on in the research, the following questions need to be answered by the researcher before data collection: What data is needed for the research? Where is the data located? How will data be secured? And how will data be interpreted?

This study has used both primary and secondary data collection methods. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, whereas literature and document review was used to collect secondary data.

3.4.1. Primary data

In this study qualitative methodologies were largely used in the collection of data. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:111), when researchers collect their own data for the purpose of researching a particular study, the data is called primary data. For the purpose of this study primary data was obtained by means of semi-structured interviews. According to Fossey (2002:723), semi-structured interviews are used to

facilitate a more focused exploration of a specific topic using an interview guide.

Participants in this interview comprised senior social workers who have had experience in placing children in same-gender families. The respondents have experience as street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of policies pertaining to same-gender families, which is at the operational level. The challenge of locating appropriate respondents was that the number of social workers who have placed children in same-gender families is very limited, hence the researcher decided on five respondents.

This method is relevant to the study because the researcher has collected data she views to be relevant to the questions, and was solely responsible for this. This sentiment is shared by Bless, *et al* .(2006:112), who indicate that data collected in this way is most appropriate to the aims of the research, since the data gathering is directed at answering precisely the questions raised by the researcher. It is the view of the researcher that valuable information has came out of well-conducted interviews. Creswell (2005:186) notes that interviews allow the researcher "control" over the line of questioning, while Badernhorst (2007:6) described primary data as the "raw" data before it has been constructed into some form of knowledge.

The five respondents were purposefully selected for in-depth interviews. They were mainly drawn from the Johannesburg DSD, which is representative of all clusters, and are experienced. In-depth interviews can help fill in historical blanks and in so doing make people more understandable (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:3). The notion of same-gender families is viewed as a new topic for discussion after 1994.

Studies on same-gender families in South Africa are relatively new; hence the literature reviewed could not provide a firm theoretical basis. The researcher largely used indirect literature. The researcher used a sound recorder to capture responses, while jotting down key points during the interview. This afforded the interviewer the opportunity to focus attention on the interviewees. No one can remember the content of multiple interviews over months or years, so researchers make permanent records of their interviews through notes, recording Rubin and Rubin (2005:203). Furthermore, a tape recorder ensured that the researcher focused attention on interviewees, gave appropriate eye contact and non-verbal communication (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001:173). Participants were informed about the purpose of the interview and the researcher asked for consent to use a voice recorder.

a) Interview schedule

The interview schedule consisted of demographics, which refers to the personal profiles of respondents. This provided information on the social workers interviewed, their work designation, their ages and years of experience. Section A explored the social workers' understanding of the concept of same-gender families, legislative provisions and their practical usage of legislation on same-gender issues. Section B explored theoretical provisions for practising social workers. Section C explored the development and formation of gender identity with the notion of understanding its relationship with same-gender families. Section D explored the transition in South Africa in relation to same-gender families, gays and lesbian issues in general.

Table 3: Aspects of the Interview Schedule

SECTION	FOCUS
	Interviewee's Personal profile
A	Legislative provisions
B	Social work profession provisions
C	Gender identity
D	Transition in South Africa

Source: Own

3.4.2. Secondary data

The abovementioned primary data collection strategies are not enough to ensure good research. In addition the researcher used internet searches for electronic journals and academic articles, books, policy documents and periodicals. The major topics for discussion were legislative provisions, social work provisions, gender identity and transition in South Africa. Since secondary data of this sort was collected primarily from other studies that might have had a different purpose, the researcher ensured that such data was interpreted carefully. The study utilised magazines, because most lesbigay discussions occur in magazines and newspapers. Studies on the subject of lesbians and gays are limited; hence there is limited previous research that was conducted. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001:171) highlighted various reasons for using secondary data: to shed light on, or complement, the primary data collected and allow the researcher to focus attention on analysis and interpretation.

3.4.3. Sampling

The sampling method used in the study was non-probability sampling in the form of purposive sampling. Neuman (2006:222) describes purposive

sampling as a valuable kind of sampling for special situations. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. The researcher interviewed five senior social workers from the field section who have had the experience of placing children through adoption and foster care in same-gender families. They were selected according to their experience and expertise. Flick (1998) attests that it is their relevance to the research topic and not their representativeness which determines the way individuals to be used in the study are selected. The researcher is convinced that the selected sample has shed light on the topic. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:147) "qualitative researchers are intentionally non-random in their selection of data sources, instead their sample is 'purposeful' they select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation".

3.5 DATA PRESENTATION

Presentation was done through coding and usage of themes as per the responses of the respondents. Themes were designed from research questions and research objectives, they were as follow: legislative, social work profession, gender identity and transition in South Africa.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis starts with data organisation. Patterson (2002) argues that before data can be analysed, the researcher must ask the following questions: Are the field notes complete? Are there any holes in the data that still need to be filled by collecting additional data before analysis? Is all the data properly labelled with a notation system? And are all interview transcripts complete? The researcher ensured that the above issues were properly addressed.

In transcribing the data the researcher used what Pierce (2008) terms a three-column transcription interview. The respondents were allocated a reference number that appears in the first column; the second column contains all of the questions; and, lastly, analysis is accommodated in the last column. Conceptualisation was used in analysing data; in so doing the researcher was able to organise and make sense of the data. While analysing data the researcher has done what Neuman (2006) refers to as data categorisation in terms of themes, concepts and features. Responses with the same theme or concept were grouped together and analysed in the same manner.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the validity of data is understood to refer to the correctness of the research findings. Golafshani (2003) suggests that to ensure reliability in qualitative research, the examination of trustworthiness is of crucial importance.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that while the terms reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality in qualitative research paradigms, the terms credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are criteria that are essential for quality.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has used semi-structured interviews as well as documentary analysis, and triangulation was also used to ensure reliability and validity. This method is supported by Golafshani (2003), who does not disregard the notion of triangulation in a qualitative research paradigm and further asserts the need to define triangulation from a qualitative researcher's perspective in each paradigm. The researcher has ensured that data is interpreted from all angles to

ensure validity and reliability. This method also answers the question: how congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what is really there? (Merriam, 1995). In this study the researcher used one on one interviews as outlined in the interview question schedule and analysis of records and documents from MARDEF to ensure validity and reliability through triangulation. Furthermore, through triangulation the researcher ensured that data collected from the respondents is valid and reliable.

3.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study of social workers' experiences with children reared in same-gender families is significant because responses obtained during the study may be used in the formulation of new programmes designed to implement the Children's Act in relation to the adoption and foster care placement of children who will be reared in same-gender families. It will assist in addressing implementation challenges. Some social workers are facing the dilemma of placing children in same-gender families.

The challenge emanates from their disapproval of this family structure, which is perceived to perhaps have later unintended consequences for children. Understanding this predicament will assist South African society to embrace diversity from a social work perspective.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher was willing to conduct a deeper study on this topic although there are challenges:

a) The use of non-probability sampling

b) Purposive sampling was used in this study and its limitation is the lack of integrity in that participants will not have equal chance of being selected.
c) Limited research conducted on the subject in South Africa.

Studies of children reared in same-gender families have mostly been conducted internationally, and there are very few studies on the subject in South Africa.

The various studies have come from the schools of psychology, sociology, anthropology, law and gynaecology; it appears that few studies have been conducted on social workers' experiences and perceptions on children reared in same-gender families, which implies that literature on the subject will be very scarce, and indirectly related literature was therefore used in this study.

The researcher is part of the social workers' population. The researcher monitors the placement of children in heterosexual and homosexual families through adoption. In this study the researcher will avoid bias by allowing the full and undisrupted participation of respondents.

There are few social workers who have experience in placing children in same-gender families.

The study did not categorise social workers according to race.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Neuman (2006:129) defined ethics as "what is or is not legitimate to do or what 'moral' research procedure involves". In this study participants were

assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and throughout the study the researcher took cognisance of the sensitivity of this aspect.

a) Rights of participation

Respondents were assured of their rights of participation: in instances in which they chose not to answer the researcher did not probe/pursue further questioning. According to Neuman (2006:129), ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research.

b) Duration of interview

Participants were informed about the duration of the interview. In this study it was estimated that twenty minutes would be allocated for each interviewee, and this arrangement was maintained, although some interview sessions were longer, as the topic became interesting to respondents and the researcher allowed them to continue with their discussions.

c) Tools for confidentiality and anonymity

A letter of consent was designed assuring participants of confidentiality and anonymity. According to Neuman (2006:135) "informed consent is a statement, usually written, that explains aspects of a study to participate and asks for their voluntary agreement to participate before the study begins".

3.11 SUMMARY

The ability of this research to document the experiences of social workers is central to the strength of this study; thus in-depth interviews were used

as tool to collect data. Primary and secondary sources were used, and these enabled the researcher to analyse and organise data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the interviews conducted will be presented. These include social workers' views, experiences and understanding regarding issues relating to same-gender families and their active and critical role in the placement of children in such family structures.

The variety in their response and viewpoints gave more depth to individual experiences and the difference of their understanding on different aspects pertaining to same-gender families. In-depth interviews as a manner of collecting data assisted in analysing data objectively. The presentation was done following five key thematic areas, which are personal information consisting of five questions, legislative provisions (four questions), social work profession provisions (three questions), gender identity (three questions) and transition in South Africa (three questions). This constituted the overall set of 17 interview questions.

This chapter is structured according to the themes of the interview and the data collected is aligned to the research objectives. The study sought to answer the following questions:

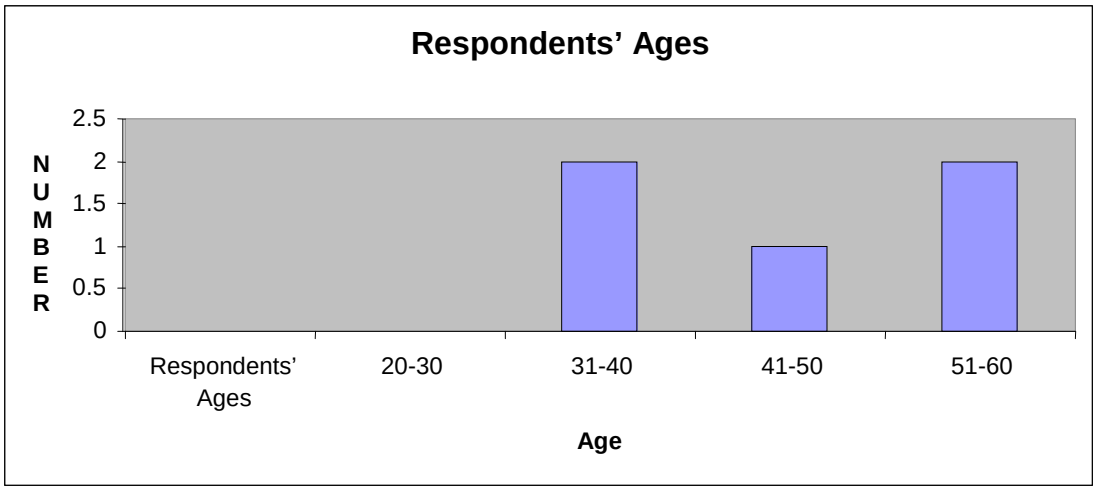
1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?

3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

4.2 PERSONAL INFORMATION

The first set of questions dealt with respondents' personal information, gender, section, religion and years of experience. Social work as a profession is largely female-dominated.

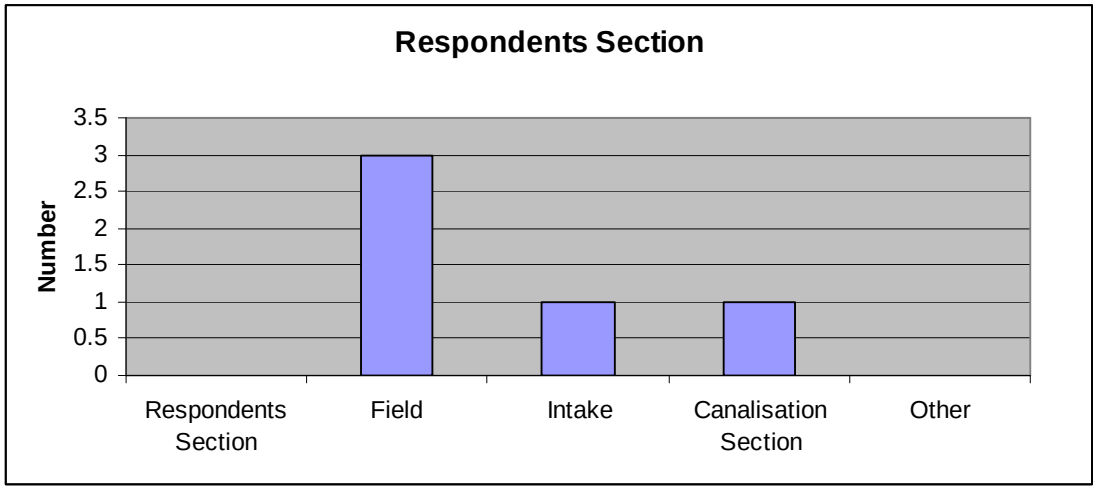
Graph 1: Respondents' Ages



Source: Own data

Graph 1 above reflects respondents' ages. Respondents 1 and 4 are in the same age category. Respondents 3 and 5 are also in the same category, while respondent 2 was in her own category. The respondents are all above 30 and below 60.

Graph 2: Respondents' Section



Source: Own data

Graph 2 reflects that three of the respondents are in the field section (respondents 3, 4 and 5). Respondent 2 was from the intake section and respondent 1 was from the canalisation section. Field section respondents therefore dominated the research sample.

Question 4 reflects that the sample was constituted mainly of Christians.

Question 5 reflects that respondent 1 has more than 20 years' experience. Respondents 2 and 4 have similar experience (between 11-20 years). Respondent 3 has 1-5 years of experience and respondent 5 has 6-10 years of experience.

This section consists of open-ended questions that are semi-structured, which allowed further probing.

4.3 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

4.3.1 Understanding of same-gender families

Picture 1: Gays in a protest (USA)



Source: http:joelgordon.photoshelter.com

Picture 1 above shows gays protesting against inequalities and other related challenges. It appears that the challenges that lesbians and gays face in South Africa for an example are more or less consistent with those faced by lesbigay communities in the USA. This also resembles a same-gender family structure as understood globally.

During interviews respondents commonly understood the concept same-gender families to mean both parents being either female or male. The differences emerged when each elaborated further. Respondent 1 stated that "same-gender families consists of people of same genders being partners, sharing life together, who are intimate, having a family together for an example gay people and lesbian people legalise their stay as companions" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "same-gender families are constituted by people with the same-sex female and female (lesbians) who live together temporarily or permanently and their stay may be formalized". Respondent 2 explained further that "same-gender families are families of couples of same gender staying together" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 emphasised that same-gender familes "in most cases are homosexual relationships". Lastly, respondent 5 (interview, 01 September 2012) remarked that same-gender families are "families composed of gays and lesbians, woman married to a woman or man married to a man, involved in a long-term relationship" . The deeper elaboration by the respondents reflected that all respondents have a deeper understanding of same-gender families

4.3.2 Views on same-gender families

When asked about how they see same-gender families, Respondents 1 and 2 began their response by highlighting that they are Christians. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "as a Christian I do not agree on same-gender relationships. It is contrary to Christian values and beliefs; however, South African constitution informs that people have rights as human beings they can live life the way they want to. I am totally against it. I was once employed by an adoption agency doing screening and the workplace forced me to do such cases, since it is

governed by policies and had contracted with the agency". Similarly, Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) remarked that "I do not understand gays and lesbians personally as a Christian I am made to believe that God created Adam and Eve and not Adam and Adam". Respondent 3 was not sure of her and highlighted this: "I did not understand gays and lesbians in South Africa. It was not common and before it was taboo, until Acts and policies were put in place. As a professional I have to work with them and handle their cases" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 stated: "I am a bit confused about who assumes a female or male role if they are of the same sex. I would often hear one partner referring to the other as a boyfriend while on the same note the other partner would say the same" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

Respondent 4 was positive in her response and noted: "There are so many different families such as single-parent families, child-headed families and different kind of a combination. Same-gender families have the choice to be what they want to be. Sexual orientation is a choice: same-gender families thus have the same rights as other families" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). The other positive response was from Respondent 5, who echoed that "I respect those people for an example a woman with feelings for the other female. I once attended a workshop on diversity and it was brought up as part of people being diverse".

In responding to the same question Respondents 1 and 2 pointed out that they were forced by the social work profession to accept the assigned tasks of dealing with such cases. According to Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012), "as a social worker I was forced to embrace the difference, put myself aside and concentrate on what I was there for. Focus on getting a home for abandoned children, those in need of care and the homeless". Respondent 2 noted that "professionally I am forced to be

non-judgemental and individualise cases. For me the causes of people being gays and lesbians is unknown. For centuries there were no gays and lesbians in South Africa" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

4.3.3 Experience of placing children in same-gender families

When asked about their experience of placing children in same-gender families all the respondents said they have dealt with such cases. Respondents 1, 2 and 3 mentioned that it was through the adoption process. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, it was through the screening process, and it was adoption". Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, but I did not understand it and it was adoption". Respondent 3 also said: "yes, it was adoption with a white couple from Norwood". In answering this question Respondents 4 and 5 also responded positively, although their intervention was different. Respondent 4 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, I placed a girl child in the foster care of two men, who later successfully adopted the child". Respondent 5 remarked that: "It was a man who was initially involved in a heterosexual relationship. He was white and had to do transfer to the father, since the mother had passed on".

