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Attachment for a group of Black South African children during apartheid.

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Attachment

for a Group of Black South African children during Apartheid.

By

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Clinical Psychology, in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand.

October 2010

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at the University of the Witwatersrand, or any other university.

Signed by Francesca Chetwin on this _____ day of_____2010

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attachment implications of early childhood separations from parents or caregivers, of a group of ten Black South African adults, who grew up during the apartheid era. Participants were asked to report on their perceptions and experiences of their childhood separations during semi-structured interviews. These interviews were transcribed and the data analysed on two levels. Firstly, a thematic content analysis was conducted and six themes were identified. The themes reported on childhood confusion, positive and negative experiences of mothers, memories of separations, reports of experiences of feeling different from other children, negative and positive experiences of fathers and men in participants families, and lastly reflections on participants' early life, their family life, their own children and how their experiences impacted on them. Participants reported that if they were unprepared for separation, or the circumstances were traumatic or unexpected, the impact was substantial. Also, and in particular, if alternative caregivers were unable to provide sensitive and responsive care, participants' memories and constructions of these periods are replete with despair. Secondly, participants' narratives were analysed for coherence and tentative conclusions drawn about adult attachment style or adult state of mind. There was evidence of participants becoming noticeably less coherent in their narratives when speaking about traumatic memories, particularly in relation to abuse, abandonment and neglect. Out of ten participants, four presented their narratives in a manner that is suggestive of secure and autonomous attachment, with overall coherence of narratives. Three participants' narratives were suggestive of a dismissing adult attachment style, and the other three were suggestive of a preoccupied adult attachment style. The second level of analysis suggests that quality, stability and continuity in early caretaking relationships are related to more secure and autonomous adult states of mind.

Acknowledgements

I conclude this research study with enduring interest in the attachment field in South Africa. For this I thank the participants who gave me their time and generously and thoughtfully engaged with my questions. The degree of distress for some participants was striking and I am mindful of the deep emotional meaning of attachment throughout the life cycle. Thank you for trusting me with your attachment stories.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The diverse South African social context remains largely divided by racialised identities and public discourse, despite being sixteen years into a non-racial democracy. Petersen, Swartz, Bhana and Flisher (2010, p. 2) describe South Africa as being "one of the most unequal countries in the world", with class differences entrenching the segregation set up during apartheid. They stress the contradiction inherent in the way that children living in poverty and adversity remain profoundly at risk, while the opportunity exists (in policy and principle) for individuals to develop considerable wealth in South Africa. The social, cultural, economic, educational and political determinants of child development are recognised as being complex and multifactorial.

With particular focus on attachment in childhood, which is believed to be an important basis for psychological wellbeing in adulthood (Bowlby, 1979), this study addresses the early separation experiences from primary caretakers of ten Black South African people, currently between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Attachment is believed to be an important aspect of development through childhood, and is subject to the impact of continuity or discontinuity of care (Lewis, Feiring & Rosenthal, 2000). Attachment has generated a substantial body of empirical research globally (but particularly in the global North), and it is considered to have both behavioural and mental representational manifestations (Lewis et al. 2000).

In South Africa, research into attachment is relatively sparse but there is a growing literature developing. Tomlinson, Cooper and Murray (2005), report that of the approximately 135 million infants born each year globally, ninety per cent of these are born in the global South. He points out that "only 4% of the articles in 12 major international infancy and developmental journals were found to address the experience of infants living in the developing world" (p. 1044).

During the apartheid era a majority of Black South African children grew up apart from their parents, separations that were largely enforced by institutionalised racism. Swartz (1997), in her preface to a

section in a book titled, *Families in Context in South Africa*, refers to how one hundred years of government labour policy led to Black working adults living apart from their families. This entrenched social situation requires research. The personal experiences documented in this report are best not considered without awareness of the related social, historical, political and personal aspects of living as a Black person in South Africa during apartheid.

1.2 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Theoretically, this research is approached from the Attachment Theory perspective. Attachment Theory has western origins and has been widely written about in developed countries. Blended family constellations are common (Nelson, Clark & Acs, 2001), but the nuclear family is still presented as the idealised norm (Swartz, 1997). Attachment has become a topic of particular interest globally over the past decade, and in South Africa scholars have suggested that the attachment of an infant to its primary caregiver has significant relevance to child developmental outcomes in South African socio-economically deprived communities (Cooper, Tomlinson, Swartz, Landman, Molteno, Stein, McPherson & Murray, 2009; Petersen et al., 2010).

1.3 APARTHEID ERA CONTEXT

The large-scale separation of Black South African children from their parents during apartheid can be attributed to apartheid policies. The disruption of family life and its impact on black children has widely been reported to have compromised development (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Donald & Dawes, 2000; Mokwena, 1992). Nonetheless, as stated above, there is a paucity of research on the attachment implications of children's separations from their parents in various South African cultural and social contexts. It remains common for children to be raised away from their parents, often with more than one change in caregiver during childhood (Vogel & Holford, 1999). The terms parents and caregivers will be used interchangeably in this report.

1.4 RESEARCH FOCUS

This study reports on emerging themes from interviews and analyse narrative coherence and (will provide tentative conclusions about) attachment style (or adult 'state of mind') of a group of ten participants regarding separations from their mother or primary caregivers during childhood. The attachment implications of the separation are examined in terms of how disruptions in attachment bonds with primary

caregivers are expressed and experienced. Mediating factors (risk and protective factors) are also explored in terms of their impact on adjustment.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will address the following three primary research questions:

i. What are the experiences and perceptions of ten Black South African adults on being separated from their parents or primary caregivers during early childhood?
ii. What risk and protective factors do participants identify, and how are these reported to have impacted on participants following separation from their parents or primary caregivers during childhood?
iii. What are the theoretical implications of disruptions in caregiving (or multiple or serial caregivers) on the development of a secure adult attachment style?

1.6 RESEARCH RATIONALE

Under the auspices of the Apartheid Archives Study, participants were interviewed about their childhood experiences and perspectives of separation from their parents or caregivers. Their experiences and constructions of this separation were explored and analysed deductively and inductively in order to better understand the impact of early attachment on adult states of mind. This is done according to attachment theory principles, taking the role of context and culture into account.

The multiple impacts of apartheid on South African society have been widely reported over several decades, with the "social disintegration in the Black community" (Ramphele, 1992) being viewed as a central consequence of this system. Barker (as cited in Everatt and Sisulu, 1992, p. 10) cogently describes how Black children and youth were "deprived of their natural guides, children of migrants (and all other poor blacks) grew through an insecure, uncertain childhood to an adult life whose sole preoccupation may be to escape the system".

Duncan and Rock (1997) described apartheid to have widely and negatively affected the lives of Black South African children. They describe the disparity between wealth for the minority of advantaged people, and marked deprivation for the majority of disadvantaged people in South Africa to have been the "defining characteristic of the racist ideology underpinning apartheid" (Duncan & Rock, 1997, p. 72). The impact of this deprivation compromised the capacity of many South African families to provide stable

family contexts in which children could develop. Parents were forced to leave their children for lengthy periods in order to work, and the Group Areas Act meant that it was often impossible for parents to live with their children due to having to work in 'white' areas far from home.

South African researchers have questioned the impact of multiple caregivers on attachment, and identified it as a focus area for further research (Vogel & Holford, 1997; Liddell, 2002). They comment specifically on discontinuity in care-giving relationships and how this may contribute to emotional and developmental difficulties for children (Henderson, 1998).

Henderson (1998) describes how the migrant labour system had been evolving for many decades in South Africa before the apartheid regime was formally adopted in 1948. She attributes changes in stability in the family relationships of indigenous people to this long history of migrancy. Spengler (as cited in Russell, 1995, p. 1) stated that "migration in Africa differs from migration in much of the world in that so small a fraction of migrants settles permanently in the places they find employment". This is likely to be a consequence of widespread colonisation in Africa over centuries.

Reynolds (as cited by Henderson, 1998, p. 169) states that "there has been for most South Africans this century no minimal stability for children or families in relation to place". The impact of this lack of stability has many developmental implications, one of them being that attachment security is compromised.

Attachment is widely described as an instinctual and biological phenomenon, which is universal across all human cultures (Harwood, Miller & Irizarry, 1995; Reebye & Jamieson, 1999). It is understood to happen in multiple significant relationships. Some theorists assert that there is a hierarchy in these relationships, with the mother-child attachment being considered primary in many cultural settings. Attachment is understood to be "enduring and lasting" (Reebye & Jamieson, 1999, p. 5). Attachment is understood to be an important prerequisite for mental health. Bowlby (1979) asserted that access to consistent nurturing is of primary importance because it is from the availability of an attachment figure that autonomy can develop. Johnson (2006) outlines important aspects of attachment. Humans are understood to be innately motivated to form affectional bonds that are designed to provide a safe haven in which to develop and a secure base from which to explore. The accessibility of reliable and consistent caregivers is central to emotional and cognitive development, providing a means to manage anxiety and stress as well to understand a wide range of emotional responses. Bowlby's son, Sir Richard Bowlby (2004) reports that early studies undertaken in the 1940s by Bowlby illustrated how long disruptions (six

months or more) in caregiver relationships experienced by children under five, were common in a group of forty-four juvenile delinquents. This highlights the roles of separation, fear and uncertainty described by Johnson (2006) as resulting in an ultimate state of detachment in children, if attachment bonds are broken. The traumatic nature of substantial disruption is stressed, with a predictable range of responses described.

Insecure attachment is identified by Barbarin and Richter (2001) as having been one of a number of risk factors implicated in the development of psychological difficulties in childhood in the South African apartheid context. They do however comment on how Black children in South Africa may utilize different routes to attain the benefit of a secure attachment, due to growing up in a multiple-caregiver environment. This could serve as a mediating factor in secure or insecure attachment.

Exploring attachment security and disruptions in caregiving relationships in the South African apartheid context is of particular value because adversity persists for a substantial proportion of Black South African families, as part of the legacy of Apartheid and current social and economic adversity. The Children's Institute (2006) reports that more than fifty percent of babies live with their mothers in urban areas until one year, after which they are taken to rural areas to live with family members. Liddell (1998, p. 103) refers to this practice as cross-fostering, which she describes as being a "longstanding practice of child exchange within families".