In explaining what their experiences were, they individually had their experiences. Responses varied, with Respondents 1, 2 and 3 experiencing some challenges personally. By contrast, Respondent 4 was personally and professionally comfortable in dealing with such cases. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012): "the couple went through orientation like any other couple. It was difficult for me to handle such a case, but because the contract was binding and also policies were binding I had to focus on the objectives of what I was there for. I had to put prejudice aside and treat it as a normal case. I had to consider 'best interest of the child'. To

us blacks adoption is stigmatised; whites respond positively to adoption because they do campaigns".

Respondent 2 said: "I think it's a way to fulfil what they do not have, child in a family. It's a deep-seated wish; hence they adopt to fulfil the need of being a parent" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The third respondent said: "I was initially judgemental but later became comfortable. I was assisted as a person I may have that biasness. I started learning to know them better. It is reality: gays and lesbians are there, and this made me to change my attitude" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 noted that "It was before 1994 and was regarded as taboo. In my intervention a panel consisting of social workers from Pretoria Head Office, Regional Office, Child Welfare and celebrities. I was personally for it but others opposed it. It was one of the first ones. The one adoptive parent was an actor; the press captured it as 'it was a serious drama'" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 (interview, 01 September 2012) said "he was legally married and it was after 1994. During interview he produced his marriage certificate. Although the family perception from the children's maternal family was not welcoming, I did not judge. All I pursued was the best interest of the child".

4.3.4 Understanding of "the best interest of the child" in line with same-gender families

The respondents were asked what their understanding of "the best interest of the child" was. All the respondents comprehended the question well. To them it meant identifying a suitable family for the child through the screening process. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) stated that: "It is all about the child and where it has to be placed. It has to be a solid, loving environment and the couple should provide for all the necessities, not on pity for parents but what would serve the child's interests". Furthermore, she emphasised that "best interest would mean giving those who qualify to bring up a responsible citizen". Similarly, Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) remarked that "basic needs are met, security, medical care. Gay and lesbian people have money and jobs, are able to give children what they would need". Respondent 3 said "family should provide for the child's developmental needs, love and care best level where the child is best cared for" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). In another interview Respondent 3 emphasised that "the family should be able to provide for emotional, basic, developmental needs. To produce a well-adjusted child at school, socially and everywhere" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 noted that "the best interest of the child entails observing attitude, relationship, capacity, meeting, housing, income, medical attention, an environment where a child cannot be abused or harmed physically or emotionally" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

When responding to the same question relating to the same-gender family structure, Respondents 1, 3, 4 and 5 were positive. Respondent 2 was negative about recommending this family structure. Respondent 1 noted that "Any family structure has its challenges, such as being separated,

death and divorce. In same-gender families one partner came out or was brought up by heterosexual parents and this means a family structure does not determine the child's gender as being (gay/lesbian)" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Simialrly, Respondent 3 said: "now I am comfortable with gays and lesbians. I was worried about what children will learn. I accepted that learning does not only take place at home: the child will learn from society by interacting with other families" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "I was personally raised not to discriminate people through colour, creed and sexual orientation; hence that never influenced how I see people". Respondent 5 also concurred with the other respondents and highlighted that "I cannot confirm that a certain type of a relationship is right or wrong for people" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012). There was a negative response from Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012): "My concern is the behaviour that is modelled for the children, their interaction with significant others. Maybe that may have a negative effect to the child".

4.3.5 Social workers role in the legal placement of children either through foster care or adoption

In another interview on the critical role assumed by social workers all the respondents understood it to mean making decisions for the children – deciding the children's future. Respondent 1 remarked that "the social worker's critical role is that of deciding for the child ("Playing God"), a scary role assumed by social workers, deciding the child's future hoping I am doing the right thing" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). In another interview Respondent 5 noted that her role was to "improve the social functioning of the family. Advocating for the children. Social workers write reports, to prevent exposure of children. They assist the court in making decisions" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012). Social

workers hope that the decision of placing children in same-gender families is best because no one can confirm the future.

4.3.6 Social work principles and social workers' attitudes

When asked about whether social workers are able to uphold social work principles when dealing with same-gender families, the respondents said "yes". Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) stated that "as a social worker I have no choice but to put beliefs aside. Social workers are human beings and forget about their difference. The motive should be embraced". Another Respondent 2 felt that "personally I think gays and lesbians are unreal, from the experience of dealing with such cases but bound by the professional ethics I do it but I personally feel bad after doing it" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 3 pointed out that "Ethics, principles, values: these depend on a person. Handling oneself as a professional. Beliefs versus professional social work principles do not play a role. Other social workers are Christians and create a better relationship."

"For me I was not even sure, it was shocking. I read legislation and I was not comfortable" (Respondent 3 28 August 2012). Another respondent said: "They should uphold social work values and principles. There is no excuse for being biased. I have faith in social workers; most social workers can be objective" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 mentioned that "social workers are human beings, sometimes social workers become their own self. Social workers' perception and concern are informed by the Act and their perceptions are individually based. Social work provides space for social workers to withdraw from such cases. Practically you have to deal with yourself" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.7 Social workers' prejudice

Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 4 were in agreement that social workers are prejudiced in dealing with same-gender families. Respondent 1 said "yes, because I thought it was racially inclined: white people are the ones who adopt children. However, I need to have room and accept others. Social work allows that if a social worker is uncomfortable with dealing with a case another social worker should take over. Social work allows biasness and not discrimination" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 added: "yes, some are prejudiced in that they cannot divorce personal selves from these cases" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

Another respondent 3 said: "yes, social workers are taking their own beliefs. Social workers are not supposed to tell people what is right or wrong. A social worker should understand her/his working environment by aligning himself or herself with it. You need to revitalise your values. When a social worker refuses to work with such cases it is referred to as labelling. Social worker creates a room for such clients. The social worker and supervisor sit down for the supervisor to check reasons why the social worker cannot proceed with a case. This department expects social workers to deliver without questioning" Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 observed that: "yes, but they should not. I have canalised social worker's reports and can say they are not prejudiced. If there are those who are prejudiced I presume they are little. They may have been influenced by religion and race" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 remarked that "I am not sure I have never experienced that" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.8 Gender identity development and formation in children

It was clear that every informant had her individual understanding of how gender identity is developed. Respondent 1 said: "I think it develops at teenage stage, but I don't know with gays and lesbians. It is through role plays" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). The similarity in Respondents 1, 2 and 4 was that they understood gender identity to be developed through role modelling, role plays, interaction with significant others and through the socialisation process. Respondent 1 noted that "children bond with the one they spend time with. They become whoever they choose to be. Upbringing moulds the way they present themselves. For an example we have children raised by single women. Boys raised by women without father figures. There are role models, mentors besides the parents at home. It's not fair to say this child will be gay/lesbian" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 said "significant other puts a print. Children model behaviour. For an example, male child may adopt girl behaviour that is displayed. Pavlov's theory on behaviour in Psychology as such behaviour is learned (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The other emphasis indicated by Respondent 4 was that "my understanding is gender identity forms part of socialisation. But socialisation must be seen broader than just within the nuclear family set-up. My observation is homosexual children come from heterosexual families" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012).

A different aspect that was highlighted by Respondent 3 was that "my understanding is that gender identity is not learned, it is a biological matter. Learning plays a role but it depends with individuals. I cannot presuppose that children brought up in same-gender families will turn out to be gays or lesbians. For an example a girl playing bicycle with boys. It may be a learned behaviour. It is a debatable issue whether behaviour is inborn or learned, but there is an increase in the number of gays and

lesbians for a number of reasons" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 informed me that "I do not know really if it is biological or not because some gay people do actions that are feminine, while some gay people cannot be noticed" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.9 Family structure and its influence on personality development

Picture 2: Two fathers march with their child in a Pride Parade



Source: Chris Harvey/ Shutterstock.com
http://www.livescience.com/17913advantages- gay-parents.html

Picture 2 above shows a child participating in a gay march with his parents in USA; indirectly or directly this will influence the child's formation of gender identity.

Most respondents think that personality expectations have a direct effect on the development of a child. Respondent 1 (interview 28 August 2012) mentioned that "yes, mannerism assists in moulding manners: for an example I observed my boy fastening his belt in the lower abdomen which he learned indirectly from his father. He also mimicked him by standing at the toilet when urinating, since girls sit and boys stand up. Children assimilate behaviours unconsciously". Another respondent also said "yes, mother models for a girl child and father models father figure. Boys may lack father figure and won't cope" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). This was also supported by Respondent 5. Respondents 3 and 4 held a different opinion: **"**family structures are changing as well as the environment. For example boys clean homes". While Respondent 4 added that "it might, but I still maintain that things can also go wrong in heterosexual families. A lot of homosexual people were raised by heterosexual parents" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012).

4.3.10 Social workers' ability to customise policies in their day-to-day activities

When asked about whether social workers find it easy or difficult to implement policies, Respondent 1 said: "social workers experience problems when they have to implement policies but are bound by the profession. Social workers join companies. Gradually implement policies with ease. Prior joining companies' people ignore company policies. When policies are designed social workers are not consulted and therefore bound by human right and have no option but implement policies. It's an imposition from the top" Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 remarked that "policies are brought down through the top-down approach. It's either there is little or no consultation with social workers at lower levels" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

Respondent 3 added that "decisions are made with a political influence and it affects policy implementation. There should be some level of consultation / public preference" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 pointed out that "a number of policies are written on an intellectual level and implementation can be problematic. If implementable social workers can implement. There should be consultation of social workers at lower levels, which means policies should be quality-based. Policies should be based on need and not political. Research should be done" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Furthermore, social workers are the ones who have to make an effort to ensure that they implement policies. It was alleged by Respondent 5 that social workers surf through the internet or make an effort to understand (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.11 Reading of magazines

Respondents 1 and 2 indicated that they read *Drum* magazine. Respondent 3 said she read *Move* magazine. Another respondent mentioned that she reads book. Respondent 5 has not read a magazine.

Picture 3: South African magazines



http://www.acclaimsubscriptions.com

4.3.12 Media education on same-gender families

Picture 5 above displays examples of some of magazines in South Africa, which is a positive effort to inform and educate communities. In this respect all respondents felt that the media has done enough to educate communities. Respondent 1 said "NGO's have done recruitment for adoptive parents" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Another respondent informed me that "same-gender families are still perceived by some of us as being taboo. Scared of stigmatisation. There needs to be more exposure from media on same-gender families more talk shows and drama to help communities. I believe same-gender marriages are taboo

and spread AIDS" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 3 said "I think recently media tries to educate communities, through soapies such as Generations and it proves that lesbians and gays are a reality. In this soapie they are shown kissing. I do not have a problem with them even if I see them in malls. I have accepted that they exist and cannot stop them. It's democracy. I have come to acknowledge that there are rules in that house and they function as a normal family. The positive about same-gender families is they are about themselves not other people and hold the opinion that people have things that are not known about them too, so they don't bother" (Respondent 3 interview,28 August 2012).

4.4 SUMMARY

The data collected was presented and described in this chapter. The analysis thereof will be done in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data presented in the previous chapter will be analysed and interpreted. The key thematic areas will be outlined. Data was collected through interviews. The responses from interviewees will be interpreted in detail and these will be aligned with perspectives from literature review. The intention of this paper was to investigate the experiences of social workers with children raised in same-gender families in the Johannesburg region, through answering the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How are the challenges faced by social workers to be mitigated?

5.2 ANALYSIS

The analysis is presented based on themes that emerged from the data presentation. The aspects presented in this study are based on small sample and the analysis is constantly informed by the sample used in a qualitative research approach. Its qualitative nature allowed the researcher to go deeper into the social workers feelings and experiences. The significance of such a study in South Africa cannot be underestimated

and needs more scholarly attention. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will reveal to other social workers and interested people some of the challenges faced by some social workers. The study demonstrates that adoption as an alternative form of placement in same-gender family structures exists and is a social reality. This became possible as social workers elicited from adoptive foster parents' information and views about their family structures and would openly indicate that they are same-gender family structures.

Adoption cases are currently done by social workers in NGO's and private practice as outlined in the Children's Act 38 of 2005.The public service social workers are the watchdogs thereof, through their monitoring role. Despite progress, it remains a complex for social workers to intervene in same-gender families.

5.2.1. Experiences

The research indicates that the respondents have experienced challenges in placing children in a same-gender family structure through adoption or foster care. Respondents 1, 2, and 3 acknowledged that it was a challenge for them to handle this matter: "the couple went through orientation like any other couple. It was difficult for me to handle such a case but because the contract was binding and also policies were binding. I had to focus on the objectives of what I was I there for. I had to put prejudice aside and treat it as a normal case I had to consider 'best interest of the child'. To us blacks adoption is stigmatised; whites respond positively to adoption because they do campaigns". Although Respondent 3 remarked that she initially experienced challenges, later through counselling and advice from her superiors she managed to cope. By contrast, Respondents 4 and 5 were positive. Their experiences could be divided into personal and professional experiences. In the process personal experiences, feelings and attitude appeared to have a role in the social workers' interventions.

Mallon (2005:4) criticised social workers' biased intervention and argued that "personal experiences of practitioners is the second powerful force that guides knowledge development. Social workers are guided not only by their personal experiences but by a professional code of ethics" hence they cannot be personal in dealing with issues relating to gays and lesbians. Markowitz (1991:14) justified this by arguing as follows: "While most social workers have "politically correct" ideas about gay men and lesbians many professionals have not always had the opportunity to deal with the deeper prejudices and heterosexual privileges that they themselves possess. Since most professionals continue to have an inadequate knowledge base about the real lives of gay men and lesbians,

this causes them to be in many case more homo-ignorant than homophobic". It is also important to note that social workers' practices are influenced by different theories such as the traditional development approach, psychoanalytic approach, heuristic approach and other approaches. Some of these rationalise social work prejudice, while others condemn social work prejudice.

Outside of the domain of social work, the issue of gays and lesbians has been criticised even by ANC politicians, some of whom argued that gay rights should not be included in the constitution. A then National Executive Committee member of the ANC, Ruth Mompati, criticised the inclusion of gays and lesbian rights in the constitution, and said: "I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. Gays have no problems. They have nice homes and plenty to eat. I don't see them suffering. No one is persecuting them. We haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently" (cited by Tachell, 1987). This proves that people have different experiences about gays and lesbians, and that it is a new phenomenon that is confusing to the politicians who design the very policies. It therefore warrants sound implementation methods.

The researcher is of the opinion that some social workers experience challenges when handling same-gender cases, but their profession, workplace and political circumstances force them to accept gays and lesbians. Furthermore, respondents commonly identified their clients as being from the white race and elite (celebrities). The above response displays a probability that respondents viewed the lesbigay issue as a racial issue in that it could be said that Black South Africans function somewhat different from White South Africans in that Blacks largely believe in an extended family structure, while Whites believe in a nuclear family structure. The White family structure allows people to be who they

want to be, whereas, by contrast in Black families a lesbigay family structure is viewed as an anomaly and as such a negative family and societal pressure is put on such a structure. Another aspect to the problem is the silence that has existed for centuries in Black communities. In this instance the researcher holds that the issue of same-gender families is still a new phenomenon in some racial groups such as blacks – hence it becomes a challenge. Lubbe also emphasises that same-gender family structures are exemplars of the increasingly rich and diverse forms that modern Western societies are allowing to emerge. The possibility is that respondents may perceive same-gender families as part of modernisation and an imposition from the West to African countries. As such the concern may be that everything that the West upholds may not be relevant to Africans. Furthermore, respondents expressed. The researcher believes that probably these are the remnants of colonial stereotypes. It also appeared that social work principles are mainly designed to accommodate clients irrespective of how social workers think or feel about issues, yet they are expected to protect communities. Social workers are concerned about the future of children and any situation that appears to threaten this they try to curb it. It is clear that this family structure is deemed by some social workers as an unacceptable family structure. The researcher also holds that a large number of social workers, especially those who practise within the public service are smaller in numbers. The larger proportion of such cases is handled by private social workers.

5.2.2. Prejudice

In relation to the notion that social workers are prejudiced four respondents confirmed that they are. Respondent 2 added that "yes, some are prejudiced in that they cannot divorce personal selves from these cases" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The prevalence of prejudice on the part of social worker is mostly felt by gays and lesbians in the matching process. According to Hill (2009:42-43), "Sometimes the birth parents may object or it might be prejudice on the part of the social worker".

However, they argued that (Christian) belief system influences how social workers handle these cases. Some scholars such as Herek, a pro same-gender family scholar, classifies this sort of prejudice as value expression prejudice. He stated that "homonegativity is thought to serve a value-expressive function by enabling individuals to express personal values which are important to them, for example religious fundamentalists" (Herek, 1988:451). By contrast, Stott (1999:395), an anti same-gender scholar justified the Christian belief and identified three truths, which are "that heterosexual gender is the product of divine will, heterosexual marriage is a divinely ordained institution and that heterosexual fidelity is the divine intention, while a homosexual liaison is a break of all three divine purposes". One respondent remarked that social workers cannot separate their professional selves from their personal selves.

Another respondent maintained that it is a white racial issue. The respondent appears to have followed the line of argument proposed by Gevisser and Cameron (1994:3) that "what has passed for the gay experience has often been White, middle-class, urban men". For their part, Respondents 4 and 5 acknowledged that they are prejudiced, but

they should not be since they are professionals. This is supported by authors such as Janca and Johnson, who stated that social workers need to provide support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families to counteract and cope with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions from society. Social workers must be advocates and fight prejudice, discrimination and oppression in all its forms regardless of personal values and beliefs (Janca and Johnson, 2008).

The overarching body of social workers, the NASW, ensures that prejudice is addressed at the highest level of the social work profession and state that: "NASW is committed to working towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, both inside and outside the profession" (NASW,2000b).

The researcher is of the opinion that it is true that prejudice exists and social work as a profession either pretends that social workers are mini-goddesses and have a straight line to follow when it comes to values and social work principles. However, to address the challenge of prejudice by social workers appropriate methods of implementation should be designed by social workers themselves. Those in authority should also allow themselves to learn instead of imposing policies on societies. Furthermore, most of the practising social workers acquired their qualifications prior to 1994, and before that time the academic curriculum was largely aligned to the Christian belief system. The reality is that not everything was bad in the previous system, but there are progressive lessons that could be learned and adapted to the current system. The other possibility is that social workers have multiple identities in that they are social workers (professional selves), they also belong to societies (religious beings) and they are themselves (personal selves). This may imply that respondents are saying either than saying social workers are prejudiced or that they should be looked at holistically. Furthermore, the experienced practising

social workers may have joined the profession as a Christian profession which synergised with their belief system but their perception that same-gender families are Satanic contradicts their belief system. The contradiction is visible on the social worker's role as an advocate possibly some social workers feel that in such cases they play a "Devil's advocate role".

5.2.3. Gender identity

Some social workers are concerned about children reared in same-gender families and argue that such children face gender identity crises as purported by critics of lesbian parenting (Slatter, 1995). Respondents 1, 2 and 4 hold that gender identity develops through role modelling, role plays, interaction with significant others and through the socialisation process. They are of the opinion that these play an important role in the formation of gender identity. By contrast pro same-gender relationships authors such as Butler (1994:34) argue that "there is no 'pure' biological body on which social ideas of gender are inscribed. Rather our bodies and our social identities are interactive". In another account, Moore described the body as an 'interface' or 'threshold' between the material and symbolic, the biological and cultural (Moore, 1994). In other instances it is believed that it is those in power who decide which biological differences between people will put them in particular categories. Similarities between people's bodies of one 'biological' sex are exaggerated and bodies of different sexes are played down (Butler, 1994). This implies that those who support same-gender relationships feel that gender development is influenced either politically or by societies, and as such are wrong in their perceptions, which also means that social workers' concerns are unfounded. Butler (1994:34) emphasised that "sex and gender are revealed to be socially and politically constructed like our gender identity

depends on how we choose to behave moment by moment". Some respondents' line of thinking is informed by sociologists such as Litoselli and Sutherland. Kohlberg explained gender identity as developing cognitively, which implies that gender identity development is individually formed. People become gays and lesbians out of choice. However, Davidson and Gordon's (1979) perspective is that social learning occurs through socialisation and that behaviour is learned. Other authors take a neutral stance: Butler for instance argues that identities are temporary and later they come out. It could also be said that social workers' fears are stereotypical beliefs and are ancient.

The researcher's opinion is that social workers are mostly faced with the dilemma of choosing between what various scholars are saying as part of the academic discourse and what they believe in personally. Furthermore, social work principles and values are too accommodative of every social setting. Social workers should be allowed freedom to assess cases and decide on the merits of each case. It is a fact that if a child experiences a gender identity crisis it has a root cause, and family structures, socialisation and behaviour that is modelled play an important role to either positively or negatively influence gender identity in the development of a child.

5.2.4. Consultation

Consultation was identified as another important aspect in the implementation of policies. South African policies are said to be designed by politicians at a technical level, yet it is expected that they be implemented by street-level bureaucrats. The top-down approach was highlighted as a mechanism utilised by either politicians or senior managers in the Department of Health and Social Development. In

interview most respondents remarked that there is either no consultation or little consultation of social workers at a lower level. Respondent 4 pointed out that "a number of policies are written on an intellectual level and implementation can be problematic. If implementable social workers can implement. There should be consultation of social workers at lower levels which means policies should be quality-based. Policies should be based on need and not political. Research should be done" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Critics of same-gender relationships argue that if policies are too flexible gays and lesbians would end up placed in wrong positions and foresee a problem. Kushner (1994:4) wrote that "it is entirely conceivable that we will one day live miserably in thoroughly ravaged world in which lesbians and gay men can marry and serve openly in the army that's it".

The researcher shares the same sentiments of the other respondents when they alluded to the fact that there is little consultation of social workers at grassroots level. The top-down approach does not reflect democratic principles that this country is claiming to have adopted. Some of these policies are perceived to be progressive, but there are contestations on some of these policies, which mean policy-makers should consider consultation as an important aspect in policy management and implementation.

5.3. SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter presented respondents commentary on their experiences of placing children in same-gender families. Most social workers have challenges in placing children in such family structures; however, there is a gradual mind shift of social workers in how to handle such cases. The rolling out of policies seemed to be the problem, since

most social workers feel they need to be consulted when policies are designed. The next chapter will present findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study with a summary of major findings and policy conclusions. Section 6.2 summarises the main findings. Section 6.3 offers some recommendations. Section 6.4 concludes the chapter with suggestions for future research.

Experiences in this research referred to both past professional and past personal experiences of social workers in dealing with same-gender families. The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges social workers face when handling such cases. In-depth interviews were used to gather data that assisted in addressing the gap.

This study was informed by the allegation that social workers are prejudiced in dealing with same-gender cases with specific reference to cases when they are to place children either through adoption or foster care. The social workers' concern was that such a family structure has a negative effect and may result in children developing gender identity crisis later in life.

The following research questions were designed:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?

2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

The exercise of engaging in this research brought a deeper insight into and understanding of the complexity of same-gender families versus social work profession expectations, social workers' personal experiences as well as institutional expectations.

In this chapter the conclusions on the overall purpose of this research paper are outlined. They are in line with the various themes referred to in the previous chapters. Findings will be largely informed by the literature references utilised in this study. These will be used in implementing same-gender policies at a provincial level.

6.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the study. Below is a prioritised summary of the major findings that will inform the policy recommendations:

6.2.1. Social workers' experiences

These findings enhance our understanding that most social workers have different experiences in dealing with same-gender families. The present study provides additional evidence that most social workers experienced difficulties when handling same-gender cases either through adoption or foster care placement. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the South African mind set, which is largely Christian, and confirms that most respondents hold that same-gender families are

unAfrican. In this paper the findings are that most social workers are prejudiced. However, the social work academic discourse is gradually trying to ensure that there is protection of gays and lesbians.

6.2.2. Gender identity development

In relation to gender development, various inputs were made. Predominantly socialisation and family structure were viewed to play an important role in the formation of gender identity. It is clear that there is no cause and effect relationship between family structures and gender identity development, however. The complexity here is that no one can predict how a person's sexual identity will develop, since most homosexual people came from heterosexual family structures. The constant engagement of social workers with same-gender families will create a deeper understanding on their part which will later resonate with current development trends.

6.2.3 Conclusions

1. The findings of this empirical research on experiences of social workers in dealing with children reared in same-gender families were different, and this necessitates the improved implementation of programmes by the social welfare department and related organisations.

2. Based on this research, the researcher concludes that some social workers are concerned with children placed in same-gender family structures. It would appear that some social workers are prejudiced about the same-gender family structure, since the responses of the sample interviewed here were different as the issue under

discussion is complex. The challenge in this study is to come to conclusion about whether social workers are negative or positive about this, since they have conflicting roles as social workers.

6.3 PROGRAMME RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following programmes in order to address the major conclusions drawn and summarised in the preceding section. The recommendations include:

1. Improved training methods for social workers and associated social services professions by developing curricula for sexual orientation programmes have to be implemented.
2. Improved monitoring and evaluation tools should be implemented to closely monitor same-gender families and a database should be developed. The study identified a gap in the Department of Social Development. Results-based monitoring and evaluation ensures that there is compliance on agreed upon planning and delivery processes to achieve set targets. The tool should be responsive since the focus should be on process evaluation.
3. Monitor all cases before the children's courts of children placed in same-gender families. Pre- and post-adoption supervision services should be strengthened in such cases in order to assess the suitability of such placements for children. This should be coupled with empirical research conducted by skilled researchers (empirical skills).
4. The South African government should collaborate with civil society organisations in working on issues of sexual orientation by allocating sufficient resources for ongoing educational programmes.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study focused on the experiences of social workers with children reared in same-gender families.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas:

1. The prevalence of same-gender families within the black racial grouping.
2. The alignment of social work training in relation to same-gender families.

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ANNEXURE A

477 Bluebush Street
Alveda Park
2091
01 August 2012

Dear fellow colleagues

I am a social worker in the Department of Health and Social Development. I am doing research on experiences of social workers with children raised in same-gender families.

The research is part of my academic requirement and I have interest in issues on same-gender families. The interview takes approximately forty five minutes.

The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. The results will be reported to Wits University as aggregate not individual. If you need a copy of the results, it will be made available to you.

Thank you for your participation.

Ms Jabulile Mdluli
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Experiences of social workers with placing children in same-gender families

1.1 Gender F M

1.2 Age 20-30
31-40

41-50
51-60

1.3 Section: Field
Intake
Canalisation
Other…….

1.4 Religion: Christian
Hindu
Muslim
Other……..

1.5 Years of experience?
1-5
6-10
11-20
Above…….

2.1 What do you understand by same-gender families?

2.2 How do you see same-gender families?

2.3 Do you have any specific experience of placing children in same-gender families?

2.4 What is your understanding of "the best interest of the child" in line with same-gender family structures?

3.1 Social workers are not the only role players in the legal placement of children either through foster care or adoption what is their critical role?

3.2 Social work principles state that social workers should be non-judgemental in their intervention do you think in same-gender cases they are able to uphold this principle?

If yes please elaborate?

If no please elaborate?

3.3 Some social workers are perceived to be prejudice when dealing with same-gender cases what is your opinion on this?

4.1 Can you describe how gender identity develops or formed in children?

4.2 In heterosexual family structures males are expected to have certain personalities such as women can this have direct effect in the development of a child?

5.1 Social workers are implementers of policies in their day to day activities do you think that they manage to institutionalise them with ease?

5.2 Have you read a magazine with issues on same-gender families if so which one?

Sarie
Huisgenoot
Drum
Femina
Rooi Rose

5.3 Do you think South African media is giving sufficient education on issues pertaining to same-gender families?

Experiences of social workers with children reared in same-gender families in Johannesburg

By

Jabulile Jessie Mdluli

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Management.

21 December 2012

ABSTRACT

Some social workers are concerned with children raised in same-gender families. They argue that this may result in children suffering from gender identity crisis. Some, however, perceive this as being prejudice and unfounded. The purpose of this paper was to explore the experiences (practices) of social workers in placing children in same-gender families in relation to their gender identity challenges. This study was qualitative in nature. It was conducted in the Johannesburg area. In-depth interviews were used as a method of gathering data from social workers to answer the research questions. The findings indicate that it is true that most social workers are concerned with the placement of children in same-gender family structures. However, the study revealed that there are many factors that influence the formation and development of gender identity. The study concludes that while social workers have different experiences in handling same-gender placements, their experiences are predominantly negative. It recommends that there should be an improvement in the implementation of the South African Constitution, Children's Act coupled with its rules and regulations. Finally, the study also recommends that the Department of Social Development, Child Protection Organisations (CPOs) and Child Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) should design a programme to train and support social workers in dealing with same-gender cases.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Management in Public and Development Management in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Jabulile Jessie Mdluli

21 December 2012

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Mr Aaron Themba Mdluli, who sponsored my studies. My biological mother, Mrs Johanna Mitah Mdluli, who has served as my pillar of my strength. My spiritual mother, Edith Daisy Tladi, for her continuous prayer, unwavering support and encouragement. Yolanda Ndyindila who took care of my children and household while I was pursuing my studies. My brothers and sister for their support during trying times. To my children, Mbali and Lehlohonolo: let this achievement be engraved in your hearts and be a challenge to you to do more.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
ANC	African National Congress
CPO	Child Protection Organisation
CYCC	Child Youth Care Centre
DSD	Department of Social Development
DHSD	Department of Health and Social Development
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
GLOW	Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand
IGLHRC	International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersexual
NASW	National Association for Social Workers
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SRS	Sex Reassignment Surgery
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This paper intends exploring social workers' experiences (practices) with children reared by same-gender parents. Social workers form part of a group of practitioners who are role-players in the protection and upbringing of children. Several studies have been conducted on children raised by same-gender parents, considered non-traditional families. The advent of democracy in South Africa ushered in disclosure and openness of the homosexual (lesbigay) community to the broader community. According to Lubbe (2008:325) "there appears to be an increasing openness and visibility of same-gender relationships and families in South Africa". Lesbigay people enjoy the right to marry spouses of the same sex. The natural challenge experienced in those marriages is the inability of the couple to procreate (biological model of reproduction), leaving them with the option of adopting or fostering a child or children. In the case of lesbians the other alternative would be through medical insemination of donated sperm. Various scholars in the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and medicine (obstetrician and gynaecologists) have conducted research on their experiences of the effects of same-gender parenting.

Some of the findings from these studies indicated that children growing in same-gender families may develop an identity crisis, while others had contrary findings. According to Greenfeld (2005:309) "findings in the literature supports the notion that children of lesbian mothers and gay fathers are not more likely to become homosexual and are not measurably different from children raised by heterosexual parents in terms of

personality development". This notion was also supported by Renaud (2007:1), who stated that "research on children of lesbian mothers has indicated that having lesbian parents does not hamper child development or child psychosocial functioning".

In this study the focus will be on social workers' experiences (practices) with children reared in same-gender families and the effect of this on gender identity. According to Bales (1994:57), "sexual identity has been identified as being made up of three components which are gender identity, gender role behaviour and sexual partner choice". There is very little literature on this subject; hence most of the discussions will be based on related issues. The three components (gender identity, gender role behaviour and sexual partner choice), however, are important to help understand sexual identity. In this paper the focus will be on gender identity. This chapter introduces the overall research report. It consists of the background, the research problem, the purpose statement, research questions for the study and the report structure.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In this paper the researcher will focus on social workers' experiences (practices), which refer to the models, theories and techniques used by social work practitioners. It is imperative to note that in their practice they are guided by social work professional values. Professional values are not different from societal values through their supportive legislation, funding and delegation of responsibility for certain societal functions. Johannesburg as part of South Africa is largely dominated by the Christian value system; however, there are other forms of religions such as Hindu, Muslim and other emerging religions. Furthermore, the study will examine the social worker's role in relation to children.

In this study, the researcher acknowledges that social workers practise in different settings such as privately owned businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while others are in the public sector. This research will be based on social workers' experiences (practices) in the public sector. The researcher's experience as a practising social worker in the monitoring of placement of children identified the difference in objectivity in the intervention of social workers in the public sector. The researcher observed that some social workers who practise privately are influenced by the commercial or business element in their intervention. This, according to the researcher, may negatively impact the report. By contrast, social workers in NGOs and private practice are specialists in cases of placing children in same gender experiences. Furthermore, their extensive involvement in such cases displays deeper understanding through knowledge as they read extensively on issues. The other aspect for discussion in this paper will be the legislative framework.

South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, and in 1996 its Constitution Act 108 of 1996 became the first in the world to include provisions on non-discrimination. This implied that all South African citizens have the right to choose their sexual orientation. South Africa's constitution guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination to all people, and includes a special prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This guarantee is found in the Equality Clause of the Bill of Rights, as contained in Chapter two, Section 9 which reads as follows:

9(1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

9(2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other

measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken".

9(3) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly
against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection

(3) National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

9(4) Discrimination on one or more grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that it is fair.

It is on this basis of provisions in the constitution that people from heterosexual families understand the rights of the lesbigay communities. As a means of carrying out this mandate six state institutions were designed: the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Public Protector, the Commission for the promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the Auditor-General and the Independent Electoral Commission. These are meant to guard democracy as well as support it (Constitution of South Africa 106, Chapter 9). There were other laws that were repealed such as the sodomy law. Louw (2005:145) stated that the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality jointly with the South African Human Rights Commission applied to the Witwatersrand High Court for an order declaring three crimes inconsistent with the constitution. The three crimes were the two common law offences of sodomy, the unnatural sexual acts and the statutory crime contained in section 20A of the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957. The applicants argued that the crimes discriminated against gay men and was, therefore, contrary to the equality provision in the Bill of Rights.