The exploration of the experiences of separation with a group of adults who experienced it during childhood will be of value in explicating factors that influence secure attachment in different South African cultural contexts. The apartheid era has been a significant complicating factor in relation to cultural practices, and it is important to discriminate between caregiving practices that are deemed cultural, social upheaval secondary to the policies of apartheid and individual perspectives that may be relevant in developing further understanding of the concept of secure attachment in South Africa.

Researchers have identified a need for further research into the particular manner in which changes in caregiver relationships are experienced in Southern Africa. Liddell (1998) questions the impact of the mobility of children within the extended family on attachment, describing this practice to be commonplace and unremarkable, despite it not being ideal according to attachment literature. In-depth attention needs to be given to the ways in which caregiving practices may or may not protect children from caregiver disruptions. An opportunity to investigate these concerns is of value in considering attachment theory within the South African context.

1.7 RESEARCH AIMS

This aims of this study were to:

1. Identify and explore the experiences and perceptions of ten Black South African adults on being separated from their parents during childhood.
2. Explore and discuss the reported impacts of separation from parents on the development of (or lack of development of) an experience of attachment security during childhood and associated adult attachment 'state of mind'.
3. Explore the significance of risk and protective factors in mediating the separation from parents, as experienced by participants.

1.8 OUTLINE OF RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter Two provides a summarised review and commentary of the literature sourced. The literature review provides a theoretical framework for the study and reports on research studies conducted that address issues related to attachment. South African research and scholarly contributions are of particular value and are privileged in this study.

Chapter Three addresses the research approach and methods adopted. The study's aims and research questions are included, as are a snapshot view of the research participants, their age, gender and broad demographics. Data gathering and analysis are described and related ethical considerations are explored. The researcher's location within the study is described reflectively and issues that may impact on the manner in which this research has been conducted and reported are identified.

Chapter Four includes the analysis of the data collected and a critical commentary on the emerging themes. These themes have been isolated from the interview transcripts through a number of careful and thoughtful readings, seeking to understand the latent and manifest meaning of the participants' narratives.

Chapter Five concludes the study, offering a final commentary on the findings. Further research opportunities and perceived limitations to the study are also examined in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to research the experience of Black adults who grew up in South Africa under apartheid during the late 1970s and 1980s it is necessary to situate the literature review firmly in the context of apartheid era South African life and its history of colonialism and oppression. Jones (1993) comments that the legislated enforcement of the migrant labour system was unique to South Africa. Reynolds (1989) points out how vulnerable Black children were under the apartheid regime, subject to the policies of a government that did not recognise or represent them.

In addressing attachment for children in apartheid South African life, it is crucial to consider the role of culture and tradition. Liddell (2002, p.102) expresses some concern about applying the "prevailing Western view" that continuity of care is of central importance in attachment, through "predictable patterns of interaction", to the African context. She argues that African children experience disruptions in their immediate care relationships much more "routinely" than Western children. She raises the possibility that changes in caregiver relationships may be imbued with contextual protective factors that mitigate their impact. The nature of these protective factors is not elaborated by Liddell, but provide scope for this study to explore attachment processes and mediating factors (protection and risk) through the childhood experiences of ten Black South African adults born and raised during apartheid. It is postulated that the mediating factors are crucial in considering attachment security for this participant group.

The global literature on attachment is extensive and continues to grow through research and the development of theoretical understanding on what is a multifaceted field within the discipline of Psychology. The study of attachment was introduced by John Bowlby in the United Kingdom in the 1940s, initially as a combination of psychoanalytic ideas and ethology (Ainsworth, Waters & Wall, 1978). This work has been elaborated over the years (Emde, 1990) with a large part of the corpus of literature emanating from the United States. It was in the United States that Ainsworth and her colleagues developed a strategy for classifying attachment styles in very young children using the Strange Situation test. This was derived from two studies in Uganda (1963 and 1967) and one in Baltimore in the US.

According to Emde (1990) this classification process marked the beginning of the second phase of attachment research and theory.

More recently a number of other focus areas relating to attachment theory have been researched. Among these are interpersonal neurobiology (Cozolino, 2006), reflective function (Fonagy & Target, 1997), affect regulation and mentalisation (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist & Target, 2002). Of particular relevance to this study is adult attachment theory and assessment, first developed by Mary Main (Main & Hesse, 1990).

South African studies of attachment are relatively new. Scholars have highlighted the need for further studies that address attachment styles and attachment security in South Africa (Vogel & Holford, 1999, Liddell, 2002). While this study provides documentation of 'remembered' childhood experiences from the apartheid era, its added value lies in the examination and analysis of these experiences in relation to modern attachment theory.

There is a body of South African literature about Black children growing up in South Africa during apartheid.[1] Many of these authors do not focus on attachment and its impact on child development. The research studies into attachment in South Africa that have been conducted are post apartheid and focus on current mother-child dyads (see Tomlinson et al., 2005). No attachment related studies have been sourced about children who grew up separate from their parents during the apartheid era.

With the growing interest in and recognition of attachment theory in general psychology and psychiatry in South Africa over the past decade or more, a need for services to assist with parent-infant bonding in identified high risk parent infant relationships has been identified. Two such services are known to the author; one in the Western Cape (The Thula Sana Mother-Infant project) and another in Gauteng (Ububele Umdlezane Parent-Infant Project). A more accessible primary health care system in South Africa has facilitated referrals to these services where available (Vogel & Holford, 1999).

In structuring the theoretical framework for this study, a wide stance is adopted to understanding universal childhood attachment phenomena and the South African apartheid context in particular.

[1] Examples of these are *Growing Up in a Divided Society* (1986), edited by Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds, *Childhood in Crossroads* (1989) by Pamela Reynolds, *Spirals of Suffering* (1997) edited by Brian Rock, *Childhood and Adversity* (1994) edited by Andrew Dawes and David Donald, and *Assaulting Childhood* (1993) by Sean Jones.

2.2 APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AND THE FAMILY

The oppressive and draconian legislation prohibiting the movement of Black South Africans to the cities was emblematic of the apartheid regime. The Stallard Commission, commenced in 1921, recommended that Black South Africans should only be permitted in municipal areas for as long as their presence was required by the White population (Jones, 1993). This recommendation is believed to have been central in the promulgation of The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 (Soni & Maharaj, 1991). Following this, there were over sixty years of legislation which systematically and intentionally engineered a deeply destructive and divisive system of social segregation in South Africa.

Barker (as cited by Murray, 1980, p.148) aptly and powerfully expresses the impact of segregation and consequently migration on the traditional extended African family:

> It is at family level that the most pain is felt, and we cannot forget that the African cultural heritage enshrines a broader, more noble concept of family than that of the West. The extended family has proved a marvellous security for those for whom, otherwise, there was no security at all. The extended family is a net wide enough to gather the child who falls from the feeble control of neglectful parents, it receives the widow, tolerates the batty, gives status to grannies. Migratory labour destroys this...

As political tension increased over the 1970s and 1980s it was more and more evident that the migrant labour system and the Bantustans were a destructive and "dysfunctional" feature of apartheid (Soni & Maharaj, 1991, p. 47).

> The policy of influx control has restricted the bulk of the black population to living in the rural periphery, while four main aspects of apartheid social policy help to explain the differentiated nature of the settlements in the bantustans which have resulted: migrant labour, commuter labour, forced removals, and the reform policies of the 1980s.Corresponding to each are distinctive patterns of settlement (Soni & Maharaj, 1991, p. 47).

Commentators observed the social consequences of apartheid policies on the family over decades. Hellman (1940, as cited by Jones, 1993) in a study on urban youth in Pimville, Johannesburg, described a growing process of alienation between parents and children. She attributed this to urbanisation and parents being unsupported by the traditional authority of kin. Apartheid and the consequences and impact of migrancy created circumstances that undermined caregiver's capacities and resources to provide children with a stable and reliable context in which to develop.

2.2.1 CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING APARTHEID.

Jones (1993, p. 9) evocatively states that "with a few strokes of a pen" the apartheid government nullified the citizenship and right to live in a chosen area in South Africa for the entire Black population. The impact of this policy on children's lives was multifaceted and often characterised by poverty. Richter (1994) stresses that the impact of poverty on parents has negative consequences for their ability to provide adequate caregiving environments for their children. Interestingly, Richter and Grieve (as cited by Richter and Griesel, 1994) report that low socioeconomic status (SES) was not the defining factor impacting on the cognitive development of 305 township infants studied in 1991. The most defining factor is the parent or caregiver's capacity to structure and organise the infant's experiences in the home environment. In another article outlining psychological aspects of health care of young children, Richter, Bac and Hay (1990, p. 490) state that "children's health problems are inextricably linked to the social, psychological and biological dimensions of poverty".

In a book titled *Assaulting Childhood,* Jones (1993, p. 16) "probes the hidden dimensions of childhood" in an ethnographic study of children living in a Western Cape urban migrant labour hostel. He eloquently refers to the "immense anguish which the absence of their migrant parents, and the flux of the home-lives in general, had caused so many of the children". This study explored in depth the experiences of apartheid era Black children's growing up in hostels, environments generally considered to be entirely unsuitable for children (Jones, 1993).

Thomas (as cited by Duncan & Rock, 1997) commented on how children suffered most under the migrant labour system.

> Most [homeland] children grow up without their fathers and many without their mothers. Most are sub optimally nurtured by guardians [mostly aging grandparents] who are seldom as competent or as uniquely motivated… as a loving resourceful … [parent] would be (Duncan & Rock, 1997, p. 77).

It is within the context of mobility and disruptions in caregiving during apartheid that this study is situated. It is the contention of the author that disruptions in caregiving are largely responsible for young children experiencing their environment as confusing. The impact of disruptions in attachment relationships is of particular relevance. The concept of attachment security is explored in relation to development and factors that mediate this, i.e. those factors that increase the likelihood of secure attachment (protective factors) and those that compromise attachment security (risk factors).