Furthermore, this was filtered through to the legal and social work fraternities through legislation. Social workers as implementers of some

pieces of legislation face the challenge of effecting placement of children in same-gender families. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has prescripts stipulating aspects such as adoption and foster care processes where there is direct involvement by social workers through preparation of court reports. It is the social workers' mandate to render these services and to consider whether or not such placements are in the best interests of the child. This notion is influenced by the nexus test that the court would have, which includes the harm of a potential gay or lesbian identity in the child. It is imperative to understand the importance of the political and legal background of the homosexual communities, since this provides the terms of reference for the lesbigay struggle. As such, it legitimises the placement of children in same-gender families. The following statutes are examples of the social work legislative framework:

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978
2. Social Services Professions Act, 1978
3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 1996, Act 55 of 1988
4. Children's Act 38 of 2005

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978

The Act provides for the registration of welfare organisations on regional bases, the establishment, functions and operations of regional welfare boards, and the establishment of a National Welfare Board.

2. Social Services Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978)

This Act, formerly known as the Social Work Act, provides for the establishment of the South African Council for Social Work and defines its powers and functions. The Act was amended on a number of occasions in 1995 and provided for the establishment of the South African Interim Council for Social Work and for the rationalisation of certain laws relating to social workers that remained in the force in the various areas of the

national territory of the Republic. The Act was also amended in 1996 in order to make the South African Interim Council for Social Work more representative of the people of the country (http://www.socdev.ecprov.gov.za).

3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 55, of 1988

This Act is designed to amend the Child Care ACT, 1983, so as to simplify the procedure for the granting of legal representation for children in children's court proceedings, to provide for the rights of certain natural fathers where adoption of their children born out of wedlock has been proposed and for certain notice to be given to amend the Natural Fathers of Children born out of Wedlock Act 1997, so as to consolidate the law on the adoption under the Child Care Act 1983, and to amend the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1992, so as to afford the father of a child born out of wedlock the opportunity to record his paternity and his particulars in the birth registration of the child and to provide for matters connected therewith (http:/www.info.gov.za).

4. Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005)

The Children's Act was promulgated in 2005. The Act is aligned with government's "First Call for Children" and "Putting Children First" policies. The Act constitutes a comprehensive rewrite of the Child Care Act, 1983, and among other things is aimed at addressing South Africa's international law and constitutional obligations towards children. The abovementioned statutes are examples of legislation in South Africa that ensure that children are placed in protective environments and under proper care by the designated officials (e.g. magistrates and social workers).

In the mid-1990s, Southern African leaders identified a strategy to address shrinking public support and the threat of electoral defeat. There were different approaches which were used by African leaders to ensure that

their constitution excludes the protection of 'homosexuals', claiming that it is un-African. South Africa, however, took a bold stand and included homosexuals in its constitution (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In 1996 the South African Constitution 108 of 1996 included provisions of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation. This embraced among other things the equality of and non-discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. They resonated with the political claims of other constituencies and groups. The constitution also mandated that six state institutions be created, including the Commission for Gender Equality and the South African Human Rights Commission (Human Rights Watch, 2011). According to Human Rights Watch (2003:51), "As the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town Tutu noted, the apartheid regime enacted laws upon the religious convictions of a minority of the country's population, laws which denied gay and lesbian people their basic human rights and reduced them to social outcasts and criminals in their land of birth".

In South Africa these rights are visible in that there are gay and lesbian bars, newspapers and magazines, NGOs and community centres. The following are pieces of legislation protecting non-discrimination based on sexual orientation:

1. The Labour Relations Act (1995) bars unfair dismissals on the basis of sexual orientation.
2. The Employment Equity Act (1998) bars unfair discrimination "in any employment policy or practice," which would include benefits such as pensions and insurance, on all the grounds listed in the Equality Clause, as well as "family responsibility" and "HIV status".
3. The Medical Schemes Act (1998) defines a "dependant" so as to include same-sex partners, as well as unmarried heterosexual partners.

4. The Rental Housing Act (1999) bars discrimination in rental housing on all the grounds prohibited in the Equality Clause, including sexual orientation.
5. The Domestic Violence Act (1999) allows any person in a "domestic relationship" – effectively meaning any cohabitation between people who are not close blood kin but living in the "same residence" – to get a protection order against abuse. It replaced an older Family Violence Act which had stipulated that protection orders were available to only married people. Human Rights Watch (2003).
6. The Children's (2005) Act allows for the adoption and fostering of children by same-gender families.

The various statutes indicate legislative progress and demonstrate the South African government's commitment to and interest in the protection of human rights. These also guide the implementation processes on issues relating to placement of children in same-gender families.

The other phenomenon for consideration in South Africa is the South African Christian culture, which consistently perceives homosexual relationships as being taboo. Undoubtedly, some social workers would have had the experience of having to intervene in such cases and are not in support of same-gender families. Mason-John (1995:123) attested that "those who want to adopt or foster are also confronted by the prejudice among social workers". Needless to say, social workers would also have to face the challenge that some magistrates would refuse to execute such orders.

It is not only social workers who may not be in favour of placing children in same-gender families. Some magistrates, as role-players in the placement of children in such families, have similar views. According to

Card (1994:188) "the best interests of a child test is often applied as if it is the best interest of the state test, especially when judges disclose reasons such as it is in the best interest of the child to grow up in a conventional state-approved family". It is clear that social workers are confronted with the dilemma of placing children in same-gender family structures, since they cannot prescribe for the clients what is perceived to be serving the best interests of the child for the clients. According to several authors cited in Bales (1994), there have been concerns in litigation procedures where lesbian mothers have been denied custody or visitation rights, it being argued that awarding custody would not be in the best interest of the child due to the following concerns:

a) It is feared that being raised by a sexually atypical parent will result in abnormal psychosexual development in the child (Cramer, 1986; Dilapi, 1989; Golombok, Spencer and Rutter, 1983; Hall, 1978).

b) Children reared by lesbian parents will be denied access to male role models (Dilapi, 1989).

c) Children will be isolated and rejected by their peers as a result of the stigma attached to the mother's sexual orientation (Cramer, 1986; Golombok, *et al.*, 1983; Patterson, 1992).

d) Children of lesbian parents will be more vulnerable to developing psychological problems (Golombok, Patterson, 1992).

e) Lesbian women are unfit parents because they are mentally ill, they are less maternal and nurturing than heterosexual women, and due to over-involvement with their partners they will not allow sufficient time for the parent/child relationship.

1.2.1 The selection of the study area

This research was conducted in the Gauteng Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg metro. The total number of functional social workers in this area is 206 and social auxiliary workers 158. Social workers and social auxiliary workers are deployed in different areas and units.

Table 1: Johannesburg Metro Areas

Area	Number of social workers	Number of social auxiliary workers
Soweto	46	46
Lenasia	43	12
Midrand	12	08
Johannesburg East/North	04	07
Johannesburg South	07	06
Alexandra	10	07
Total	**122**	**86**

Source: JHB Metro Human Resource Unit (2012)

Table 2: Johannesburg Metro Units

Units	Number of social workers	Number of social auxiliary workers
Intake	07	04
Canalisation	08	10
Probation	33	28
Child Protection Unit	04	05
Community Dev Unit	32	25
Total	**84**	**86**

Source: JHB Metro Human Resource Unit (2012)

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Some social workers are concerned about children reared in same-gender families and argue that such children face gender identity crises as purported by critics of lesbian parenting (Slatter,1995). Several international studies have been conducted, by authors such as Knoesen, (2003), Mischel, (1966, 1970), and Bandura (1977, 1986, 1989), and some findings concur with this view, while other researchers such as Demo and Allen (1996), Laird, (1994), Tasker and Golombok (1995), Redding (2007) and Greenfeld (2005), have refuted it. Although no study has been specifically conducted on this subject, anecdotal evidence suggests that in South Africa social workers as specialists in the field of monitoring child rearing have different views on this subject. In 1994 same-gender marriages were legalised in South Africa; hence this study focuses on the period between 1994 and 2010.

This study was conducted in the Gauteng Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg metro region. Unless the South African government and the social workers' professional association understands

that social workers' experiences in this matter are of paramount importance, challenges experienced by certain social workers will continue hindering professional interventions. This concern signals the need for this study.

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences (practices) of social workers in the Johannesburg satellite office on the issue of placement of children in same-gender families in relation to their gender identity challenges. The study will also present findings and analyse its findings. The research also seeks to provide recommendations for a review of policies relating to same-gender families, and also to formulate more precise questions that future research may be able to address.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address the research problem, the following research questions are posed:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

1.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined important aspects of this paper which highlight the significance of this study. The problem and purpose of the study was

discussed, as was the area in which the study was conducted: the Johannesburg region, Department of Health and Social Development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for the study. It reviews concepts of same-gender families.

A literature review constitutes a discussion of previous research, and outlines current research. It is in the literature review that one unpacks the key concepts and theory, and discusses the conceptual framework (Badenhorst, 2007: 43). Literature reviews assist researchers in narrowing their focal area in a specific topic and to demonstrate the significance of studying a particular topic. A literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that people learn from and build on what others have done (Neuman, 2006:111). In this section the aim is to evaluate, interpret and discuss the literature on same-gender parenting, social work as a profession and current developments from the social work, legal, sociological and other related perspectives. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the theoretical framework using case studies from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United States of America (USA).

2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Child: Defined by the Children's Act 38-2005 as "a person under the age of 18 yrs".

Homosexuality: Defined by Herdt (1997:12) as "both as a subjective state of individual desire for erotic contact with persons of the same gender and as a significant cultural category of identity involving social, political and economic practices and social institutions that are above and beyond individual actors".

Gays: According to Sullivan (2001:144), "refers to men having sex with men".

Lesbians: According to Sullivan (2001:144), "refers to women having sex with women".

Homophobia: According to Slatter (1995:38), "describes the irrational fear, hatred and intolerance of homosexual men and women".

Past experiences: According to Science Daily (2009:1), "researchers have shown that past experiences really do help when have to make complex decisions based on uncertain or confusing information. They show that learning from experience actually changes the circuitry in our brains so that we are seeing and make a decision or carry out appropriate actions.

2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON LESBIGAY ISSUES

As a discipline, social work is informed by various schools of thought such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and other disciplines. The theoretical perspective on lesbian and gay issues is generally discussed as "queer theory". According to Jackson (2003:72), "queer theory was founded on critiques of heteronormativity, but in contrast to queer activism tends to 'take place at the level of culture and discourse, paying little attention to social structures and material social practices'".

Jolly (2000:84) highlighted that "Queer was to be a new approach to sexuality, open to all those who are oppressed by the binary distinctions and the gender norms which accompany them, whether they are lesbian, gay, straight, bisexual, transsexual, celibate, undecided, or hermaphrodite". The queer theory discourse perceives gender identity issues broadly as opposed to sociological approaches. Lober (2007:2) stated that "Most sociological research designs assume that each person has one sex, one sexuality, and one gender, congruent with each other and fixed for life. Postmodern feminists and queer theorists have been interrogating bodies, desires, and genders, but sociology has not". There are, of course, traditional developmental models used by social workers (Blos, 1979, Erikson, 1950, Marcia, 1980, Newman and Newman, 1987).

According to Mallon (2005:12) "traditional development models posit concepts of sex-role identifications that are concerned only with heterosexual development and presume heterosexual identity as an eventual outcome". The psychoanalytic school of thought is most often utilised by social workers in their analysis of lesbigay issues.

Markowitz (1996:28) remarked that "some social workers, particularly those from a psychoanalytically oriented perspective, believe that somewhere in the gay or lesbian person's system you can find the roots or causes of homosexuality and that it secretly has something to do with family dysfunction". However, it is clear that lesbigay issues are complex and need a lesbigay perspective. This in turn suggests that a social worker should adopt a holistic perspective. Some perspectives relate to environment which may be disempowering health, and social wellbeing, and as such imposes enormous adaptive tasks on lesbigays (Germain and Gitterman, 1996). Social workers who subscribe to other theoretical perspectives consider the heuristic practice.

According to Mallon (2005:4), "heuristic practice, which can be described as principles to guide patterns of professional behavior and which has shaped and refined practice, may also serve as a theoretical model for practitioners". There appears to be a plethora of theoretical models from which social work practitioners can draw. It is, however, the task of individual social workers to adapt these practices according to various case scenarios.

When considering the legal rather the law perspective Ross (2004:8) remarked that "same-gender is viewed as a jump from the profane to the sacred tools big a jump". For decades same-gender marriages and lesbigay issues were not recognised and gay and lesbian organisations waged a legal battle in various courts and in the constitution-making process. However, it is important to note that South Africa is the first country in the world to include gays and lesbian rights in its constitution. Gay and lesbian marriages were viewed as non-traditional marriages. Furthermore, Ross (2004:114) noted that "the biggest barrier to same-gender marriage is the notion that gay relationships are a sexual rather than committed form of love, though in reality heterosexual couples have as much variety in a quantity of sex as do gays and lesbian couples".

In the legal fraternity a social worker's role is one of advocacy, in particular in divorce cases and custody battles between spouses (who are either same-gender or opposite sex spouses). Previously, lesbians experienced prejudice levelled against them on various levels. Tasker and Golombok (1995:24) highlight that "one of the most commonly voiced assumptions in child custody cases involving a lesbian mother is that the children will grow up to be homosexual, an outcome that is generally considered to be undesirable by those involved in decision-making in courts of law". This view emanates from the point that social workers

function with other practitioners in establishing a multidisciplinary approach.

It is also vital to note that gender theory provides political guidance. Gender theory seeks to outline how politics, policies structure and constructive gender differences and inequalities. Since the 1980s, gender differences and gender relations have been developed as a category which structures societies, economics and politics (Scott, 1980). Political science gender studies are located in institutionalised approaches to theories of democracy and the state (Phillips, Squires and Sauer, 2003) and in discursive approaches to policy-making (Bacchi, 2005).

2.4 SOCIAL WORK AND RELATED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

According to Payne (1997:40), "Social work is a professional service, rendered by a registered social worker, to promote, enhance or restore the capacity and social functioning of individuals, groups and communities". This, therefore, indicates that social work as a profession has the obligation to protect same-gender families and to assist in their acceptance by the communities in which they live. It is imperative to understand the background and establishment of social work in South Africa. Poverty in South Africa has been part of social illness which exists irrespective of racial groups.

For Gray (1998:7), "Social work in South Africa started in 1929 as an outcome of the Carnegie Commission of Enquiry into the poverty of white people". As a predominantly Christian country, South Africa engages in community uplift activities through its various churches. One such church is the Dutch Reformed Church, which, according to Drower (2002:8), trained white social workers in 1938. Pieterse (1976:46) highlighted the fact that the government was the first to lead social service delivery,

which was established in 1937 and focused on the needs of the minority population. The scourge of poverty was later discovered not only to affect white people but also other racial groups. During the apartheid era different departments had to care for their own social groups; hence the fragmented overall delivery of social work services. Social work practices in the state departments then became regulated and some policies and acts were promulgated in the sphere of social welfare and social security. The following statutes are examples of the social work legislative framework:

1. National Welfare Act 100 of 1978
2. Social Services Professions Act,1978
3. Adoption Matters Amendment Act 1996,Act 55 of 1988

The above statutes provide guidance on social work practices as well as procedures on the placement of children through adoption. These are aligned with National Association for Social Workers (NASW) international policies. Internationally, the social work profession upholds policies advocated by the National Association for Social Workers (NASW). Crispy (1996:2) refers to the NASW's policy on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues: the NASW believes that same-gender sexual orientation should be afforded the same respect and rights as other gender sexual orientation. The NASW is committed to working towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, both inside and outside the profession. In social work education and the professional environment, the NASW expects schools of social work to address the issue of discrimination.

On the one hand, the NASW acknowledges that social workers are homophobic or heterosexist and that this may have an effect on the social support of gays and lesbians. According to Brown (1996), Mc Henry and

Johnson (1993) and Peterson (1996), homophobia and/or heterosexism may cause social workers either to belittle or exaggerate the importance of sexual orientation in gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals, and perpetuate the self-hatred experienced by some gay and lesbian clients. Taken to the extreme, homophobia in social workers and other practitioners can lead to the use of conversion or reparative therapies, which are explicitly condemned by the NASW, the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Counselling Association (ACA) and the American Psychiatric Association (NASW, 2000b). It is imperative to note that as a discipline social work is eclectic in nature, since it is informed by different schools of thoughts (such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminology, law and other fields of study). This study will draw its information from various sources, focusing on what different authors have asserted on the subject of same-gender parenting.

2.5 SOCIAL WORKER INTERVENTIONS IN SAME-SEX FAMILIES

The intervention of a social work practitioner is guided by values, norms, professional ethics, codes of conduct and principles. However, the stipulated provisions do not guarantee maximum objectivity in a social worker's interventions with issues relating to same-gender families. It is imperative also to understand the level at which they intervene, which is that of street-level bureaucrats. Social workers need to provide support for gay, lesbian and transgender families to counteract and cope with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions from society. Social workers must be advocates and must fight prejudice, discrimination and oppression in all its forms regardless of personal values and beliefs (Janca and Johnson, 2008).