2.3 ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD

2.3.1 A wide angle perspective on development.

Sandström (1966, p.13) stresses that "there is no other organism that requires a longer period of adjustment than man". This highlights the immense complexity of early inner life, shaped by social interaction (Gerhardt, 2008) and characterised by initial complete dependency and increasing independence over the formative years. Sandström stresses the integration of physiological, cognitive and social development as well as the impact of heredity and environment on human functioning. Sandström (1966, p. 15) also refers to development as a term that is applied to the whole life cycle, "growth and maturation as well as stagnation and decline", although in psychology it typically refers to the process of growth and maturation during infancy and childhood.

In 1930 Margaret Mead published a book titled *Growing up in New Guinea,* in which she posited that the different cultures in the world were a great laboratory in which to study child development (LeVine, LeVine, Dixon, Richman, Leiderman & Brazelton, 1994). However, as explained by LeVine et al. (1994), the interpretation of child development across cultures was not as simple as Mead had anticipated. Not only did criteria and interests change in documenting child development, but contextual differences based on environment and culture differed so substantially that it was not possible to compare cultures across the same set of criteria for child development.

Fitzgerald (1999) cites Kim and Choi's (1994) conceptualisation of development occurring on two interrelated but not mutually exclusive dimensions; individualism and collectivism. Keller (2003) echoes this broad categorisation of individual or collective competencies across cultures stressing that the environmental context shapes cognitive development most prominently. Keller's paper, focusing on the development of competencies in the family and social environment, contrasts infancy experiences in Cameroon and Germany. She suggests that "family relationships are important in all cultural communities, yet their operational basis may differ" (Keller, 2003, p.290). Bornstein and Cote (2001, p. 549) suggest that there are universal parenting activities which they list as "nurturing, physical stimulation, social exchange, verbal interaction, didactic engagement, and provision of the child's material environment", although they do refer to there being substantial cultural diversity in the ways that these activities are manifest.

Scholars in developing countries and those who adopt a wide and critical orientation to psychology texts have noted that child development was first written about in the late nineteenth century in Europe and

later in North America. This led to the generalization of first world middle class values and norms, largely White, which were also laden with values that foreground heterosexual and individualist ideas that are not necessarily universally relevant or appropriate (Bozalek, 1997). This perspective is important because it reminds scholars about the substantial diversity in human culture and context.

2.3.2 Caregiving functions

Bradley and Caldwell (1995, p. 40) define caregiving functions as "a set of environmental actions performed by a caregiver, or environmental conditions arranged by a caregiver, which assist or impede the child carrying out his or her own functions". Various scholars caution against simplistic understandings of development within a caregiving system. The role of the individual, environment and heredity and behaviour contribute to outcomes (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2003; Bradley & Caldwell, 1995). Bowlby (1979) stressed the complexity of factors contributing to outcomes of attachment. He did not describe a simplistic cause and effect model of attachment, although he did include the potential for psychopathology to emanate from disturbed attachment relationships.

Having stressed the complexity of attachment in the context of caregiving relationships it remains valuable to provide a breakdown of the components of caregiving relationships. Aldgate and Jones (2006) refer to five dimensions of caregiving. These are basic care which includes the provision of food, shelter, warmth, clothing and hygiene as well as access to medical and dental care. The provision of safety includes children being protected from harm and danger, which includes self harm. Providing emotional warmth involves a degree of individualised special care that communicates worthiness and encourages self esteem. Also included in the provision of emotional warmth is the provision of stability, consistency, affection and sensitive responsiveness. Providing stimulation involves the promotion of learning and cognitive development across a wide range of social and play related experiences. Finally, the provision of behavioural guidance and boundaries enables a child to learn to regulate his or her own behaviour and emotional experiences. Modelling appropriate behaviours is a core component of this category.

Sroufe et al. (2005) list the tasks of parenting/caregiving as regulation of arousal, appropriately modulated stimulation, provision of secure base and safe haven, appropriate guidance, limits and structure, maintenance of parent-child boundaries, socialisation for emotional expression and containment, scaffolding for problem solving, supporting mastery and achievement, supporting the child's contacts with the broader social world, and finally, accepting the child's growing independence.

Attachment is an aspect of development that was understood by John Bowlby to be part of the human evolutionary process where infants demonstrate 'species specific' attachment behaviours; "sucking, clinging, grasping, crying and smiling" (Berry Brazelton & Cramer, 1990, p.88) which occurs in every culture to ensure the survival of the infant.

The literature review will provide a brief historical overview of attachment theory. Thereafter modern attachment concepts will be elaborated.

2.3.3 The historical roots of attachment theory

John Bowlby is widely recognized for having developed a primary theoretical understanding of the role of attachment in development. He utilised evolutionary understanding and proposed that attachment is fundamentally a primitive survival strategy that entails a set of behaviours which serve to protect the human infant from the danger of predators, and a harsh physical environment (Durkin, 1995).

In an effort to develop a theoretical base for his observations of children separated from their parents during the 1940s in Britain, Bowlby and Robertson conducted studies on children who had been hospitalised in the United Kingdom between 1948 and 1952. They identified three phases that children were observed to experience following a prolonged separation: protest, despair and detachment (Kobak & Madsen, 2008).

These findings highlighted for Bowlby the importance of emotional and cognitive aspects of attachment relationships. Bowlby stressed the role of positive and negative emotions associated with attachment as being "regulatory mechanisms" (Cassidy, 2008, p.7) in development. Parents or caregivers are alerted to the needs of the child by expressions of affect, something Bowlby also attributed to evolutionary pressures. He conceptualised the attachment relationship as an important part of cognitive development. The primary attachment relationship forms the basis of the infant or child's mental representation or schemas "of the attachment figure, the self and the environment, all of which are largely based on experiences" (Cassidy, 2008, p. 7).

2.3.4 Attachment classification for children

Ainsworth's Strange Situation assessment is described by Sroufe (1985) to have been intended as a "mild everyday stressor' for a young child. In cultures where parental or caregiver separation is not customary

(Japan for example) it would be inappropriate to conduct the strange situation assessment without relevant adaptions.

On the basis of Ainsworth's research in Uganda and Baltimore, and the careful observations of infants in the strange situation assessment, three initial attachment classifications were developed and were considered to be organised forms of attachment with clear classification criteria (Steele 2002).

Ma (2006) provides a categorisation of the Ainsworth strange situation attachment classifications. These are:

i. Anxious avoidant attachment (category A), characterised by a lack of protest on separation from the parent or caregiver, and on their return the child appears to be wary, and actively seems to avoid the parent or caregiver, and does not play freely.
ii. Secure attachment (category B) is manifest by protest on separation, which continues on return but the child is easily soothed and returns to free play.
iii. Ambivalent/resistant attachment (Category C) is manifest by protest on departure and return of the parent or caregiver, with difficulty in being soothed. The child appears unable to return to free play.

Subsequently, and more recently, another category of attachment has been recognised - the disorganised form of attachment. Disorganised attachment is distinct from the styles associated with organised attachment, and results from the unpredictable, frightened or frightening behaviour of the caregiver (Steele, 2002).

Disorganised attachment is manifest by contradictory behaviours that do not appear to match the emotional experience of the child in that context. It tends to be associated with exposure to ongoing abuse and traumatic incidents and the experience of multiple losses.

> Disorganized attachment strategies, or contradictory and un-integrated behaviours toward the caregiver when comfort is needed, can first be identified at 12 months of age. For example, freezing, huddling on the floor and other depressed behaviours in the presence of the caregiver when under stress are part of the coding criteria for disorganized behaviours. Contradictory approach-avoidance behaviours toward the caregiver when under stress are also indicators of a disorganized strategy (Hennighausen & Lyons-Ruth, 2005).

2.3.5 The attachment relationship defined.

Aldgate and Jones (2006) refer to the complexity of attachment for infants and children. They state that while attachment to parents and caregivers constitutes an important part of the relationship, *it is not the whole relationship.* Green (as cited by Aldgate & Jones, 2006), clarifies that attachment refers specifically to the child's representation of the parent-child relationship. Further, Aldgate and Jones (2006) stress that attachment is characterised by a set of behaviours and emotions that are activated in particular situations, when the child seeks protection or sanctuary with the parent or attachment figure. They also refer to the balance between attachment and exploratory behaviours for young children; where children's curiosity results in exploration of their environment and then conversely, their need for a safe haven of protection when distressed, frightened, tired, ill or hurt.

Hazan and Shaver (1994) add that babies typically form a primary attachment relationship in their first eight months, provided that there is a primary caregiver available to the baby. They describe attachment relationships to be characterised by "proximity maintenance, safe-haven and secure-base behaviours" (Hazan & Shaver, 1994, p.68). Moreover, there is clear empirical evidence that a hierarchy of attachment relationships exists, with one that is preferred to all others, particularly if the baby or young child is scared, tired or ill. Changes in the hierarchy are noted as children develop towards adulthood, with a pair bond relationship ultimately becoming part of the attachment relationship hierarchy (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). This hierarchy is disputed by some scholars. Various perspectives on how attachment relationships are structured are further elaborated on later in this review.

While attachment relationships are understood to be central to development, Hazan and Shaver (1994) stress that they are not the only important relationships. Children and adults have a range of relationship needs that are fulfilled in a range of ways. Hazan and Shaver (1994) stress that the most intimate relationships, with parents, siblings and adult lovers or partners do appear to be characterised as attachment relationships, as security and comfort are core attributes of these types of relationships.

2.3.6 Key concepts in attachment theory.

There are various concepts that are peculiar to attachment theory that are frequently used by theorists. Aldgate and Jones (2006, p. 70) refer to the *attachment system* which consists of all the behaviours and the repertoire of feelings associated with "proximity" and security seeking. Bowlby and his colleagues identified four systems: the attachment system, the exploratory system, the affiliative system and the fear/wariness system (Boris, Aoki & Zeanah, 1999). The attachment system involves the development of

strong emotional relationships with caregivers. The exploratory system encourages learning by exploration of the environment. The affiliative system refers to the way in which babies and young children will seek to engage with people that they do not know, but in non-stressful environments. The fear/wariness system is evoked in strange circumstances when the infant or young child becomes alarmed and seeks the protection of the attachment figure (Thompson & Limber, 1990)

The attachment system includes a child's internalised experience of responses from *attachment figures* (those individuals that a child seeks out for reassurance). Bowlby referred to the child's internalised experience of responses, or the formation of mental representations as the *internal working model*. Bowlby assumed that attachment relationship/s would be represented mentally as a "translation" of actual relationship patterns (Bretherton, 2005, p.17). Zeanah and Barton (1989) suggest that internalisations of relationships are believed not only to structure past experiences psychically, but also to assist in the management of relationship experiences to come. Zeanah and Barton (1989, p. 138) report that "a growing consensus suggests that internal representations exist as hierarchically arranged networks, with higher order or more global representations overlying more specific event schemas".

The vulnerability of young children in developing representations of "unfavourable" attachment relationships is stressed by Main and Goldwyn (1991, p. 127). Main and Goldwyn (1991) refer to the role of metacognition in development and states that children over the age of three begin to be able to discriminate between and think about contradictory behaviours of attachment figures. Main and Goldwyn (1991, p. 136) cite Bowlby's (1973) assertion that the young child is vulnerable to developing "multiple models of the attachment figure", and by implication, "multiple models of the self". It is the presence of contradictory behaviours in an attachment figure that is believed to lead to the development of multiple models of the attachment figure and the self. It is these multiple models that are believed to lead to insecure and disorganised forms of attachment (Main & Goldwyn, 1991).

The attachment *bond* and the attachment *relationship* are terms that are frequently confused in the literature. Aldgate and Jones (2006, p.72) define an attachment bond as an enduring relationship that is characterised by an "affectional tie... as perceived by the child... which has as part of it, an attachment relationship". Cassidy (as cited by Aldgate & Jones, p. 73) states that an attachment bond is not between two people, it is a relationship that one person has *toward* another person. This definition points out how the bond a child feels towards the parent is not necessarily reciprocal in that the parent is not attached to the child in the same way; as a secure base or safe haven.

> For a child to have an *attachment bond* to another person, the child must look to the other person for security and comfort and perceive that person to be stronger and wiser. At that same time, an attachment bond cannot exist by itself; it must be part of a wider *affectional bond* between that child and another person. Affectional bonds can exist between children and a whole range of individuals who are significant in their lives (Aldgate & Jones, 2006, p. 73).

The *secure base* is a term that was used in ethological studies to describe the conditions provided by a primary caregiver to an infant, so that the infant has the capacity to confidently and safely explore the environment around him or her. He describes how infants will, in their first and second years be preferentially attached to one individual, usually the mother (or other primary caregiver) and will make this preference clear (Bowlby, 1988). This concept is particularly relevant for young children.

> When a parent is available and sensitive, the infant learns that he or she can effectively use his or her caregiver as a secure base in times of uncertainty and, in doing so, develops the ability to effectively engage the object world. In contrast, children who come to expect caregivers to be unavailable or ineffective develop insecure strategies for coping with their distress (Fortuna & Roisman, 2008, p.11).

Aldgate and Jones (2006) constructively discriminate between an *attachment relationship* and a *caregiver relationship,* or perhaps a parent-child relationship. They suggest that the attachment relationship particularly refers to the feelings of the child toward the caregiver in dynamic relation and is empirically linked to self-concept and social and educational development for the child. The caregiver or parent-child relationship was conceptualised by Ainsworth and her colleagues as comprising of four dimensions, "sensitivity, acceptance/rejection, cooperation/interference and accessibility/ignoring" (Aldgate & Jones, 2006, p. 77). Bradley and Caldwell (1995, p.41) caution that the dynamics of the caregiver relationship and the attachment relationship "mutually regulate" development.

Hazan and Shaver (1994, p. 69) cite research evidence demonstrating that the primary attachment relationship "has the greatest and most lasting impact on later development and functioning". They do however stress that working models of attachment are based on a number of important relationships and are constructed on experiences throughout infancy and childhood, becoming relatively stable during adolescence, but are not resistant to change. Aldgate and Jones (2006) clarify the existing three models of attachment presented in literature. Firstly, the traditional view is that there is a hierarchy of attachment relationships with the primary caregiver as the prototype on which internal representations will be developed. Secondly, there is the view that children integrate their attachment patterns into one internal representation, as Hazan and Shaver (1994) suggest. Lastly, there is the view that each attachment relationship is discrete and has its own working model. This approach also argues that different attachment relationships impact on different domains of a child's mental life and development.

2.3.7 Determinants of attachment

Bowlby, and later Ainsworth and colleagues identified maternal sensitivity as the central determinant of secure attachment. This conclusion has caused considerable controversy among scholars. It was argued that Ainsworth's evidence was insufficient to make this claim. However, others (Bretherton, 1985; Main & Goldwyn, 1991; Sroufe, 1988; Isabella, 1993) still abide by Ainsworth's view citing methodological weaknesses in studies where maternal sensitivity was not strongly associated (De Wolff & Van Ijzendoorn, 1997). In order to test the relationship between caregiver antecedents of secure attachment, De Wolff and Van Ijzendoorn (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of 66 studies and found a moderately strong relationship between maternal sensitivity and secure attachment. De Wolff and Van Ijzendoorn (1997) also identified additional caregiver qualities positively associated with caregiver sensitivity: stimulation, positive attitude, mutuality, synchrony and emotional support.

> Attachment theory suggests that sensitive responsiveness of the parent is the most important determinant of attachment security in the infant. Repeated interactions generate expectations about the behaviour of significant others, which originate mental schemata or internal working models, influencing the individual's social life (Bernardi, 1998, p. 799).

Sroufe (1985) points out that the Strange Situation is a measure of a relationship between a mother and child dyad and is therefore not a measure of attachment behaviours. Sroufe (1985, p. 2) states that attachment classifications, "while based solely on infant behaviour are presumed to reflect the history of caregiver sensitivity".

While not classically part of attachment theory, the notion of mediating (risk and protective) factors has been documented in relation to the course of child development. It is argued that these factors are relevant to consider in the apartheid context, where family systems were fragmented.

2.3.8 Mediating factors: risk and protective factors

Rutter (1998) and Garmezy (1994) are key contributors to the concepts of risk and protective factors in relation to the psychological development of children. Rutter (1998) defines risk factors as including exposure to conflict in the relationship of parents, poverty or low SES, crowding in small premises, a parent with a mental or physical disorder and lastly, intervention by social services.

Rutter (1998) suggests that experiencing one of the above conditions does not place a child at any greater risk for developing psychopathology. However, in the face of two risk factors being present, the risks for psychopathology increase four times. These factors were identified based on research in the United Kingdom, and therefore are based on Western cultural norms.

Rutter (as cited by Thies, 2005) identified three factors that appear to buffer or protect children against adversity. These became known as the Triad of Protective Factors. They are a positive personality on the part of the child, a supportive family and support for the child from at least one community agency, for example, a church or a school. It is noted that the concept of attachment is not mentioned by Rutter. It is argued that secure attachment is a protective factor in child development.

2.3.9 Risk and protective factors in developing countries

Garmezy (as cited in Cowen & Work, 1988) describes "stressors of marked gravity". These stressors are noted to be long lasting and profound, as was the case for many Black children during apartheid. In the South African context, the adversity and poverty described as typical for the majority of Black children under apartheid, served as risk factors to optimal psychological development.

In a study assessing risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries, Walker et al. (2007) describe a range of risk factors, including psychosocial risk factors. Amongst the psychosocial risk factors they identified were three parenting or caregiver factors that are "consistently related to young children's cognitive and social-emotional competence" (Walker et al. 2007, p. 152). These are cognitive stimulation, caregiver sensitivity and emotional warmth and responsiveness.

Ramphele (1992) refers to the concept of protective factors in her chapter on the breakdown of the Black South African family. She states that

> There are thus protective factors which enable certain people to survive and achieve. These have not been properly documented, but include stable family circumstances, where there are high expectations for all to achieve; the presence of positive societal role models; a stable environment (hence the relatively better performance of school children in well-developed rural areas compared to those in the townships); and the presence of an interested adult acting as a mentor to protect against social pathology (Ramphele, 1992, p. 23).

Richter (1995), when investigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in South Africa, postulated that there are three factors which are likely to militate against optimal adjustment. Whilst she is writing about HIV/AIDS, it is argued that these factors apply to this study as they are relatively generic and broad in nature. These are poverty resulting in general developmental delay and poor global performance and drive. Loss, separation and bereavement; being separated from parents or caregivers, or a lack of continuity of care are commonly associated with "internalising psychological conditions including anxiety, rumination, depression, social isolation, survivor's guilt and low self-esteem" (Richter, 2005,

np). Cruel and impersonal child care can lead to poor interpersonal skills, difficulty in expressing love for others and aggressive behaviour.

2.3.10 Continuity and discontinuity of care

Belsky, Campbell, Cohn and Moore (as cited in Tomlinson et al., 2005) argued that "instability in attachment status is related to the degree of discontinuity of care, changes in family circumstance, and changes in maternal sensitivity".

> For optimal development, elements *within* a system or layer (for example, relationships within the microsystem), as well as the links that exist *between* systems, should be continuous and supportive of one another rather than disharmonious or disrupted (Liddell, 2002, p.99).

> The prevailing Western view is that continuity in microsystemic relationships is fundamental to optimal development, since continuity engenders stable attachments and predictable patterns of interaction. If attachments lack consistency and dependability, there may be adverse outcomes for children's socioemotional competence and general mental health (Liddell, 2002, p.102).

In the South African apartheid context continuity of care for young children was negatively impacted by the migrant labour system and parental stressors.

2.3.11: The 'social synapse': interpersonal neurobiology.

The bidirectional relationship between environment and brain development has been a recent area of research by neuroscientists. Cozolino (2006) refers to the social synapse as existing between all individuals and being the means of which our social organisation occurs in all cultures. He refers to the realm of automatic and unconscious communication as well as the verbal and non-verbal modes. He says

> At first, genes serve as a template to organise the brain and trigger critical and sensitive periods; later, they orchestrate the ongoing transcription of experience into genetic material. Through the biochemical alchemy of template and transcription genetics, experience becomes flesh, love takes material form and culture is passed through a group and carried forward through time (Cozolino, 2006, p. 6)

> Our parents are the primary environment to which our young brains adapt, and their unconscious minds are our first reality (Cozolino, 2006, p.7).