- Mallon (2005:8) argued that "if one were to look exclusively within the social work professional literature to develop knowledge base of

practice, one would find a very circumscribed discussion of gay and lesbian practice issues in the mainstream social work literature". The following are examples of social work values (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Gottfried and Larsen, 2010):

1. Social workers value service to others and commit to social justice in helping clients get deserved and needed resources.
2. Social workers value the inherent dignity and worth of others
3. Social workers value the privacy of human relationships.
4. Social workers behave with integrity.
5. Social workers are responsible for practising with competence.

Social work values stated above play a significant role in ensuring that social workers act professionally in dealing with same-gender family cases. In this study the researcher has focused on discussing social workers' experiences with children raised in same-gender families, since it would make a significant contribution to the knowledge base for social workers. Mallon (2005:4) cited that "the personal experience of practitioners is the second powerful force that guides knowledge development. Social workers are guided not only by their personal experiences but by a professional values and code of ethics". There appears to be very little practical experience of social workers in dealing with lesbigay issues. Although some may be deemed as being 'politically correct' they lack the experience of dealing with deeper prejudices and heterosexual privileges (Mallon, 2005).

Mallon (2005:14) also indicated that "since most professionals continue to have an inadequate knowledge base about the real lives of gay men and lesbians this causes them to be in many cases more homoignorant than homophobic". There are various intervention services social workers are required to render to families. These vary from counselling services to

statutory services. In the case of lesbigay families, social workers assist in the placement of children who are either in foster care or adoption. It is significant to note that there are various forms of adoptions which vary from a step parent/second parent adoption to a stranger application for adoption. Social workers assume the role of expert witnesses in the different courts; hence they are subpoenaed by the court to prepare reports outlining the circumstances of the prospective foster parent, or prospective adoptive parent, and the prospective foster child in the home with the aim of determining the level of suitability adoption. It is from the recommendations put forward by social workers that the court will make a decision/ruling. According to Hill (2009:47), "after the preparation course the social worker will carry out a so-called 'home study' or assessment. This involves a social worker visiting you at home once or twice for about six months".

Since the legalisation of lesbigay adoptions in South Africa social workers are bound to process these applications positively. However, this might not always be the case, since social workers have their preconceived ideas about experiences with these family structures. This study will attempt to ascertain the level of genuineness or hypocrisy in their interventions. Social workers' concerns are mostly informed by some research studies conducted on such children and family structures.

In a research study presented by Peterson (2006), findings on children raised by same-gender parents suggested that this family structure has psychological effects on children. Children in such families were found to be more sensitive to issues related to homosexuality, received more teasing (but with no long-term effects) were more tolerant to diversity and were more nurturing of young children.

Furthermore, these children are said to suffer social marginalisation and harassment by other children. Children can also be harassed by adults who disapprove of such relationships. Gays and lesbians are seen to be unstable, and children brought up in such families are said to have identity confusion, as they have no choice but to align with the family lifestyle that they are exposed to. The Peterson study (2006) was mostly influenced by ideologies from the psychological school of thought, and social workers' experiences and perceptions are mostly a product of inputs drawn from it.

2.6 TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES

South Africa is historically a colonial country in which family structures were predominantly heterosexual. Citizens upheld Christian belief systems, which were informed by the three truths as identified by Stott (1999:1) "that heterosexual gender is the product of divine will that heterosexual marriage is a divinely ordained institution and that heterosexual fidelity is a divine intention". Stott (1999) then explains that a homosexual liaison was considered to represent a rupturing of all three divine purposes. This became prevalent when the ACDP contested the legalisation of same-gender families in the 1990s. The ACDP held that same-gender relationships are not a "… notion of African tradition, Christianity and normalcy". Similarly, the then Western Cape Premier, Peter Marais, attacked the clause by saying that "Christians must choose between the Constitution and the Bible, because the former was written by communists under disguise of democracy" (*Mail and Guardian*, December 22, 2002). These debates took place at different levels and at different times within the ANC. According to Thatchell (1987:2), Ruth Mompati, who was not supportive of gays and lesbians, observed in the National Executive Committee of the ANC in 1987, "I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They

have nice homes, and plenty to eat. I do not see them suffering. No one is persecuting them. We haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently". Furthermore, she saw the gay issue as a "red herring", distracting attention from the main struggle against apartheid, and justified the ANC's lack of policy on lesbian and gay rights by stating, "We don't have a policy on flower sellers either" (Thatchell, 1987). After extensive debates and engagements the Constitution included gay and lesbian rights. The transformation was cascaded down for further implementation. This resulted in the amendment of various statutes, including the Child Care Act, now the Children's Act. In 2001, a Pretoria High Court judge ruled that the Child Care Act of 1983 and the Guardianship Act of 1968 which prevented lesbian couples from jointly adopting their children, was unconstitutional, and ruled that the legislation should be amended to include same-sex life partners (Cock, 2003). The above necessitates a background being provided about homosexual practices in South Africa.

Historically, homosexual practices have been experienced among migrant mine workers. According to Moodie and Ndatshe (1994:134) "same-gender sexual practices among migrant older and younger male mine workers in South Africa provide an example of the circumstances in which they occur today". During the colonial/apartheid era such behaviour was punishable by the state and severe penalties were incurred. It was only in 1994 that South Africa became a democracy and with it came the freedom to openly practise homosexuality. Gevisser and Cameron (1995:38) argued that "Boys in the mines did household chores, such as cooking, and joined the men in bed at night, serving as their 'wives' or sexual partners for considerable periods of time". Thus homosexuality was widespread in various communities irrespective of race, although it was previously viewed as a white (European) adopted lifestyle. Picture 1 below depicts the extent to which such freedom can be exercised in South Africa

whereas previously gay and lesbian people were subjected to violence and intolerance levelled against them in some communities.

In order for the writer to discuss issues of same-gender families in South Africa it is important to outline the phases of development of homosexuality as a source of development of same-gender families. It is apparent that the struggle waged against lesbigay rights and the transitions in this struggle were concurrent with the political transition in South Africa. As a centre for development, Johannesburg is the place where gay movements were largely formed in the "new" South Africa post-1994, as Robertson (2005:269) explains: "First was the founding of the multiracial gay rights organisation in the Johannesburg area in the 1980's namely GLOW".

The increasing activism in the lesbigay rights movement gained political support from the African National Congress (ANC). Robertson noted that "ANC members in exile were being exposed to what the Pan-Africanist Congress's (PAC) Alexander calls 'the European Leftist position on the matter'". Liberal European notions of gender rights and the political legitimacy of gay rights had an immense impact on senior ANC figures like Albie Sachs and Kader Asmal, who henceforth became the strongest lobbyists for gay issues in the ANC (Robertson, 1994:75). The 1990 gay march that took place in Johannesburg was benchmarked against those held in places like New York and San Francisco, which celebrated the Stonewall riots of 1969.

South Africa has a Human Rights Watch structure which represents the rights of gays and lesbians internationally. According to Human Rights Watch (2011) "lesbians and transgender men face extensive discrimination and violence in their daily lives, both from private individuals and government officials". Furthermore, the report emphasises that "legal

rights are important and can be empowering, but they are meaningless in the face of the abuse, intimidation and violence that people with unconventional gender and sexual expression face on a daily basis" (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

Currently, South Africa is gradually becoming more accepting of gays and lesbians. This has advanced to the level of practical implementation of lesbigay liberation; hence the freedom to adopt and foster children with the notion of establishing functional families. Needless to say, South African media (newspaper and television) is openly discussing lesbigay issues and challenges. However, despite these efforts there are acts of discrimination and hate levelled against such communities. The prominent lead role South Africa assumed was recently observed in the United Nations debate in March 2012 (*Mail and Guardian*, 2012). The Human Rights Commission consists of members from different countries such as Europe Russia, North and Latin America, Asian states and African states. The debate on the report was on "how international rights law can be used to end violence and human rights violation based on sexual orientation and gender identity". However, it appeared that the debate on lesbigay issues was not embraced by all the states. At this gathering, South Africa as a leading state experienced the challenge of a walkout being staged by some of the other states. Amongst several countries present, the Muslim including Pakistan walked out, while Asian giants China and India were silent. South Africa was then supported by Europe (*Mail and Guardian*, 2012).

2.7 SAME-GENDER FAMILIES EFFECTS ON CHILD-REARING

2.7.1. Gender identity development and expressions

Gender identity development is deemed to be significant by social workers in the course of nurturing children who are reared in same-gender families. The discourse on gender identity is encapsulated by the concept of gender development. Gender development consists of three components: gender identity, gender role and sexual orientation. According to Zucker and Green (1992:204), "gender identity is the concept of self as male or female, gender role concerns the types of behaviour and attitudes considered to be appropriate for females and males in a particular culture, and sexual orientation refers to sexual attraction to the opposite gender". In this study the focus is on gender identity and on the findings of several studies conducted previously on children raised by same-gender parents. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002:7) argued that "gender identity can be seen as a multiple and never fluid, and never complete: the emergence and re-emergence of the self". There are various theoretical models in sociology about the formation of gender identity, including the cognitive-development model and the social learning model. Social workers use these theories as a point of reference in determining their intervention in cases of same-gender families.

Davidson and Gordon (1979:14) remarked that according to the "cognitive-development model articulated by Kohlberg, children learn their own genders in much the same way that they learn the identity of physical objects and recognize that these physical objects retain identity over time". Furthermore, Davidson and Gordon (1979:15) explained that the "social learning model view of gender-identity formation emphasizes the idea that children enjoy being rewarded if they are for doing boy or girl

things, they will come to want to be boys or girls and will identify themselves as such". According to Tasker and Golombok (1995:204) the gender identity of children raised by lesbian mothers appears to be in line with their biological sex. None of the children studied to date, estimated by Patterson (1992) to be more than 300, had shown evidence of gender identity confusion: "all the of the boys were sure that they were male and all girls were sure that they were female".

Gender identity and sexual identity are concepts that are used interchangeably. Posel (2002:56) argued that "the urge to consume [sexuality] has become the fulcrum of interesting political interests, economic imperatives, cultural aspirations and notions of selfhood". South Africa has political structures such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which advocates for sexuality issues in the political domain. Ratele (2004:142) noted that "racism is kinky politics as it always involves a sexual wrapping of identity politics. Racism, together with (hetero) sexism, then, is what keeps us in awe, or fear or ignorance of black and white, male and female bodies and sexualities in this society".

Regarding the formation of identities (sexual/gender), certain historical constructs are considered to play a pivotal role, and history may form the foundation of how we perceive ourselves. According to Butler (in Reddy, 2004a:17), "Even if our identities are fluid, discourse presents us with a mirror images–identities through which we may achieve (temporary) closure by 'coming out', and in so doing identify with others whom we perceive to be like us". In relation to the formation of gender identity Cameron (1997:49) holds that "the media, and magazines in particular, play a large constituting in this process rather than simply reflecting or representing such differences, and by our consumption of such media texts, so do we".

According to Human Rights Watch (2003:203) "gender norms are as powerful in South Africa as they are elsewhere in the region, and the abuse directed at people who transgress against them can be as severe". The upholding of these norms is prevalent in most public spaces such as malls, universities, and state institutions, where bathrooms are separated according to gender. This sometimes leads to abuse of gays and lesbians. Human Rights Watch (2003:204) states that "South Africa is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa where hospitals offer sex reassignment surgery (SRS)". Such people acquire transgender legal identity papers. This was addressed by the South African Law Commission in a report on the Legal Consequences of Sexual Realignment and Related Matters. In the USA there have been various reports on sexual orientation in the last three years: the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, and American Psychoanalytic Association have reviewed the research on sexual orientation, and identity, and each has confirmed that sexual orientation and gender identity do not correlate with mental illness or immorality (O'Halan and Kathrine, 2006).

2.7.2. Family structures (traditional and non-traditional)

Families are part of social structures in which children are reared. There are key focal areas where critiques of gay and lesbians base their arguments (such as the family theory). The ideal would be to define what an ideal family structure is, but the court and public discourse will always bring about controversy. According to Lubbe (2007:270), "the concept family depends on the cultural assumptions about families and gendered relations within families themselves". Parenting is a skill that most parents need to possess in order to nurture appropriate and desirable social behaviour.

The historical discrimination levelled against lesbian mothers and gay fathers has mostly been experienced in the courts of law, where if the mother or father was said to have a certain sexual orientation she/he would not be granted custody of the children. There are several debates on what constitutes a family; some authors such as Lubbe (2007) hold that a family should possess a structure in which there is a mother and a father – hence "family" is largely defined as being heterosexual. However, with the recent developments, homosexual family structures are beginning to enjoy the status of being considered acceptable.

Social workers' interventions have previously been understood to be hindering adoptions by lesbian and gay parents. According to Golombok (2007:11), "social workers argued that since children who have been put up for adoption are particularly vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems they should be placed in as traditionally a family environment as possible". The prevalence of prejudice on the part of social worker is mostly felt by gays and lesbians in the matching process. According to Hill (2009:42-43) "Sometimes the birth parents may object or it might be prejudice on the part of the social worker".

However, in South Africa there are changes that are in favour of the placement of children with lesbigay parents. A study was conducted on the differences found in children reared by heterosexual mothers and those who were born through donor insemination. The findings were that there were no differences in either the cognitive functioning or behavioural adjustment between children who had been conceived by donor insemination and raised by lesbian couples and a control group of children from heterosexual two-parent families (Flaks, Fischer, Masterpasqua, and Joseph, 1995).

There are aspects identified as being critical assessment areas in the child's social and emotional well-being and adult sexual orientation. With regard to the emotional aspect, the mother-child relationship is conceptualised on the basis of attachment theory. According to Golombok (2007:17) "another aspect of parenting that influences the social and emotional well-being of the child is parenting style". Parenting skills play an important role in that parents who are neglectful do not foster appropriate psychosocial adjustment in their children. The other factor that may influence children's behaviour is the environment. This therefore refutes the notion that those children who are brought up in a lesbian household are for example more likely to be gay or lesbian themselves. Other scholars of the classical social learning theory claim that children model behaviours exhibited by their same-gender parent and that parental reinforcement for such behaviour encourages children's imitations (Mischel, 1966, 1970; Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989).

As a proponent of same-gender family structures Lubbe (2007) indicated that "same-gender families are exemplars of the increasingly rich and diverse forms that modern Western societies are allowing to emerge". The different schools of thought have different perceptions and findings about the influence of a family structure; however, social workers are advised to remain objective in their interventions.

2.8 EXPERIENCES OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (ZIMBABWE)

The discourse on homosexuality in some southern African countries is that it is deemed as being unAfrican. This is prevalent in most African countries, among them Zimbabwe, which will be used as a case study. Zimbabwe's legislative framework provides for the legitimacy of marriages in the Zimbabwe Marriage Act. Although it refers to opposite sex types of

marriages and polygamous marriages no provision was made for same-sex marriages. It appears that under the leadership of President Mugabe, the Zimbabwean government abhors homosexuality. For this reason same-gender families are deemed to be a farfetched ideal, since there is still a battle against the discrimination against homosexuals. The Human Rights Watch (2003:13) highlighted one of President Mugabe's speeches, in which he stated that "if we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts what moral fibre our society shall ever have to deny organised drug addicts". The moral fibre of Zimbabwe is underpinned by the country's Christian belief system. According to Gher (2004:44) "Zimbabwe has a secular government, but seventy to eighty percent of its populace belongs to mainstream Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic Anglican and Methodist churches".

As a champion of lesbigay rights, South Africa's own agenda lies in ensuring that other African countries are on par with it. This has led to the formation of a human rights organisation in Zimbabwe (GALZ). In an attempt to address this issue the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) was used to campaign against discrimination (Human Rights Watch 2003). While states are transforming and scrapping laws on "sodomy", Zimbabwe is found to be largely enforcing these laws, which mainly viewed as being discriminatory. According to Human Rights Watch (2003:124) "in many places, non-state actors continue to act out the mandates given by the state leaders: to 'eliminate' gays and lesbians, to treat them like 'animals', to 'fight against the enemy', to 'condemn' and 'reject' homosexuals". The above discussion makes it clear that, at this stage, there is a clear need to discuss same-gender families in other parts of the African continent. The struggle of same-gender families is still at its early stages of ensuring mere recognition of gays and lesbians. President Mugabe holds that

homosexual behaviour is being "thrust" on Africa by the West. He has condemned homosexuals as being lower creatures than "dogs" and "pigs".

2.9 EXPERIENCES OF SAME-GENDER FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The notion of lesbigay families is explained by different authors in the USA, which makes it subject to many analogies. According to Appell (2007:289) "United States family law is largely based on the modern family in that the foundation of family law is the patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family and biology and marriage define family relationships, and regulate rights, privileges, and benefits among family member and against the state". Furthermore, he explained that gays and lesbian families are viewed in the light of "post-modern family structures". Lesbian and gay issues are viewed as complex and unstable family constellations. He argues that "post-modern families are pushing away from biological connectivity, a movement which is not entirely unproblematic, but provides significant benefits".

This background assists in painting a picture from sociological and legal aspects which play a role in the discourse of placement of children in same-gender families. Social workers in the USA are also governed by pieces of legislations when placing children legally in same-gender families either through adoption or foster care. Globally, same-gender issues are a challenge, hence the picture below shows gays in a protest in USA, advocating that gay and lesbian marriages be legalised, that they be afforded equal rights in children custody battles, and that they be given rights to adopt or foster children. This implied the normalisation of a same-gender family structure.