Schore (2003) presents the caregiver as the "external psychobiological regulator" of the infant's nervous system which is rapidly organising itself (or self regulating) over the first two years of life. Schore stresses the affective nature of the bond between the mother (or caregiver) and infant, which he says accounts for the central role of affect in attachment bonds. Schore also reports that the interactions in the attachment relationship are "shaping the maturation of structural connections within the cortical and sub cortical limbic areas that come to mediate socioaffective functions" (Schore, 2003, p. 6).

Schore reports that all the infants' senses are mediated by the caregiver, and as visual acuity develops in the infant, the caregiver's facial expressions become a primary mode of communication between them. The mother or caregiver's attunement to the infant is clearly related to the quality of the relationship, with periods of intense engagement and resting periods that are ideally synchronous and infant led (Schore, 2003). Schore traces the nature of the mother-infant relationship in great detail over the first two years and refers to how the infant's development requires the mother to become a "socialisation agent" (Schore, 2003, p.17) in the second year, in contrast to the intensive care-giving role of the first year.

Gerhardt (2008) reiterates the perspectives described above. She posits that the "social brain" is shaped during pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life by sensitive attunement and responses to the baby or toddler by the parent or primary caregiver. Shaping the social brain includes learning

> how to manage feelings in line with other people, as well as the development of a person's stress response, immune response and neurotransmitter systems which affect future emotional life. The new human being is set up with various socially and culturally influenced programmes, from physiological set points to emotional expectations and coping mechanisms (Gerhardt, 2008, p, 3).

Gerhardt (2008) proposes that poor attunement and inconsistency in the care of babies and toddlers impact on all bodily systems as well as contributing to the *likelihood* of an insecure attachment. She also comments on how recent studies that combine physical, emotional, social and biological elements in development are "integrating disciplines that have far too long been kept in rigid compartments" (Gerhardt, 2008, p, 5).

2.4. CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD

This study argues that attachment is fundamentally a universal psychological and biological phenomenon that transcends the diversity of cultures. It is however of great importance to acknowledge the ways in which culture is construed by scholars to impact on attachment. Van Der Riet (1998, p. 192), in a discussion paper on perspective taking on South African children, eloquently alludes to culture as being an "external layer" which covers the "sociological, psychological and physiological layers, beneath which is the "core essence" of humanity. This is a unifying perspective which has value when considering core human attributes. Another perspective, taken by Liddell (2002, p.104), is that attachment relationships are most studied and understood in Western culture where the least survival risks reside. She refers to the wide diversity of behaviours in children in relation to their dependence or independence, that may be favoured by caregivers, largely due to local ecology, availability of resources and opportunities.

As previously stated, most child development and attachment research has taken place in Western contexts. As early as 1950, researchers were criticised for ignoring culture as an important variable in attachment studies. Mary Ainsworth conducted her famous attachment studies in Uganda in 1963 and 1967. She concluded that attachment behaviours in babies in Uganda were comparable to American babies although behaviours differed. Van Ijzendoorn and Sagi-Schartz (2008) report that a key conclusion drawn in Ainsworth's Uganda study was that the most important criteria for secure attachment are the continuity and quality of the mother-infant interaction, not the number of caretakers per se. This constitutes an important question for this study, particularly if the mother-infant bond is substantially disrupted early in the infant's life and alternative care givers are not available.

Van Ijzendoorn and Sagi-Schartz (2008) comment in the introduction to their chapter on cross-cultural attachment studies, that most cross-cultural research in attachment had an 'etic' rather than 'emic' focus. Etic refers to studies based on theoretical or scientific principles, without emphasis on contextual differences. Emic studies take contextual differences into account and explore differences in context more specifically. It is clearly of central importance in this study that contextual and cultural factors are considered when investigating attachment during the South African Apartheid era. Moreover, consideration of the psychology of indigenous groups has particular value as the everyday behaviour of people, and the culturally endorsed interpretation of this behaviour are central to understanding the particular meaning intrinsic to that culture (Liddell, 2002).

2.4.1 Attachment in the South African context

Central to the understanding of attachment in the South African apartheid context is consideration of mediating factors that contribute to the outcomes for Black South African children's outcomes in adult life. Duncan and Rock (1997) describe mediating factors to be a set of intra-individual and situational factors that interact and impact the outcome of the child's response to exposure to violence. These mediating factors are arguably equally relevant to children's responses to disruptions to care.

Robertson and Berger (1994, p. 155) comment on how some children are noted to develop adjustment difficulties and psychopathology in face of stress while others are not. They suggest that "vulnerability and resilience" are factors that are influenced by "dynamic processes" that are subject to change over years. Examples of these dynamic processes are temperament, genetic factors and family circumstances.

The apartheid context was itself a general risk factor for Black South African children. Turton and Chalmers (1990, p. 1197) refer to the "social and economic" disadvantage imposed on Black South African adults by apartheid, so by implication children were disadvantaged as well. In Turton and Chalmers' (1990, p. 1197) study which measured the association between social and economic disadvantage with stress and ill health, their findings were complex which they likened them to a "web". They summarised their findings by saying that "individual experiences of distress are embedded and produced in the complex totalities of individual life experiences".

This study discriminates between risk and protective factors identified in developed countries and those identified in developing countries. While there are commonalities there are also substantial differences in context. Liddell (2002) warns that research into risk factors present in developed western societies should not simply be seen as relevant to developing countries. She refers to how risks are usually multidimensional in origin, interactive in process, and cumulative in their effects.

> How particular cultural groups define and manage risk may be expected to vary in accordance with whether they attribute outcomes to fate, supernatural forces, or human agency. Variants in ethno theories of development will also be important—groups that view development as primarily a matter of inevitable maturation may manage risks differently from groups that view development as being determined by the facilitative actions of attentive caregivers. Cultural groups might rank-order risk factors differently and for reasons to do with their subsistence patterns, ecology, or religious beliefs. These and many other aspects of risk are likely to be influenced in turn by factors such as whether risks are construed as rarities or normative in a particular culture (Liddell, 2002, p. 98).

2.5. Attachment in adulthood

The concept of attachment in adulthood is described by theorists to be based on the mental representations of childhood experiences (Lewis, Feiring & Rosenthal, 2000). De Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg and Van Ijzendoorn (2001) clarify that there is a distinction between the experiences that an adult had in childhood with their caregivers or parents, and the representations that are developed from these experiences. De Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg and Van Ijzendoorn (2001, p. 472) suggest that the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) "system" investigates the "probable" early attachment relationship as well as adult state of mind.

The adult attachment interview was developed as a means to access memories about childhood, and the representations that were formed. The approach taken in the original measure, the AAI, was to "surprise the unconscious" by asking questions about the individual's experiences in carefully constructed ways. Ultimately adult attachment is assessed as a unified 'state of mind', regardless of the nature of childhood experiences (Main, 1991, p. 141). This means that a simple cause and effect relationship has not been

found to exist between early experiences and coherence, or a unified state of mind. People with objectively traumatic circumstances may exhibit autonomous state of mind, despite negative attachment experiences.

However, stable and matched associations between childhood attachment and adult 'state of mind' have been found in various longitudinal studies in the U.S. (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell & Albersheim, 2000), although researchers do acknowledge the potential for change. Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target (2004) report that there is a 68 to 75% correspondence between child and adult attachment classifications.

Main & Goldwyn (1991) describe the AAI to be a specially designed semi-structured interview that seeks to gain understanding into the subject's general memories of early and current parental or caregiving relationships. What is important about this memory retrieval is that current perspectives are sought about autobiographical memories of attachment relationships.

There are a range of measures of adult attachment which include self reports and interview, projective or observational measures. However, for the purposes of this study, principles underlying the AAI interview method were used for the analysis of narratives.

2.5.1 Adult Attachment Classifications

Ma (2006) outlines the adult attachment classifications and corresponding child classifications. The Dismissing (D) adult classification is associated with the Avoidant (A) classification. It is characterised by brief descriptions in general, a tendency to idealise the parents but an absence of information to support the idealisation. Levy, Meehan, Kelly, Reynosos, Weber, Clarkin, and Kernberg (2006, p 1029) describe how

> dismissing individuals devalue the importance of attachment relationships or portray them in an idealized fashion with few corroborating concrete examples. They have difficulty recalling specific events from their past and usually describe an early history of rejection. These individuals are judged to have low *coherence of mind* because of the vagueness and sparseness of their descriptions as well as the inconsistency between vaguely positive generalizations and "leaked" evidence to the contrary.

The Secure/Autonomous classification (F) adult classification is associated with Secure (B) in childhood representation. It is characterised by coherence in discourse and evidence of objectivity and attachment relationships being valued. Secure/Autonomous adults are able to give examples of their relationship experiences. It is important to note that there may be marked distress, trauma and loss in childhood experiences despite a Secure/Autonomous adult classification. Gerhardt (2006) also refers to the

development of a coherent narrative being independent of life events. Levy et al. (2006, p.1028) define this classification as

> a well-organized, undefended discourse style in which emotions are freely expressed and by a high degree of coherence, are exhibited in the discussion of attachment relationships, regardless of how positively or negatively these experiences are portrayed. These individuals maintain a balanced and realistic-seeming view of early relationships, value attachment relationships, and view attachment-related experiences as influential to their development.

The Preoccupied (E) classification for adults is associated with the Ambivalent/Resistant (C) classification for children. It is characterised by incoherency, vague and long descriptions. It is also associated with evidence of the adult being preoccupied and emotional when recalling past experiences. Levy et al. (2006. p. 1029) describe this classification as follows:

> Preoccupied individuals have little difficulty talking about attachment and expressing attachment-related feelings. However, these individuals tend to display confusion about past experiences and are unable to gain insight into early events. They often describe early relationships with parents as over involved or as guilt inducing. Descriptions of their current relationship with parents are often characterized by pervasive anger, passivity, and attempts to please parents, even when they describe the relationship as positive. Perhaps of most noted importance, preoccupied individuals have a tendency toward incoherence in their descriptions. Specifically, their interviews are often excessively long and are characterized by the use of lengthy, grammatically entangled sentences, jargon and nonsense words, reversions to childlike speech, and confusion regarding past and present relationships. Preoccupied responses often fail to address the interviewer's original questions.

The Unresolved or Disorganised adult attachment (U) is associated with the Disorganised/ Disoriented (D) classification for children. It is characterised by lapses in reasoning and cognitive monitoring in descriptions, particularly when referring to previous traumatic experiences. Levy et al. (2006, p. 1029) describe the disorganised 'state of mind' to be present

> when an individual displays lapses in the monitoring of reasoning or discourse when discussing experiences of loss and abuse. These lapses include highly implausible statements regarding the causes and consequences of traumatic attachment-related events, loss of memory for attachment-related traumas, and confusion and silence around discussion of trauma or loss.

2.5.2 Key concepts in adult attachment

When assessing adult attachment it is believed that adults use their mental representations to tell their attachment stories. Stories or narratives are therefore the core of the assessment methodology (George & West, 2001). The criteria used for assessing narratives about attachment stories are coherence, evidence of reflective function (or mentalization), access to memory and the use of defences.

Narrative coherence is described as the most important measure of adult attachment because it is believed to reflect the "integrity of the self" (Fiese & Sameroff, 1999, p.7). Fiese & Sameroff (1999) report that

> the ways in which an individual's story makes sense, how clauses and thoughts are organized, the willingness of the individual to consider differing perspectives, and the match between affect and content are all considered part of the coherence of an individual's story or narrative (Fiese and Sameroff 1999, p. 4).

Reflective function is described as "the capacity to envision mental states in self and others" (Fonagy et al. 2004, p. 23). Fonagy et al. (2004) argue that reflective function is central to developing the ability to regulate emotions and organise conceptualisations of the self. Also, and equally important is the ability to infer and interpret the mental states and experiences of others. This makes the behaviour of others "meaningful and predictable" (Fonagy et al. p. 24) and is believed to be an antecedent of a child's ability to identify and attribute meaning to their own thoughts and experiences. Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Moran and Higgit (1991) refer to how people's understanding of the everyday world is crucially linked to general understanding of the mind.

Access to memory in adult attachment is particularly characterised by "accessing, describing and evaluating memories" that may be painful or associated and stored along with strong affects (Hesse, 1996, p. 6). There is an important link between accessing memories and coherence as the AAI questions require an adult to retrieve memories and simultaneously coherently relate them to the interviewer (Hesse, 1996).

George and West (2001, p. 38) describe there to be "a shifting balance of adaptive and defensive processes, guided by mental representations of attachment". Defensive strategies are manifest in interviews as unconscious strategies to protect the self from distress and may be useful in providing insights into underlying attachment representations. Adults may distance themselves from memories by using pronouns such as 'you' instead of 'I', or laugh when relating painful memories.

2.6. CONCLUSION

No research has been sourced that addresses or investigates child or adult attachment during the apartheid era. This provides meaningful scope for this study to consider childhood experiences of attachment in the apartheid context retrospectively, and draw tentative conclusions about adult attachment, through the use of interviews.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the research methods employed by this study, providing particular detail on the aims, approach, data collection and analysis. A description of the participants is provided and the ethical issues related to their role in the study are explored. Finally, the reflective comments on the location of the researcher in the study are provided.

3.2 AIMS

The aims of this study were to:

i. Identify and explore the experiences and perceptions of ten Black South African adults on being separated from their parents during childhood.
ii. Explore and discuss the reported impacts of separation from parents on the development (or lack of development) of attachment security during childhood and associated adult attachment 'state of mind'.
iii. Explore the significance of risk and protective factors in mediating the separation from parents, as experienced by participants.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

i. What are the experiences and perceptions of ten Black South African adults on being separated from their parents or primary caregivers during early childhood?
ii. What risk and protective factors do participants identify, and how are these reported to have impacted on participants following separation from their parents or primary caregivers during childhood?
iii. What are the theoretical implications of disruptions in caregiving (or multiple or serial caregivers) on the development of secure adult attachment style?

3.4 APPROACH AND METHODS

When considering the most suitable research approach for this study, a qualitative approach emerged as being of value for two key reasons. The first is because the topic being investigated required detailed information from participants about their 'lived' experiences, perceptions and reflections of their childhood nurturing environment. Secondly, a qualitative methodology offers scope for the experiences of marginalised (although the numerical majority) South Africans to be documented, analysed, interpreted and disseminated.

This study was designed in order to gain insight into and understanding of the experience of childhood separation from caregivers with reference to their attachment security in early childhood. The participants, as adults now, were asked to speak about their perspectives of this separation and reflect on their experiences. This study can be described as being broadly exploratory in nature, and as indicated, it had made use of a qualitative approach. Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999 p. 216) provide a succinct and clear definition of qualitative research:

> The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage and live through situations. In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to develop understandings of the phenomena under study, based as much as possible on the perspective of those being studied. Qualitative researchers accept that it is impossible to set aside one's perspective totally (and do not claim to). Nevertheless they believe that their self-reflective attempts to 'bracket' existing theory and their own values allow them to understand and represent their informants' experiences and actions more adequately than would otherwise be possible.

The role of qualitative research in psychology has increasingly been considered valuable in providing textured and meaningful information that can contribute to theory and practice. Previously, positivism was the dominant research paradigm in psychology, based on research conducted in the natural sciences. This positivistic approach yielded objective data from systematic observation, based on hypotheses and largely utilising inferential statistics as a means of data analysis (Ponterotto, 2005). The growing trend in using qualitative research methods in psychology can be attributed to recognition of the need to provide answers to different sorts of questions (Elliot et al. 1999). Kelly (1999, p. 398) adds that the outcomes of qualitative research are less about providing information that fits "law like" patterns of human behaviour but rather understanding behaviour contextually. This is arguably more valuable in the social sciences in general. Kelly also refers to how the change in the trend towards qualitative research has been called the "interpretive turn" (Kelly, 1999, p. 399) and has been welcomed by many scholars in psychology.

Critics of qualitative research methods have suggested that objectivity will be lost and that findings are solipsistic, thereby running the risk of developing theory that is more idiopathic (providing specific individual information) than nomothetic (providing general findings about people). Others have criticized the qualitative research approach for not producing scientifically verifiable 'truth'. However, qualitative research does not seek to create truth; it aims to be generative, providing explanations and new ways of understanding human experience (Kelly, 1999). "Theory is constructed through a dialogue between questions and data" (Kelly, 2009, p. 404). In addition, qualitative research provides information about particular perspectives and then positions and describes them at the level or "status" of perspective (Kelly, 1999, p. 403).

Participants were approached for this study with the view that their perspectives and experiences were context bound and subjectively constructed (Durrheim, 1999). However, gaining access to reflections on real experience can be of profound benefit to researchers when considered and analysed for core themes across people in similar contexts. Elliot et al. (1999, p. 217) in setting out to justify qualitative research suggest that while the real experiences of people provide researchers with information that is bound by contextual factors (e.g. history and language) and discourse, it can be presented in a way that describes its relative meaning in context and "ground understandings of the subject matter empirically" (Elliot et al., 1999, p. 217).

The research findings and analysis can be considered as being both deductive and inductive in nature. The thematic content analysis is deductive in that it provides data driven analysis which is then considered according to attachment theory. The second level of analysis is inductive in that it is theory driven. Attachment theory principles and concepts are applied to the analysis of the coherence of participants' narratives with a view to providing tentative comments on adult attachment style, or adult 'state of mind' in the South African context. Another aspect of this study which can be described as deductive is its ultimate contribution to the growing corpus of attachment studies and data in South Africa. This contribution is in response to a call by South African researchers for more in-depth research into attachment in our context (Tomlinson, Cooper & Murray, 2005).

3.5 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The ten participants who took part in this study were all Black South Africans who were born in South Africa between 1970 and 1984. This would mean that they experienced an Apartheid era early childhood at a time when their parents or primary caregivers were subject to the restrictive, separatist and draconian apartheid Group Areas legislation.

	Pseudonym[2]	Gender	Year and place of birth	Current information about the participant
P 1	Palesa	Female	1983 in the Eastern Cape Province	Palesa is currently working in security at a shelter in Johannesburg. She trained in social auxiliary work in 2009 and is now completing training at an art therapy centre. She is a single mother of two young sons (7 years and 4 years) who live with her in Johannesburg. She initially left them in the Eastern Cape when she came to Johannesburg to look for work, but fetched them as soon as she had a job and accommodation.
P2	Lerato	Female	1982 in Polokwane, Limpopo Province.	Lerato is currently working with disabled children and completing training at an art therapy centre. She has a five-year-old daughter who does not live with her. She is with her paternal grandmother in KwaZulu Natal. Lerato lives with her cousin in Johannesburg with whom she describes a conflictual relationship.
P3	Sibongile	Female	Born in 1984 in Umtata, Transkei	Sibongile is a fourth-year student in the arts at a university in Gauteng. She is completing an internship year at an art therapy centre as part of her university training. She is single but does have a long-term boyfriend. She does not yet have any children of her own.
P4	Pumi	Female	Born in 1981 in Rustenburg, North West Province.	Pumi is single and living with her parents in Johannesburg but wants to move out. She works as a receptionist at an NGO.
P5	Lulu	Female	Born 1983 in Johannesburg but taken to live with aunt in Estcourt KZN when six months old.	Lulu is unmarried and has one daughter who is two years old. She is in an unstable relationship with the father of her daughter and wishes to end the relationship. She struggles to care for her daughter alone. She works full time in Johannesburg as a call centre agent in the corporate sector.
P6	Mpho	Male	Born 1982 in Nongoma, KwaZulu Natal	Mpho is a single man who is open about being gay. He is currently single. He works as a brand designer for a company and lives in Pretoria. He works in Johannesburg. He does not have children.
P7	Lebo	Male	Born 1981 in Aliwal North in the Eastern Cape Province	Lebo is a single man and is qualified as a Clinical Social Worker. He works for an Employee Assistance Programme company as a supervisor in a call centre environment. He does not have children.
P8	Tshepo	Male	Born 1979 in Limpopo Province	Tshepo is married with one infant son. He is a pharmacist and works for a pharmaceutical company in drug research. He also works in a pharmacy on weekends.
P9	Vusi	Male	Born 1981 in Gauteng Province	Vusi is a single man and works in the training department of a large corporate. He does not have any children.
P10	Thenjiwe	Female	Born in 1975 in Welkom, Free State Province	Thenjiwe is a single (divorced) mother of two children (12 and 11 years). She currently lives with both her children in Johannesburg although her one child has only been with her for six months. She works full time for a training and research NGO.