Same-gender families are legalised in some parts of USA such as California, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Washington. Florida is the only state with an outright law banning gays and lesbians from adopting children (Same-Sex Adoption Laws). Studies on the topic in the USA have largely been conducted by psychologists. Lesbians and gays have historically been classified as abnormal (abnormal behaviour). In 1957 the psychologist Evelyn Hooker conducted her first study. In 1972 the first gay studies programme began at Sacramento State University. A transition also occurred in the APA, which removed homosexuality from the handbook of disorders. Late in the 1970s research was conducted on the children of lesbian and gay parents. In 1990 Simon Le Vay observed that the male brain could take two different forms depending on one's sexual preferences. In 2000 a national census was conducted and the findings were that over 600,000 same-gender households were counted in the USA. Furthermore, research was conducted on such family structures, and the findings were that 60% of Americans disapprove of legally sanctioning gay couples to adopt. And, according to Peterson (1996), 42% oppose allowing gays or lesbians to teach.

According to Tiffany (2003) same-sex couples are changing the stock image of the American family and the landscape of family law, since most children in these families are a product of reproductive technologies. This legal intervention was also extended to the relationship that both parents have with the adopted child, who would then automatically be their biological child. These include among other things the right to financial support or inheritance. In South Africa no such household census has been conducted. However, there can be no doubt that gay and lesbian households are on the increase. Furthermore, lesbian and gay families in the US are the prime but not the only the examples of post-modern families. Post-modern families are pushing us away from biological

connectivity, a movement which is not entirely heterosexual but provides significant benefits (Tiffany, 2003).

In the USA criticisms levelled against same-gender adoption were as follows:

1. The gay community cannot biologically reproduce without the help of outside parties, thereby resulting in many feelings regarding their lifestyle as unfit and negatively affecting children (Sullivan, 2001).
2. Children raised under the gay lifestyle often encounter struggles with mental breakdowns and social disorder as a result of their childhood growing up with two parents of the same sex (Sullivan, 2001).
3. There is an assumption that one partner plays a female role and one partner plays a male role; however, that is generally not true, resulting in an absence of one important figure in a child's life (Patterson, 1992).
4. It is found that lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women and vice versa for gay men (Sullivan, 2001).
5. Same-sex relationships last only a small proportion of the time of most heterosexual marriages, with most lasting between one to three years and next highest as four to seven "Comparing the lifestyles".
6. Because of those traditional notions of family values and the discussed criteria – relationship longevity/ stability, patterns of fidelity and health and stress – children raised by same-sex couples suffer from health and physical effects resulting in gender identity issues and mental breakdowns. (Tiffany, 2003 in *American Journal of Analysis* of Americans' shifting opinions and beliefs on same-sex families).

2.10 SUMMARY

It is clear from the literature review that there is limited literature on the subject (much of the literature review was drawn from literature indirectly related to the topic). Various practitioners from other schools of thought have their views on same-gender parenting, although social workers have not made much contribution. Despite the South African government's effort to combat homophobia the phenomenon recurs in societies, especially in black communities, as it is regarded as un-African. Furthermore, most exponents of homosexuality conducted their studies in the early 20th centuries, while proponents conducted their studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Their findings indicate that homosexuality is a difference in human sexual orientation and that it has to be accepted. This process is also viewed as part of transition and globalisation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section explains the methodology used in the study, the methods utilised to gather data, the population interviewed and how interview schedules were administered in order to answer the research questions. The gathering of data was done through the use of in-depth interviews with staff from Gauteng Social Development in Johannesburg, 81 Rissik Street Regional Office.

The nature of the study was qualitative, with its intention to focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings and involve studying all the phenomena and their complexity (Leedy and Omrod 2001:147). In-depth interviews have the potential to provide insight which reveals the nature of the phenomenon under study. This is a phenomenological study in that it focuses on the interviewees/respondents and their experiences in dealing with the placement of children in same-gender families. Furthermore, in in-depth interviews, the interviewees are partners in the research enterprise rather than subjects to be tested or examined (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:12).

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The approach used in this study is the qualitative approach. According to Bouma and Atkinson (1995:206) qualitative research can be described as any social science research that produces results that are not obtained by statistical procedures or any other method of quantification.

One advantage of the qualitative method in exploratory research, according to Health International, is that it allows the researcher the flexibility to probe the initial participant's responses – that is, to ask the "why" or "how" questions. Patton (2002) states that qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents. In this study, the researcher focused more on in-depth, open-ended interviews and documents – hence the use of a qualitative approach.

Creswell (2003:181) noted that "qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. The qualitative researcher goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research". In this study social workers were interviewed in office, which is their natural setting, and they were a small number of respondents. The disadvantage of the qualitative research method is that it is time-consuming in terms of gathering and analysing data. Moreover, the findings in qualitative research, unlike the quantitative method, cannot be generalised.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study seeks to establish social workers' experiences with children reared in same-gender families. The approach used in this study is the interpretive qualitative approach. According to Merriam (2002:4), "Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered the interpretative qualitative approach. If you were interested in studying the placement of a child in a foster care, for example, you might focus on understanding the experiences from the perspective of the child, the foster family, the agency involved". This study falls within the ambit of exploratory research. Neuman (2006:33) describes exploratory research "as research in which

the primary purpose is to examine a little understood issue or phenomenon to develop primary ideas and move towards refined research questions by focusing on the 'what' question".

According to Creswell (2003:75) "the concept is 'immature' due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research". In this study the researcher anticipated that information and experiences gathered from social workers would contribute to the baseline information on children raised in same-gender families.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Leedy and Omrod (2005) argued that in order for the researcher to avoid serious problems later on in the research, the following questions need to be answered by the researcher before data collection: What data is needed for the research? Where is the data located? How will data be secured? And how will data be interpreted?

This study has used both primary and secondary data collection methods. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, whereas literature and document review was used to collect secondary data.

3.4.1. Primary data

In this study qualitative methodologies were largely used in the collection of data. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:111), when researchers collect their own data for the purpose of researching a particular study, the data is called primary data. For the purpose of this study primary data was obtained by means of semi-structured interviews. According to Fossey (2002:723), semi-structured interviews are used to

facilitate a more focused exploration of a specific topic using an interview guide.

Participants in this interview comprised senior social workers who have had experience in placing children in same-gender families. The respondents have experience as street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of policies pertaining to same-gender families, which is at the operational level. The challenge of locating appropriate respondents was that the number of social workers who have placed children in same-gender families is very limited, hence the researcher decided on five respondents.

This method is relevant to the study because the researcher has collected data she views to be relevant to the questions, and was solely responsible for this. This sentiment is shared by Bless, *et al* .(2006:112), who indicate that data collected in this way is most appropriate to the aims of the research, since the data gathering is directed at answering precisely the questions raised by the researcher. It is the view of the researcher that valuable information has came out of well-conducted interviews. Creswell (2005:186) notes that interviews allow the researcher "control" over the line of questioning, while Badernhorst (2007:6) described primary data as the "raw" data before it has been constructed into some form of knowledge.

The five respondents were purposefully selected for in-depth interviews. They were mainly drawn from the Johannesburg DSD, which is representative of all clusters, and are experienced. In-depth interviews can help fill in historical blanks and in so doing make people more understandable (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:3). The notion of same-gender families is viewed as a new topic for discussion after 1994.

Studies on same-gender families in South Africa are relatively new; hence the literature reviewed could not provide a firm theoretical basis. The researcher largely used indirect literature. The researcher used a sound recorder to capture responses, while jotting down key points during the interview. This afforded the interviewer the opportunity to focus attention on the interviewees. No one can remember the content of multiple interviews over months or years, so researchers make permanent records of their interviews through notes, recording Rubin and Rubin (2005:203). Furthermore, a tape recorder ensured that the researcher focused attention on interviewees, gave appropriate eye contact and non-verbal communication (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001:173). Participants were informed about the purpose of the interview and the researcher asked for consent to use a voice recorder.

a) Interview schedule

The interview schedule consisted of demographics, which refers to the personal profiles of respondents. This provided information on the social workers interviewed, their work designation, their ages and years of experience. Section A explored the social workers' understanding of the concept of same-gender families, legislative provisions and their practical usage of legislation on same-gender issues. Section B explored theoretical provisions for practising social workers. Section C explored the development and formation of gender identity with the notion of understanding its relationship with same-gender families. Section D explored the transition in South Africa in relation to same-gender families, gays and lesbian issues in general.

Table 3: Aspects of the Interview Schedule

SECTION	FOCUS
	Interviewee's Personal profile
A	Legislative provisions
B	Social work profession provisions
C	Gender identity
D	Transition in South Africa

Source: Own

3.4.2. Secondary data

The abovementioned primary data collection strategies are not enough to ensure good research. In addition the researcher used internet searches for electronic journals and academic articles, books, policy documents and periodicals. The major topics for discussion were legislative provisions, social work provisions, gender identity and transition in South Africa. Since secondary data of this sort was collected primarily from other studies that might have had a different purpose, the researcher ensured that such data was interpreted carefully. The study utilised magazines, because most lesbigay discussions occur in magazines and newspapers. Studies on the subject of lesbians and gays are limited; hence there is limited previous research that was conducted. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001:171) highlighted various reasons for using secondary data: to shed light on, or complement, the primary data collected and allow the researcher to focus attention on analysis and interpretation.

3.4.3. Sampling

The sampling method used in the study was non-probability sampling in the form of purposive sampling. Neuman (2006:222) describes purposive

sampling as a valuable kind of sampling for special situations. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. The researcher interviewed five senior social workers from the field section who have had the experience of placing children through adoption and foster care in same-gender families. They were selected according to their experience and expertise. Flick (1998) attests that it is their relevance to the research topic and not their representativeness which determines the way individuals to be used in the study are selected. The researcher is convinced that the selected sample has shed light on the topic. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:147) "qualitative researchers are intentionally non-random in their selection of data sources, instead their sample is 'purposeful' they select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation".

3.5 DATA PRESENTATION

Presentation was done through coding and usage of themes as per the responses of the respondents. Themes were designed from research questions and research objectives, they were as follow: legislative, social work profession, gender identity and transition in South Africa.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis starts with data organisation. Patterson (2002) argues that before data can be analysed, the researcher must ask the following questions: Are the field notes complete? Are there any holes in the data that still need to be filled by collecting additional data before analysis? Is all the data properly labelled with a notation system? And are all interview transcripts complete? The researcher ensured that the above issues were properly addressed.

In transcribing the data the researcher used what Pierce (2008) terms a three-column transcription interview. The respondents were allocated a reference number that appears in the first column; the second column contains all of the questions; and, lastly, analysis is accommodated in the last column. Conceptualisation was used in analysing data; in so doing the researcher was able to organise and make sense of the data. While analysing data the researcher has done what Neuman (2006) refers to as data categorisation in terms of themes, concepts and features. Responses with the same theme or concept were grouped together and analysed in the same manner.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the validity of data is understood to refer to the correctness of the research findings. Golafshani (2003) suggests that to ensure reliability in qualitative research, the examination of trustworthiness is of crucial importance.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that while the terms reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality in qualitative research paradigms, the terms credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are criteria that are essential for quality.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has used semi-structured interviews as well as documentary analysis, and triangulation was also used to ensure reliability and validity. This method is supported by Golafshani (2003), who does not disregard the notion of triangulation in a qualitative research paradigm and further asserts the need to define triangulation from a qualitative researcher's perspective in each paradigm. The researcher has ensured that data is interpreted from all angles to

ensure validity and reliability. This method also answers the question: how congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what is really there? (Merriam, 1995). In this study the researcher used one on one interviews as outlined in the interview question schedule and analysis of records and documents from MARDEF to ensure validity and reliability through triangulation. Furthermore, through triangulation the researcher ensured that data collected from the respondents is valid and reliable.

3.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study of social workers' experiences with children reared in same-gender families is significant because responses obtained during the study may be used in the formulation of new programmes designed to implement the Children's Act in relation to the adoption and foster care placement of children who will be reared in same-gender families. It will assist in addressing implementation challenges. Some social workers are facing the dilemma of placing children in same-gender families.

The challenge emanates from their disapproval of this family structure, which is perceived to perhaps have later unintended consequences for children. Understanding this predicament will assist South African society to embrace diversity from a social work perspective.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher was willing to conduct a deeper study on this topic although there are challenges:

a) The use of non-probability sampling

b) Purposive sampling was used in this study and its limitation is the lack of integrity in that participants will not have equal chance of being selected.
c) Limited research conducted on the subject in South Africa.

Studies of children reared in same-gender families have mostly been conducted internationally, and there are very few studies on the subject in South Africa.

The various studies have come from the schools of psychology, sociology, anthropology, law and gynaecology; it appears that few studies have been conducted on social workers' experiences and perceptions on children reared in same-gender families, which implies that literature on the subject will be very scarce, and indirectly related literature was therefore used in this study.

The researcher is part of the social workers' population. The researcher monitors the placement of children in heterosexual and homosexual families through adoption. In this study the researcher will avoid bias by allowing the full and undisrupted participation of respondents.

There are few social workers who have experience in placing children in same-gender families.

The study did not categorise social workers according to race.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Neuman (2006:129) defined ethics as "what is or is not legitimate to do or what 'moral' research procedure involves". In this study participants were

assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and throughout the study the researcher took cognisance of the sensitivity of this aspect.

a) Rights of participation

Respondents were assured of their rights of participation: in instances in which they chose not to answer the researcher did not probe/pursue further questioning. According to Neuman (2006:129), ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research.

b) Duration of interview

Participants were informed about the duration of the interview. In this study it was estimated that twenty minutes would be allocated for each interviewee, and this arrangement was maintained, although some interview sessions were longer, as the topic became interesting to respondents and the researcher allowed them to continue with their discussions.

c) Tools for confidentiality and anonymity

A letter of consent was designed assuring participants of confidentiality and anonymity. According to Neuman (2006:135) "informed consent is a statement, usually written, that explains aspects of a study to participate and asks for their voluntary agreement to participate before the study begins".

3.11 SUMMARY

The ability of this research to document the experiences of social workers is central to the strength of this study; thus in-depth interviews were used

as tool to collect data. Primary and secondary sources were used, and these enabled the researcher to analyse and organise data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the interviews conducted will be presented. These include social workers' views, experiences and understanding regarding issues relating to same-gender families and their active and critical role in the placement of children in such family structures.

The variety in their response and viewpoints gave more depth to individual experiences and the difference of their understanding on different aspects pertaining to same-gender families. In-depth interviews as a manner of collecting data assisted in analysing data objectively. The presentation was done following five key thematic areas, which are personal information consisting of five questions, legislative provisions (four questions), social work profession provisions (three questions), gender identity (three questions) and transition in South Africa (three questions). This constituted the overall set of 17 interview questions.

This chapter is structured according to the themes of the interview and the data collected is aligned to the research objectives. The study sought to answer the following questions:

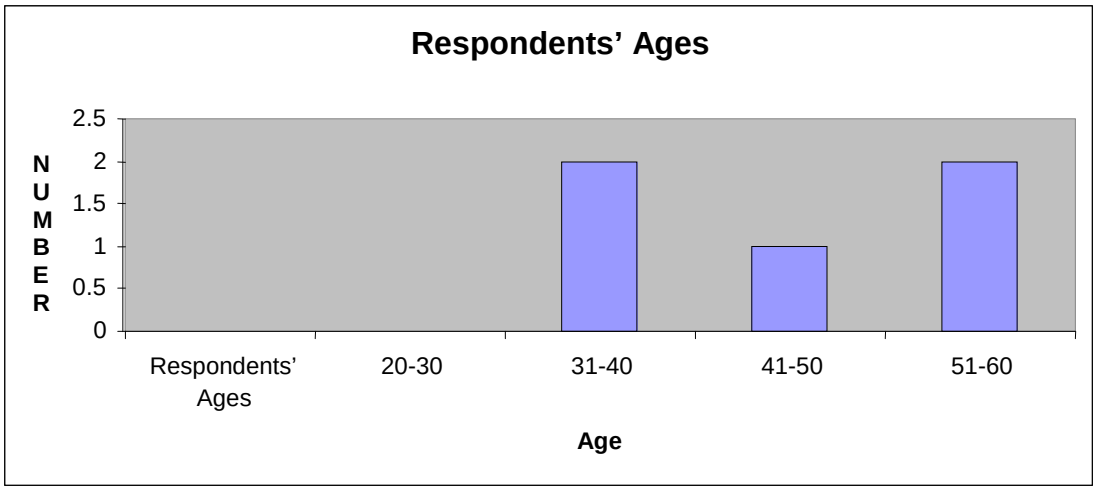
1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?

3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

4.2 PERSONAL INFORMATION

The first set of questions dealt with respondents' personal information, gender, section, religion and years of experience. Social work as a profession is largely female-dominated.