[2] All names in this column are pseudonyms.

3.6 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

Participants were sourced by way of snowball sampling (a form of convenience sampling) from the greater Johannesburg area. Snowball sampling facilitates an introduction to the purpose of the study by the initial contact person and later by the researcher. The main criteria on which participants were sought were that they needed to have had an experience of being cared for by at least two primary caregivers in their childhood years. For the purposes of this study, the childhood years were defined as extending from birth to fourteen years.

3.7 PROCEDURE OF DATA GATHERING

Initial contact with each participant was made by telephone and a brief description of the research study was provided. This included the provision of a brief description about the Apartheid Archives Research Project and this study in particular. Potential participants were pleased and encouraged by the interest of researchers in their experiences during the apartheid era. The request for information about their experiences may have fostered or encouraged personal reflection and a sense of how their childhood circumstances may be understood in the apartheid context.

Eleven potential participants were contacted by the researcher. One was found to be unsuitable as she was White and the study focused on apartheid era Black children, now adults. The other ten potential participants were all found to fit the criteria for the study and agreed to take part. Face-to-face meetings were set up at the convenience of the participants. The researcher travelled to meet each participant at a suitable venue. Nine out of ten interviews took place in a private office at the participants' place of study or work. One interview took place in a church office made available by the administrator of the church.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with each participant. The shortest interview was 40 minutes and the longest was 90 minutes. One participant was interviewed twice due to the electronic failure of the recording device. The length of the two interviews combined for this participant was 110 minutes, although there was only 70 minutes of recording available in total.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed, which consisted of eleven questions (See Appendix A). The order in which questions were asked varied according to the participant's responses and the manner in which he or she engaged. Generally, the open-ended questions posed to participants resulted in long responses and in some cases fewer questions needed to be asked.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

There are two levels of analysis in this research. A thematic content analysis was considered appropriate for the analysis of participants' perspectives of their childhood experiences, but this analytic approach was not found adequate in analysing expressions of attachment style and narrative coherence.

In terms of personal, social and cultural experiences, a thematic content analysis was considered an appropriate method of analysis for the content of the interview data, which consisted of a sizeable and multipart data set. This analytic approach allows for dominant themes and subthemes of related information to be identified from the content of the interviews data. A theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82).

This method has been used extensively in qualitative research and is described as a foundational method by Braun and Clarke (2006) in their paper describing the use of thematic content analysis in Psychology. Seeking and finding repeated patterns of meaning in the data set constitute the overarching focus of thematic content analysis. Braun and Clark (2006) identify six steps in the process of thematic content analysis which were followed in the process of data analysis.

i. Familiarisation with the data, which involves several focused readings of the interviews ahead of coding, during which initial ideas begin to form.
ii. Generating initial codes. This step involves generating a list of preliminary thoughts about the content of the data and related ideas.
iii. Searching for themes involves clustering the codes into thematic groups.
iv. Reviewing themes involves pruning and refining the themes generated.
v. Defining and naming themes is the end stage of a thematic mapping process which encapsulates the message inherent in each theme.
vi. Producing the report is the last stage and involves telling a succinct and convincing story of the data collected.

The coding and mapping processes were done using coloured felt tipped pens and a large spreadsheet that provided scope for a comparative view across pertinent themes. Themes were gradually compiled over time, during several reading sessions of the transcriptions. It is acknowledged that the thematic clustering can be attributed to the perspective of the researcher and was imposed on the data by this author.

The second level analysis includes inductive commentary on the coherence of narratives and likely adult attachment styles or adult 'state of mind', across the participant group, in relation to the theoretical definitions of adult attachment style. These individual analyses are included in this research report, three in Chapter 4, and seven in Appendix E.

In preparation for this commentary each participant's narrative was analysed according to eight carefully considered criteria, focusing on how each participant "structured, organised and stored" information about their attachment figures (Simpson & Rholes, 1998, p. 5). This approach is broadly based on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) assessment of adult attachment. This is the original and oldest method of assessment of adult attachment (Simpson & Rholes, 1998), designed by Main and her colleagues in the 1980s, and asks the subject a set of questions designed to "elicit distal memories, beliefs and feelings of past relationships with one's parents or primary caregivers" (Simpson & Rholes, 1998, p. 5).

Important in the responses is the 'story' or 'narrative' of their attachment relationships. These stories are believed to reflect the subject's representations of their internalised attachment relationships (George & West, 2001). In this study participants were asked a different set of questions which initially were not modelled on the AAI. However, based on careful consideration of how to most meaningfully portray participants holistically, and analyse their narrative portrayal of their lives in line with attachment theory, it was decided that an individualised analysis would be necessary, to complement the thematic content analysis.

A very important criterion considered in each participant summary is the 'coherence of the narrative'. Coherence is considered to be the central tenet in evaluating self integrity (Fiese & Sameroff, 1999), with qualities of the narrative construction providing insight into how aspects of the self converge into an integral whole.

Scholars assess the coherence of narratives in a variety of ways: through linguistic grammars, computational models and discourses (Fiese & Sameroff, 1999). However, in narratives such as those collected for this study, meaning making is the basis on which the coherence of the narrative was

assessed. Fiese and Sameroff (1999, p. 8) provide a succinct summary of the assessment of narrative coherence.

> When the focus of the study is on meaning-making and identity, however, coherence analysis should focus on how the story is put together, the steps taken to present a unified whole, the degree to which the story makes sense, and the way in which the pieces of the story match the affect of the storyteller. Therefore, four qualities of narrative coherence need to be considered: the relative consistency of the narrative, how the narrative is organized, the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and the modulation of affect.

In justifying the approach adopted, it is considered of value to include Crowell, Waters, Treboux, O'Connor, Colon-Downs, Feider, Golby and Posada's (1996, p. 2584) description of the AAI process:

> The Adult Attachment Interview is a semi-structured interview developed to investigate adults' attachment representations. Subjects are asked to describe their parents as caregivers, explain these descriptions, describe how their parents typically responded to distress, and discuss their own current relationships with their parents. They are also asked to describe any significant losses and/ or instances of abuse during childhood. Scoring focuses on the accessibility of early experiences to memory and the coherence and plausibility of the subject's narrative. Although the language and discourse style elicited in the AAI do not specify the content of an adult's attachment working model, accessibility of early experiences, coherence, and plausibility are assumed to reflect the internal consistency, extensibility, and test-ability of the underlying belief system.

Seven conceptual principles of attachment formed the basis of the analytic commentary on each participant. This approach acknowledges specific and general ways in which attachment relationships are experienced. In South Africa during apartheid, the realities of life for Black South African families were shared, with many personal, social, developmental, political, educational and health consequences. These have been widely documented in general, but not in relation to the attachment implications.

In the main these criteria are those used in assessing adult attachment styles in the Adult Attachment Interview developed by George, Kaplan and Main, in the 1980s (de Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van Ijzendoorn, 1994). These criteria are utilised in considering the ways in which participants may have internalised their childhood experiences, although the analysis should in no way be considered conclusive or defining of the attachment style of participants[3].

[3] Scoring of the Adult Attachment Interview is a complex process (Hesse, 1996) and in-depth training and certification is required. Currently, in South Africa, based on current information, only one Clinical Psychologist is being trained to score the Adult Attachment Interview.

These are:

i. General history and impressions
ii. Emotional tone of the interview
iii. Internalised secure base
iv. Coherence of narrative
v. Access to memories
vi. Reflective function
vii. Tentative comment about attachment style

It is important to note that mediating factors are included in each participant commentary as these are believed to impact significantly on general development and attachment. A list of protective and risk factors are identified for each participant.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Each participant was comprehensively briefed on the focus of the research. Following the briefing, the researcher checked the participants' understanding of the research. Prior to the interview each participant was given a participant information sheet to keep (see Appendix B). Two consent forms were provided to the participants: one was to obtain the interviewees' general consent to participate (see Appendix D) and the other a consent form for recording the interview (see Appendix C).

An opportunity was then provided for the participant to ask questions of the researcher. Two participants expressed concern about confidentiality, but following discussion agreed that the assignment of a pseudonym would disguise their identity sufficiently to satisfy their concerns. One participant requested a copy of the final research report.

The participants' ages ranged between 27 and 35 years. They were not a significantly vulnerable population in general terms but six participants out of the ten were distressed and tearful when relating their childhood experiences to the researcher. The researcher attempted to be empathic and supportive, suggesting to two of the participants that they should consider psychotherapy as a means to continue to address these painful memories. The number for the Emthonjeni Centre (Wits) free counselling service was provided to two of the participants and follow-up calls were attempted with one of the participants. One participant was already attending psychotherapy to address childhood difficulties.

While there were no direct benefits for participating, relating the details of their early life in a safe context was experienced positively by all participants. All participants spontaneously offered comment about how the interview process facilitated new thoughts, feelings and a process of reflection.

This study gained ethics approval from the Department of Psychology, School of Human and Community Development. The ethics number allocated to this research report is MCLIN/10/002 IH. This research was conducted under the auspices of the Apartheid Archive Research Project.

3.10 REFLEXIVITY

During my Psychology Honours year in 2009 I had conducted research into the perspectives and experiences of apartheid era domestic worker mothers on leaving their children during their formative years. The findings of this research seemed to naturally forge their way into the conceptualisation of this study; an exploration of adults' perspectives on and experiences of being separated from their parents during their early childhood. The two studies together seem to be the start of a long-term research trajectory for me, broadly in the field of attachment in the South African context.

This choice of topic is based on a long-term and enduring interest in early relationships and how these are believed to impact on relationships and psychological stability. As a curious student and adult who ascribes substantial credence to the nurture side of the nature/nurture debate, it has been of profound value to me to explore this topic during 2010. My curiosity and a strong awareness of how much I have to learn has led to a great deal of reflection and many more questions forming for me, than answers. However, I do consider the findings in this study to be of important value; they are broadly consistent with reports of work done by other South African scholars, including renowned people such as Mamphele Ramphele, in her book titled, *Steering by the stars: being young in South Africa***.**

On a more personal level, I lived through the 1970s and 1980s as a young person and adult whilst gaining insight into and awareness of the deeply destructive impact of apartheid in South Africa. I worked as a nursing sister and a community mental health worker during the 1990s with a range of communities and am mindful of the many challenges inherent in the recovery of this

country after apartheid. I am also, through my studies and my involvement with the Apartheid Archives Research Project aware of the recalcitrance of the old order. My location as a white middle-class person cannot be omitted. I have lived a privileged life in South Africa thus far, on the basis of my skin colour.