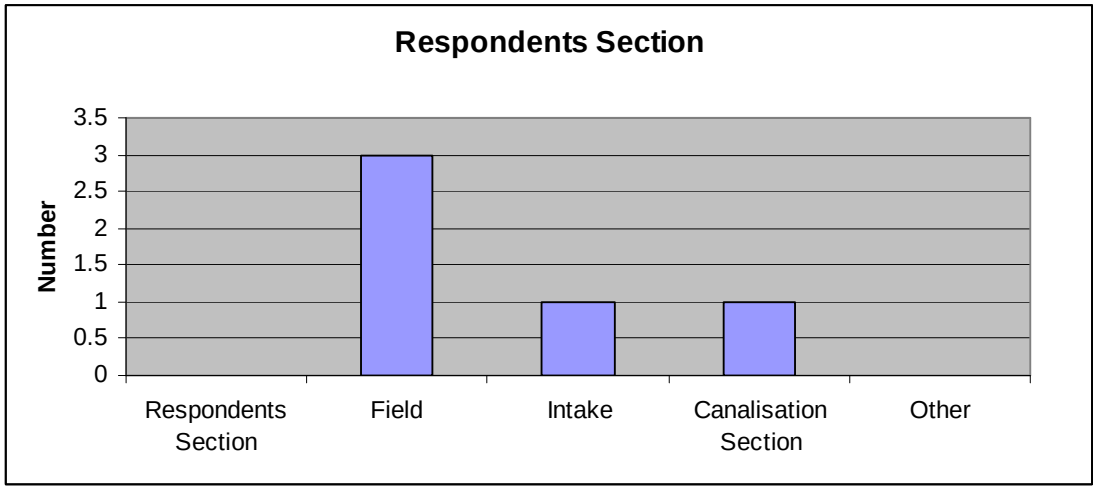
Graph 1: Respondents' Ages



Source: Own data

Graph 1 above reflects respondents' ages. Respondents 1 and 4 are in the same age category. Respondents 3 and 5 are also in the same category, while respondent 2 was in her own category. The respondents are all above 30 and below 60.

Graph 2: Respondents' Section



Source: Own data

Graph 2 reflects that three of the respondents are in the field section (respondents 3, 4 and 5). Respondent 2 was from the intake section and respondent 1 was from the canalisation section. Field section respondents therefore dominated the research sample.

Question 4 reflects that the sample was constituted mainly of Christians.

Question 5 reflects that respondent 1 has more than 20 years' experience. Respondents 2 and 4 have similar experience (between 11-20 years). Respondent 3 has 1-5 years of experience and respondent 5 has 6-10 years of experience.

This section consists of open-ended questions that are semi-structured, which allowed further probing.

4.3 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

4.3.1 Understanding of same-gender families

Picture 1: Gays in a protest (USA)



Source: http:joelgordon.photoshelter.com

Picture 1 above shows gays protesting against inequalities and other related challenges. It appears that the challenges that lesbians and gays face in South Africa for an example are more or less consistent with those faced by lesbigay communities in the USA. This also resembles a same-gender family structure as understood globally.

During interviews respondents commonly understood the concept same-gender families to mean both parents being either female or male. The differences emerged when each elaborated further. Respondent 1 stated that "same-gender families consists of people of same genders being partners, sharing life together, who are intimate, having a family together for an example gay people and lesbian people legalise their stay as companions" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "same-gender families are constituted by people with the same-sex female and female (lesbians) who live together temporarily or permanently and their stay may be formalized". Respondent 2 explained further that "same-gender families are families of couples of same gender staying together" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 emphasised that same-gender familes "in most cases are homosexual relationships". Lastly, respondent 5 (interview, 01 September 2012) remarked that same-gender families are "families composed of gays and lesbians, woman married to a woman or man married to a man, involved in a long-term relationship" . The deeper elaboration by the respondents reflected that all respondents have a deeper understanding of same-gender families

4.3.2 Views on same-gender families

When asked about how they see same-gender families, Respondents 1 and 2 began their response by highlighting that they are Christians. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "as a Christian I do not agree on same-gender relationships. It is contrary to Christian values and beliefs; however, South African constitution informs that people have rights as human beings they can live life the way they want to. I am totally against it. I was once employed by an adoption agency doing screening and the workplace forced me to do such cases, since it is

governed by policies and had contracted with the agency". Similarly, Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) remarked that "I do not understand gays and lesbians personally as a Christian I am made to believe that God created Adam and Eve and not Adam and Adam". Respondent 3 was not sure of her and highlighted this: "I did not understand gays and lesbians in South Africa. It was not common and before it was taboo, until Acts and policies were put in place. As a professional I have to work with them and handle their cases" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 stated: "I am a bit confused about who assumes a female or male role if they are of the same sex. I would often hear one partner referring to the other as a boyfriend while on the same note the other partner would say the same" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

Respondent 4 was positive in her response and noted: "There are so many different families such as single-parent families, child-headed families and different kind of a combination. Same-gender families have the choice to be what they want to be. Sexual orientation is a choice: same-gender families thus have the same rights as other families" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). The other positive response was from Respondent 5, who echoed that "I respect those people for an example a woman with feelings for the other female. I once attended a workshop on diversity and it was brought up as part of people being diverse".

In responding to the same question Respondents 1 and 2 pointed out that they were forced by the social work profession to accept the assigned tasks of dealing with such cases. According to Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012), "as a social worker I was forced to embrace the difference, put myself aside and concentrate on what I was there for. Focus on getting a home for abandoned children, those in need of care and the homeless". Respondent 2 noted that "professionally I am forced to be

non-judgemental and individualise cases. For me the causes of people being gays and lesbians is unknown. For centuries there were no gays and lesbians in South Africa" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

4.3.3 Experience of placing children in same-gender families

When asked about their experience of placing children in same-gender families all the respondents said they have dealt with such cases. Respondents 1, 2 and 3 mentioned that it was through the adoption process. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, it was through the screening process, and it was adoption". Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, but I did not understand it and it was adoption". Respondent 3 also said: "yes, it was adoption with a white couple from Norwood". In answering this question Respondents 4 and 5 also responded positively, although their intervention was different. Respondent 4 (interview, 28 August 2012): "yes, I placed a girl child in the foster care of two men, who later successfully adopted the child". Respondent 5 remarked that: "It was a man who was initially involved in a heterosexual relationship. He was white and had to do transfer to the father, since the mother had passed on".

In explaining what their experiences were, they individually had their experiences. Responses varied, with Respondents 1, 2 and 3 experiencing some challenges personally. By contrast, Respondent 4 was personally and professionally comfortable in dealing with such cases. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012): "the couple went through orientation like any other couple. It was difficult for me to handle such a case, but because the contract was binding and also policies were binding I had to focus on the objectives of what I was there for. I had to put prejudice aside and treat it as a normal case. I had to consider 'best interest of the child'. To

us blacks adoption is stigmatised; whites respond positively to adoption because they do campaigns".

Respondent 2 said: "I think it's a way to fulfil what they do not have, child in a family. It's a deep-seated wish; hence they adopt to fulfil the need of being a parent" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The third respondent said: "I was initially judgemental but later became comfortable. I was assisted as a person I may have that biasness. I started learning to know them better. It is reality: gays and lesbians are there, and this made me to change my attitude" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 noted that "It was before 1994 and was regarded as taboo. In my intervention a panel consisting of social workers from Pretoria Head Office, Regional Office, Child Welfare and celebrities. I was personally for it but others opposed it. It was one of the first ones. The one adoptive parent was an actor; the press captured it as 'it was a serious drama'" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 (interview, 01 September 2012) said "he was legally married and it was after 1994. During interview he produced his marriage certificate. Although the family perception from the children's maternal family was not welcoming, I did not judge. All I pursued was the best interest of the child".

4.3.4 Understanding of "the best interest of the child" in line with same-gender families

The respondents were asked what their understanding of "the best interest of the child" was. All the respondents comprehended the question well. To them it meant identifying a suitable family for the child through the screening process. Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) stated that: "It is all about the child and where it has to be placed. It has to be a solid, loving environment and the couple should provide for all the necessities, not on pity for parents but what would serve the child's interests". Furthermore, she emphasised that "best interest would mean giving those who qualify to bring up a responsible citizen". Similarly, Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012) remarked that "basic needs are met, security, medical care. Gay and lesbian people have money and jobs, are able to give children what they would need". Respondent 3 said "family should provide for the child's developmental needs, love and care best level where the child is best cared for" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). In another interview Respondent 3 emphasised that "the family should be able to provide for emotional, basic, developmental needs. To produce a well-adjusted child at school, socially and everywhere" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 noted that "the best interest of the child entails observing attitude, relationship, capacity, meeting, housing, income, medical attention, an environment where a child cannot be abused or harmed physically or emotionally" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

When responding to the same question relating to the same-gender family structure, Respondents 1, 3, 4 and 5 were positive. Respondent 2 was negative about recommending this family structure. Respondent 1 noted that "Any family structure has its challenges, such as being separated,

death and divorce. In same-gender families one partner came out or was brought up by heterosexual parents and this means a family structure does not determine the child's gender as being (gay/lesbian)" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Simialrly, Respondent 3 said: "now I am comfortable with gays and lesbians. I was worried about what children will learn. I accepted that learning does not only take place at home: the child will learn from society by interacting with other families" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 (interview, 28 August 2012) noted that "I was personally raised not to discriminate people through colour, creed and sexual orientation; hence that never influenced how I see people". Respondent 5 also concurred with the other respondents and highlighted that "I cannot confirm that a certain type of a relationship is right or wrong for people" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012). There was a negative response from Respondent 2 (interview, 28 August 2012): "My concern is the behaviour that is modelled for the children, their interaction with significant others. Maybe that may have a negative effect to the child".

4.3.5 Social workers role in the legal placement of children either through foster care or adoption

In another interview on the critical role assumed by social workers all the respondents understood it to mean making decisions for the children – deciding the children's future. Respondent 1 remarked that "the social worker's critical role is that of deciding for the child ("Playing God"), a scary role assumed by social workers, deciding the child's future hoping I am doing the right thing" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). In another interview Respondent 5 noted that her role was to "improve the social functioning of the family. Advocating for the children. Social workers write reports, to prevent exposure of children. They assist the court in making decisions" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012). Social

workers hope that the decision of placing children in same-gender families is best because no one can confirm the future.

4.3.6 Social work principles and social workers' attitudes

When asked about whether social workers are able to uphold social work principles when dealing with same-gender families, the respondents said "yes". Respondent 1 (interview, 28 August 2012) stated that "as a social worker I have no choice but to put beliefs aside. Social workers are human beings and forget about their difference. The motive should be embraced". Another Respondent 2 felt that "personally I think gays and lesbians are unreal, from the experience of dealing with such cases but bound by the professional ethics I do it but I personally feel bad after doing it" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 3 pointed out that "Ethics, principles, values: these depend on a person. Handling oneself as a professional. Beliefs versus professional social work principles do not play a role. Other social workers are Christians and create a better relationship."

"For me I was not even sure, it was shocking. I read legislation and I was not comfortable" (Respondent 3 28 August 2012). Another respondent said: "They should uphold social work values and principles. There is no excuse for being biased. I have faith in social workers; most social workers can be objective" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 mentioned that "social workers are human beings, sometimes social workers become their own self. Social workers' perception and concern are informed by the Act and their perceptions are individually based. Social work provides space for social workers to withdraw from such cases. Practically you have to deal with yourself" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.7 Social workers' prejudice

Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 4 were in agreement that social workers are prejudiced in dealing with same-gender families. Respondent 1 said "yes, because I thought it was racially inclined: white people are the ones who adopt children. However, I need to have room and accept others. Social work allows that if a social worker is uncomfortable with dealing with a case another social worker should take over. Social work allows biasness and not discrimination" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 added: "yes, some are prejudiced in that they cannot divorce personal selves from these cases" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

Another respondent 3 said: "yes, social workers are taking their own beliefs. Social workers are not supposed to tell people what is right or wrong. A social worker should understand her/his working environment by aligning himself or herself with it. You need to revitalise your values. When a social worker refuses to work with such cases it is referred to as labelling. Social worker creates a room for such clients. The social worker and supervisor sit down for the supervisor to check reasons why the social worker cannot proceed with a case. This department expects social workers to deliver without questioning" Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 observed that: "yes, but they should not. I have canalised social worker's reports and can say they are not prejudiced. If there are those who are prejudiced I presume they are little. They may have been influenced by religion and race" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 remarked that "I am not sure I have never experienced that" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.8 Gender identity development and formation in children

It was clear that every informant had her individual understanding of how gender identity is developed. Respondent 1 said: "I think it develops at teenage stage, but I don't know with gays and lesbians. It is through role plays" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). The similarity in Respondents 1, 2 and 4 was that they understood gender identity to be developed through role modelling, role plays, interaction with significant others and through the socialisation process. Respondent 1 noted that "children bond with the one they spend time with. They become whoever they choose to be. Upbringing moulds the way they present themselves. For an example we have children raised by single women. Boys raised by women without father figures. There are role models, mentors besides the parents at home. It's not fair to say this child will be gay/lesbian" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 said "significant other puts a print. Children model behaviour. For an example, male child may adopt girl behaviour that is displayed. Pavlov's theory on behaviour in Psychology as such behaviour is learned (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The other emphasis indicated by Respondent 4 was that "my understanding is gender identity forms part of socialisation. But socialisation must be seen broader than just within the nuclear family set-up. My observation is homosexual children come from heterosexual families" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012).

A different aspect that was highlighted by Respondent 3 was that "my understanding is that gender identity is not learned, it is a biological matter. Learning plays a role but it depends with individuals. I cannot presuppose that children brought up in same-gender families will turn out to be gays or lesbians. For an example a girl playing bicycle with boys. It may be a learned behaviour. It is a debatable issue whether behaviour is inborn or learned, but there is an increase in the number of gays and

lesbians for a number of reasons" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 5 informed me that "I do not know really if it is biological or not because some gay people do actions that are feminine, while some gay people cannot be noticed" (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.9 Family structure and its influence on personality development

Picture 2: Two fathers march with their child in a Pride Parade



Source: Chris Harvey/ Shutterstock.com
http://www.livescience.com/17913advantages- gay-parents.html

Picture 2 above shows a child participating in a gay march with his parents in USA; indirectly or directly this will influence the child's formation of gender identity.

Most respondents think that personality expectations have a direct effect on the development of a child. Respondent 1 (interview 28 August 2012) mentioned that "yes, mannerism assists in moulding manners: for an example I observed my boy fastening his belt in the lower abdomen which he learned indirectly from his father. He also mimicked him by standing at the toilet when urinating, since girls sit and boys stand up. Children assimilate behaviours unconsciously". Another respondent also said "yes, mother models for a girl child and father models father figure. Boys may lack father figure and won't cope" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). This was also supported by Respondent 5. Respondents 3 and 4 held a different opinion: **"**family structures are changing as well as the environment. For example boys clean homes". While Respondent 4 added that "it might, but I still maintain that things can also go wrong in heterosexual families. A lot of homosexual people were raised by heterosexual parents" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012).

4.3.10 Social workers' ability to customise policies in their day-to-day activities

When asked about whether social workers find it easy or difficult to implement policies, Respondent 1 said: "social workers experience problems when they have to implement policies but are bound by the profession. Social workers join companies. Gradually implement policies with ease. Prior joining companies' people ignore company policies. When policies are designed social workers are not consulted and therefore bound by human right and have no option but implement policies. It's an imposition from the top" Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 2 remarked that "policies are brought down through the top-down approach. It's either there is little or no consultation with social workers at lower levels" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012).

Respondent 3 added that "decisions are made with a political influence and it affects policy implementation. There should be some level of consultation / public preference" (Respondent 3 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 4 pointed out that "a number of policies are written on an intellectual level and implementation can be problematic. If implementable social workers can implement. There should be consultation of social workers at lower levels, which means policies should be quality-based. Policies should be based on need and not political. Research should be done" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Furthermore, social workers are the ones who have to make an effort to ensure that they implement policies. It was alleged by Respondent 5 that social workers surf through the internet or make an effort to understand (Respondent 5 interview, 01 September 2012).

4.3.11 Reading of magazines

Respondents 1 and 2 indicated that they read *Drum* magazine. Respondent 3 said she read *Move* magazine. Another respondent mentioned that she reads book. Respondent 5 has not read a magazine.

Picture 3: South African magazines



http://www.acclaimsubscriptions.com

4.3.12 Media education on same-gender families

Picture 5 above displays examples of some of magazines in South Africa, which is a positive effort to inform and educate communities. In this respect all respondents felt that the media has done enough to educate communities. Respondent 1 said "NGO's have done recruitment for adoptive parents" (Respondent 1 interview, 28 August 2012). Another respondent informed me that "same-gender families are still perceived by some of us as being taboo. Scared of stigmatisation. There needs to be more exposure from media on same-gender families more talk shows and drama to help communities. I believe same-gender marriages are taboo

and spread AIDS" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). Respondent 3 said "I think recently media tries to educate communities, through soapies such as Generations and it proves that lesbians and gays are a reality. In this soapie they are shown kissing. I do not have a problem with them even if I see them in malls. I have accepted that they exist and cannot stop them. It's democracy. I have come to acknowledge that there are rules in that house and they function as a normal family. The positive about same-gender families is they are about themselves not other people and hold the opinion that people have things that are not known about them too, so they don't bother" (Respondent 3 interview,28 August 2012).

4.4 SUMMARY

The data collected was presented and described in this chapter. The analysis thereof will be done in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data presented in the previous chapter will be analysed and interpreted. The key thematic areas will be outlined. Data was collected through interviews. The responses from interviewees will be interpreted in detail and these will be aligned with perspectives from literature review. The intention of this paper was to investigate the experiences of social workers with children raised in same-gender families in the Johannesburg region, through answering the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?
2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How are the challenges faced by social workers to be mitigated?

5.2 ANALYSIS

The analysis is presented based on themes that emerged from the data presentation. The aspects presented in this study are based on small sample and the analysis is constantly informed by the sample used in a qualitative research approach. Its qualitative nature allowed the researcher to go deeper into the social workers feelings and experiences. The significance of such a study in South Africa cannot be underestimated

and needs more scholarly attention. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will reveal to other social workers and interested people some of the challenges faced by some social workers. The study demonstrates that adoption as an alternative form of placement in same-gender family structures exists and is a social reality. This became possible as social workers elicited from adoptive foster parents' information and views about their family structures and would openly indicate that they are same-gender family structures.

Adoption cases are currently done by social workers in NGO's and private practice as outlined in the Children's Act 38 of 2005.The public service social workers are the watchdogs thereof, through their monitoring role. Despite progress, it remains a complex for social workers to intervene in same-gender families.

5.2.1. Experiences

The research indicates that the respondents have experienced challenges in placing children in a same-gender family structure through adoption or foster care. Respondents 1, 2, and 3 acknowledged that it was a challenge for them to handle this matter: "the couple went through orientation like any other couple. It was difficult for me to handle such a case but because the contract was binding and also policies were binding. I had to focus on the objectives of what I was I there for. I had to put prejudice aside and treat it as a normal case I had to consider 'best interest of the child'. To us blacks adoption is stigmatised; whites respond positively to adoption because they do campaigns". Although Respondent 3 remarked that she initially experienced challenges, later through counselling and advice from her superiors she managed to cope. By contrast, Respondents 4 and 5 were positive. Their experiences could be divided into personal and professional experiences. In the process personal experiences, feelings and attitude appeared to have a role in the social workers' interventions.

Mallon (2005:4) criticised social workers' biased intervention and argued that "personal experiences of practitioners is the second powerful force that guides knowledge development. Social workers are guided not only by their personal experiences but by a professional code of ethics" hence they cannot be personal in dealing with issues relating to gays and lesbians. Markowitz (1991:14) justified this by arguing as follows: "While most social workers have "politically correct" ideas about gay men and lesbians many professionals have not always had the opportunity to deal with the deeper prejudices and heterosexual privileges that they themselves possess. Since most professionals continue to have an inadequate knowledge base about the real lives of gay men and lesbians,

this causes them to be in many case more homo-ignorant than homophobic". It is also important to note that social workers' practices are influenced by different theories such as the traditional development approach, psychoanalytic approach, heuristic approach and other approaches. Some of these rationalise social work prejudice, while others condemn social work prejudice.

Outside of the domain of social work, the issue of gays and lesbians has been criticised even by ANC politicians, some of whom argued that gay rights should not be included in the constitution. A then National Executive Committee member of the ANC, Ruth Mompati, criticised the inclusion of gays and lesbian rights in the constitution, and said: "I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. Gays have no problems. They have nice homes and plenty to eat. I don't see them suffering. No one is persecuting them. We haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently" (cited by Tachell, 1987). This proves that people have different experiences about gays and lesbians, and that it is a new phenomenon that is confusing to the politicians who design the very policies. It therefore warrants sound implementation methods.

The researcher is of the opinion that some social workers experience challenges when handling same-gender cases, but their profession, workplace and political circumstances force them to accept gays and lesbians. Furthermore, respondents commonly identified their clients as being from the white race and elite (celebrities). The above response displays a probability that respondents viewed the lesbigay issue as a racial issue in that it could be said that Black South Africans function somewhat different from White South Africans in that Blacks largely believe in an extended family structure, while Whites believe in a nuclear family structure. The White family structure allows people to be who they

want to be, whereas, by contrast in Black families a lesbigay family structure is viewed as an anomaly and as such a negative family and societal pressure is put on such a structure. Another aspect to the problem is the silence that has existed for centuries in Black communities. In this instance the researcher holds that the issue of same-gender families is still a new phenomenon in some racial groups such as blacks – hence it becomes a challenge. Lubbe also emphasises that same-gender family structures are exemplars of the increasingly rich and diverse forms that modern Western societies are allowing to emerge. The possibility is that respondents may perceive same-gender families as part of modernisation and an imposition from the West to African countries. As such the concern may be that everything that the West upholds may not be relevant to Africans. Furthermore, respondents expressed. The researcher believes that probably these are the remnants of colonial stereotypes. It also appeared that social work principles are mainly designed to accommodate clients irrespective of how social workers think or feel about issues, yet they are expected to protect communities. Social workers are concerned about the future of children and any situation that appears to threaten this they try to curb it. It is clear that this family structure is deemed by some social workers as an unacceptable family structure. The researcher also holds that a large number of social workers, especially those who practise within the public service are smaller in numbers. The larger proportion of such cases is handled by private social workers.

5.2.2. Prejudice

In relation to the notion that social workers are prejudiced four respondents confirmed that they are. Respondent 2 added that "yes, some are prejudiced in that they cannot divorce personal selves from these cases" (Respondent 2 interview, 28 August 2012). The prevalence of prejudice on the part of social worker is mostly felt by gays and lesbians in the matching process. According to Hill (2009:42-43), "Sometimes the birth parents may object or it might be prejudice on the part of the social worker".

However, they argued that (Christian) belief system influences how social workers handle these cases. Some scholars such as Herek, a pro same-gender family scholar, classifies this sort of prejudice as value expression prejudice. He stated that "homonegativity is thought to serve a value-expressive function by enabling individuals to express personal values which are important to them, for example religious fundamentalists" (Herek, 1988:451). By contrast, Stott (1999:395), an anti same-gender scholar justified the Christian belief and identified three truths, which are "that heterosexual gender is the product of divine will, heterosexual marriage is a divinely ordained institution and that heterosexual fidelity is the divine intention, while a homosexual liaison is a break of all three divine purposes". One respondent remarked that social workers cannot separate their professional selves from their personal selves.

Another respondent maintained that it is a white racial issue. The respondent appears to have followed the line of argument proposed by Gevisser and Cameron (1994:3) that "what has passed for the gay experience has often been White, middle-class, urban men". For their part, Respondents 4 and 5 acknowledged that they are prejudiced, but

they should not be since they are professionals. This is supported by authors such as Janca and Johnson, who stated that social workers need to provide support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families to counteract and cope with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions from society. Social workers must be advocates and fight prejudice, discrimination and oppression in all its forms regardless of personal values and beliefs (Janca and Johnson, 2008).

The overarching body of social workers, the NASW, ensures that prejudice is addressed at the highest level of the social work profession and state that: "NASW is committed to working towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, both inside and outside the profession" (NASW,2000b).

The researcher is of the opinion that it is true that prejudice exists and social work as a profession either pretends that social workers are mini-goddesses and have a straight line to follow when it comes to values and social work principles. However, to address the challenge of prejudice by social workers appropriate methods of implementation should be designed by social workers themselves. Those in authority should also allow themselves to learn instead of imposing policies on societies. Furthermore, most of the practising social workers acquired their qualifications prior to 1994, and before that time the academic curriculum was largely aligned to the Christian belief system. The reality is that not everything was bad in the previous system, but there are progressive lessons that could be learned and adapted to the current system. The other possibility is that social workers have multiple identities in that they are social workers (professional selves), they also belong to societies (religious beings) and they are themselves (personal selves). This may imply that respondents are saying either than saying social workers are prejudiced or that they should be looked at holistically. Furthermore, the experienced practising

social workers may have joined the profession as a Christian profession which synergised with their belief system but their perception that same-gender families are Satanic contradicts their belief system. The contradiction is visible on the social worker's role as an advocate possibly some social workers feel that in such cases they play a "Devil's advocate role".

5.2.3. Gender identity

Some social workers are concerned about children reared in same-gender families and argue that such children face gender identity crises as purported by critics of lesbian parenting (Slatter, 1995). Respondents 1, 2 and 4 hold that gender identity develops through role modelling, role plays, interaction with significant others and through the socialisation process. They are of the opinion that these play an important role in the formation of gender identity. By contrast pro same-gender relationships authors such as Butler (1994:34) argue that "there is no 'pure' biological body on which social ideas of gender are inscribed. Rather our bodies and our social identities are interactive". In another account, Moore described the body as an 'interface' or 'threshold' between the material and symbolic, the biological and cultural (Moore, 1994). In other instances it is believed that it is those in power who decide which biological differences between people will put them in particular categories. Similarities between people's bodies of one 'biological' sex are exaggerated and bodies of different sexes are played down (Butler, 1994). This implies that those who support same-gender relationships feel that gender development is influenced either politically or by societies, and as such are wrong in their perceptions, which also means that social workers' concerns are unfounded. Butler (1994:34) emphasised that "sex and gender are revealed to be socially and politically constructed like our gender identity

depends on how we choose to behave moment by moment". Some respondents' line of thinking is informed by sociologists such as Litoselli and Sutherland. Kohlberg explained gender identity as developing cognitively, which implies that gender identity development is individually formed. People become gays and lesbians out of choice. However, Davidson and Gordon's (1979) perspective is that social learning occurs through socialisation and that behaviour is learned. Other authors take a neutral stance: Butler for instance argues that identities are temporary and later they come out. It could also be said that social workers' fears are stereotypical beliefs and are ancient.

The researcher's opinion is that social workers are mostly faced with the dilemma of choosing between what various scholars are saying as part of the academic discourse and what they believe in personally. Furthermore, social work principles and values are too accommodative of every social setting. Social workers should be allowed freedom to assess cases and decide on the merits of each case. It is a fact that if a child experiences a gender identity crisis it has a root cause, and family structures, socialisation and behaviour that is modelled play an important role to either positively or negatively influence gender identity in the development of a child.

5.2.4. Consultation

Consultation was identified as another important aspect in the implementation of policies. South African policies are said to be designed by politicians at a technical level, yet it is expected that they be implemented by street-level bureaucrats. The top-down approach was highlighted as a mechanism utilised by either politicians or senior managers in the Department of Health and Social Development. In

interview most respondents remarked that there is either no consultation or little consultation of social workers at a lower level. Respondent 4 pointed out that "a number of policies are written on an intellectual level and implementation can be problematic. If implementable social workers can implement. There should be consultation of social workers at lower levels which means policies should be quality-based. Policies should be based on need and not political. Research should be done" (Respondent 4 interview, 28 August 2012). Critics of same-gender relationships argue that if policies are too flexible gays and lesbians would end up placed in wrong positions and foresee a problem. Kushner (1994:4) wrote that "it is entirely conceivable that we will one day live miserably in thoroughly ravaged world in which lesbians and gay men can marry and serve openly in the army that's it".

The researcher shares the same sentiments of the other respondents when they alluded to the fact that there is little consultation of social workers at grassroots level. The top-down approach does not reflect democratic principles that this country is claiming to have adopted. Some of these policies are perceived to be progressive, but there are contestations on some of these policies, which mean policy-makers should consider consultation as an important aspect in policy management and implementation.

5.3. SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter presented respondents commentary on their experiences of placing children in same-gender families. Most social workers have challenges in placing children in such family structures; however, there is a gradual mind shift of social workers in how to handle such cases. The rolling out of policies seemed to be the problem, since

most social workers feel they need to be consulted when policies are designed. The next chapter will present findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study with a summary of major findings and policy conclusions. Section 6.2 summarises the main findings. Section 6.3 offers some recommendations. Section 6.4 concludes the chapter with suggestions for future research.

Experiences in this research referred to both past professional and past personal experiences of social workers in dealing with same-gender families. The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges social workers face when handling such cases. In-depth interviews were used to gather data that assisted in addressing the gap.

This study was informed by the allegation that social workers are prejudiced in dealing with same-gender cases with specific reference to cases when they are to place children either through adoption or foster care. The social workers' concern was that such a family structure has a negative effect and may result in children developing gender identity crisis later in life.

The following research questions were designed:

1. What are the challenges faced by social workers when placing children in same-gender families?

2. What are the challenges faced by children raised in same-gender families?
3. How can the challenges faced by social workers be mitigated?

The exercise of engaging in this research brought a deeper insight into and understanding of the complexity of same-gender families versus social work profession expectations, social workers' personal experiences as well as institutional expectations.

In this chapter the conclusions on the overall purpose of this research paper are outlined. They are in line with the various themes referred to in the previous chapters. Findings will be largely informed by the literature references utilised in this study. These will be used in implementing same-gender policies at a provincial level.

6.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the study. Below is a prioritised summary of the major findings that will inform the policy recommendations:

6.2.1. Social workers' experiences

These findings enhance our understanding that most social workers have different experiences in dealing with same-gender families. The present study provides additional evidence that most social workers experienced difficulties when handling same-gender cases either through adoption or foster care placement. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the South African mind set, which is largely Christian, and confirms that most respondents hold that same-gender families are

unAfrican. In this paper the findings are that most social workers are prejudiced. However, the social work academic discourse is gradually trying to ensure that there is protection of gays and lesbians.

6.2.2. Gender identity development

In relation to gender development, various inputs were made. Predominantly socialisation and family structure were viewed to play an important role in the formation of gender identity. It is clear that there is no cause and effect relationship between family structures and gender identity development, however. The complexity here is that no one can predict how a person's sexual identity will develop, since most homosexual people came from heterosexual family structures. The constant engagement of social workers with same-gender families will create a deeper understanding on their part which will later resonate with current development trends.

6.2.3 Conclusions

1. The findings of this empirical research on experiences of social workers in dealing with children reared in same-gender families were different, and this necessitates the improved implementation of programmes by the social welfare department and related organisations.

2. Based on this research, the researcher concludes that some social workers are concerned with children placed in same-gender family structures. It would appear that some social workers are prejudiced about the same-gender family structure, since the responses of the sample interviewed here were different as the issue under

discussion is complex. The challenge in this study is to come to conclusion about whether social workers are negative or positive about this, since they have conflicting roles as social workers.

6.3 PROGRAMME RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following programmes in order to address the major conclusions drawn and summarised in the preceding section. The recommendations include:

1. Improved training methods for social workers and associated social services professions by developing curricula for sexual orientation programmes have to be implemented.
2. Improved monitoring and evaluation tools should be implemented to closely monitor same-gender families and a database should be developed. The study identified a gap in the Department of Social Development. Results-based monitoring and evaluation ensures that there is compliance on agreed upon planning and delivery processes to achieve set targets. The tool should be responsive since the focus should be on process evaluation.
3. Monitor all cases before the children's courts of children placed in same-gender families. Pre- and post-adoption supervision services should be strengthened in such cases in order to assess the suitability of such placements for children. This should be coupled with empirical research conducted by skilled researchers (empirical skills).
4. The South African government should collaborate with civil society organisations in working on issues of sexual orientation by allocating sufficient resources for ongoing educational programmes.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study focused on the experiences of social workers with children reared in same-gender families.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas:

1. The prevalence of same-gender families within the black racial grouping.
2. The alignment of social work training in relation to same-gender families.

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ANNEXURE A

477 Bluebush Street
Alveda Park
2091
01 August 2012

Dear fellow colleagues

I am a social worker in the Department of Health and Social Development. I am doing research on experiences of social workers with children raised in same-gender families.

The research is part of my academic requirement and I have interest in issues on same-gender families. The interview takes approximately forty five minutes.

The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. The results will be reported to Wits University as aggregate not individual. If you need a copy of the results, it will be made available to you.

Thank you for your participation.

Ms Jabulile Mdluli
0766008342
Jabulile.mdluli@gauteng .gov.za

Experiences of social workers with placing children in same-gender families

1.1 Gender F M

1.2 Age 20-30
31-40

41-50
51-60

1.3 Section: Field
Intake
Canalisation
Other…….

1.4 Religion: Christian
Hindu
Muslim
Other……..

1.5 Years of experience?
1-5
6-10
11-20
Above…….

2.1 What do you understand by same-gender families?

2.2 How do you see same-gender families?

2.3 Do you have any specific experience of placing children in same-gender families?

2.4 What is your understanding of "the best interest of the child" in line with same-gender family structures?

3.1 Social workers are not the only role players in the legal placement of children either through foster care or adoption what is their critical role?

3.2 Social work principles state that social workers should be non-judgemental in their intervention do you think in same-gender cases they are able to uphold this principle?

If yes please elaborate?

If no please elaborate?

3.3 Some social workers are perceived to be prejudice when dealing with same-gender cases what is your opinion on this?

4.1 Can you describe how gender identity develops or formed in children?

4.2 In heterosexual family structures males are expected to have certain personalities such as women can this have direct effect in the development of a child?

5.1 Social workers are implementers of policies in their day to day activities do you think that they manage to institutionalise them with ease?

5.2 Have you read a magazine with issues on same-gender families if so which one?

Sarie
Huisgenoot
Drum
Femina
Rooi Rose

5.3 Do you think South African media is giving sufficient education on issues pertaining to same-gender families?