I have approached this study with the intention of being open and explorative in my approach. I have sought the real experience of participants, bearing in mind how my location as an individual in South Africa could impact on my interviewing approach and subsequent interpretations.

3.11 DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The audio recordings of the interviews were saved on a disc that is locked in a secure cupboard. They are no longer saved on the researcher's computer. The transcriptions remain on the researcher's computer without the actual names of participants, only pseudonyms. The transcriptions are available to the supervisor and the researcher, with pseudonyms attached to individual narratives.

A copy of this report will be available to academic staff and students at the University of the Witwatersrand. It is likely that the results of this research will be configured into one or more academic papers which are likely to be submitted for publication over the course of the next two years.

3.12 CONCLUSION

The approach to this study was carefully considered and an analytic approach selected to best present the findings from this important research. It is hoped that the results are an accurate and respectful reflection of the experiences and perspectives of the participants, who gave time, thought and emotional focus to this aspect of their personal histories.

CHAPTER FOUR:

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The reported experiences and perceptions of the participants from this study provided a sizeable and meaningful data set for analysis. Participants were willing to speak about their experiences and there was immediate understanding by nine of the ten participants about the purpose of this research.

Four of the six female participants were tearful in their interview. This emotional distress appeared to be related to losses or absence of close relationships with caregivers during early childhood, traumatic memories or distressing feelings related to loss or regret. It is noted that despite speaking about distressing content, none of the four male participants were tearful during their interview. This is largely understood to be related to dominant socialisation 'norms' regarding the prohibition of men expressing emotional distress openly, more colloquially reflected in the expression 'boys/men don't cry'. However, emotion was evident in the non-verbal communication of male participants in pauses, body posture, changes in voice volume and pitch and gesticulation, among others. It is widely recognised in psychology that non-verbal communication is not always under conscious control (Snyder, 1974), and that people communicate their emotions in ways that they are not always aware of.

Following considerable reflection about the narrative data gathered in this study, two equally valuable and important dimensions emerged. Firstly, the apartheid context and the circumstances that participants described were of value in portraying experiences, their impacts and participants perspectives. This is done by means of a thematic content analysis. Secondly, the coherence of the interview narratives were found to be of value in reflecting 'state of mind', which is considered to be central in assessing adult attachment. Adult attachment style is believed to follow on from the way that early relationships are internalised in childhood (Blatt & Levy, 2003) and can be assessed based on the manner in which adults relate their attachment stories.

The thematic content analysis provides a portrayal of participants' perspectives about their childhood experiences. It is a deductive or data driven approach which focuses on identified themes emerging across the ten participants' narratives. The rationale for the use of this analytic method is to identify and analyse the emerging response pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic content analysis is of value because it

can lead to the identification of deeper questions, thereby facilitating ongoing research and investigation into this important area of apartheid South African life.

The data that was provided by this participant group is nuanced, varied and wide in scope. These qualities resulted in challenges in refining themes, and simultaneously provided clarity on core issues that emerge from the data. Participants' experiences varied substantially on a number of important dimensions which makes cross referencing individual summaries against the themes more meaningful when reading this chapter.

The second level of analysis involved an in-depth analysis of each participant's interview data according to theory driven (inductive) attachment concepts and principles. These concepts are primarily guided by the approach developed by Main and her colleagues (1985) for scoring of the Adult Attachment Interview (coherence of narrative, reflective function, access to memory and a tentative attachment classification). Additional criteria that were deemed relevant and important were included (internalised secure base, emotional tone of the interview and mediating factors) to the analysis of each individual narrative.

Three individual participant analyses are included in the chapter to illustrate the striking differences in participant 'state of mind' presentation, and likely attachment style. The three individual analyses reflect examples of what are considered to be a secure, a preoccupied and a dismissing adult attachment style. The other seven participant summaries are included as appendices.

Analysis and discussion are integrated in this chapter. Moreover, the two levels of analysis are complementary and valuable in revealing contextually deep portrayals of the stories presented. This enlivens and extends the profile of each participant beyond the limits of the information usually portrayed in a thematic content analysis. Individual profiles are a reflection of the researcher's interpretation of each participant's story. This level of analysis does to some extent privilege how participants were perceived to have made 'meaning' of their childhood experiences.

Of primary relevance to the analysis of the data from this study is the context and circumstances of Black children in South Africa, during apartheid. These circumstances were frequently associated with the breakdown of a purportedly strong traditional family system (Wilson, 1975, as cited by Jones, 1993). Wilson stressed that migrancy directly resulted in parental couples being separated, which led to detrimental changes in the way that children were nurtured.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.2 Level One: Thematic content analysis

Introductory comments

The themes isolated in this research report are reflective of the author's perceptions. Themes were isolated and considered on their value in illustrating the lived experience of participants. As in the AAI, participants of this study were asked to recall childhood experiences which were intended to reflect their perspectives. The form or style of the participant's description is believed to indicate the way in which the adult has appraised the experience (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn, 1993). While the individual analyses comments on specific participants, the themes contribute important and interesting insights into the collective experiences reported.

Theme 1: Confusion

Participants reflected on having experienced confusion about circumstances in their lives as children. These participants provide insight into their confusion about what was happening around them. They did not experience caregivers providing explanations of events in age appropriate ways.

Feeling alone with confusion

> *Palesa: Yes, you know we did not have a chance to ask what is happening because my mother was in such pain. I was six.* [brother was five]. *And then my mother went home and then we were left alone.... It was very difficult. ...we did not know ... That was terrible. I did not know who was going to look after us, what was going to happen, where we would be? Everyone was just leaving and going places.*

Palesa's recollections of confusion relates to the absence of her caregiver and the seeming unavailability of other adults who would be able to contain young children.

> *Lerato: There was this confusion around my life, that I lived with. ... ...Ja, its kinda confusing, because they say that my father was staying in Pretoria then, that he would come every end of the month. I am confused. I just remember everytime that I was mostly with this Granny. There was no one there, I would be with this Granny. ... that is why I'm confused. When I'm alone I'm asking myself, why I was left.*

Lerato's confusion is compounded by evidence of a generally neglectful experience in her early childhood. Waters, Hamilton and Weinfield (2000, p. 680) noted that "adults classified as preoccupied display confusion about past experiences" which is consistent with the view that Lerato exhibits a predominantly preoccupied attachment style.

Vusi: So um, I grew up in that stage where, you know; different people had to take care of me. Where one year I would be with my aunt and then I would be with my uncle. That sort of brought a lot of confusion into my life.

The quotes above are suggestive of the participants having had questions about their circumstances as children. During the apartheid era it was painful and difficult for parents to leave their children, so they may have avoided addressing their absences directly with their children (Chetwin, 2009; Sibanda, 2009). Moreover, a mother recalls her son's confusion decreasing as he grew older and his cognitive capacity increased. He also became more accustomed to life without his mother (Chetwin, 2009). A number of participants mentioned that it was not customary for adults or parents to speak to children about sensitive issues. It is likely that this contributed to confusion for children in their early childhood.

Who is my real mother?

A number of participants mentioned not knowing who their actual mother was. The feeling of confusion about this is understandably difficult for young children to manage.

Sibongile: I remember I used to call my aunt Mom, because my Mom left me at a very young stage to go back to school, and I thought that my aunt is my Mom, until she told me that that your mother is this one, and so I did not care that she was not my mother, I did not become disappointed, I was so attached to my aunt, even now I'm attached to her more than anyone. ... I was six or seven, somewhere then? .... but I was so attached to my aunt. .. I lost that feeling for my mother because she left me early, but my Mom told me that Nombelelo is not my mother, that she is my aunt. Maybe it was jealousy, I don't know, because parents do that sometimes, they feel like I am losing my baby, let me tell her that I am her mother. But I did not care, I thought okay, you are my mother, but she is,my mother too, I have three mothers, my grandmother, you and my aunt.

It is possible that Sibongile used denial as a defence mechanism in stating that she did not care about her aunt not being her mother. It is likely that this revelation would have been distressing to her at the time.

Lebo: I think I had a sense of her being my mother, and not being my mother. But then I thought, she is not my mother..., for me to strike the balance, it was difficult, I was also set in my ways. I would think, I don't see anything wrong with this, and my grandmother was okay.

Lebo described finding the difference between his grandmothers' parenting style and his mother's attempts to assume authority over occasional weekend visits as being difficult to reconcile.

Thenjiwe: I knew my grandmother as my mother actually, until such time as I was.. I guess I was old.. and I was told that this is not your mother, this is your grandmother. In fact no one told me, or someone told me.. I don't know how I found out. I used to call my grandmother mama, and I used to call my mother Mama as well, but I knew my grandmother as my mother. I use to call my

grandmother Mama and she did everything for me. ... you know at that age when you understand things. I initially did not understand why I had to stay with her and not with my parents...

Thenjiwe seems not to remember if it was ever made explicitly clear to her which of her caregivers was her mother. She makes reference to children's understanding increasing with age, and yet the emotional impact of the separation from her mother seemed to result in her separation never 'making sense' to her.

Theme Two: Perceptions of Mother

Participants expressed both positive and negative feelings about their mothers. Those participants (Lerato, Lulu and Vusi) who reported experiencing gross neglect were openly negative about their mothers. This theme is divided into two sections, issues regarding positive appraisal of mother and issues regarding negative appraisal of mother.

Four out of the ten participants' mothers were teenagers when they were born and returned to school thereafter, in most cases leaving their babies with their mothers. Teenage pregnancy in some Black South African cultures has cultural meaning, as proof of fertility (Varga, 2003). Teenage pregnancy in South Africa is also associated with the psychosocial consequences found in other parts of the world (Varga, 2003).

From an attachment and bonding perspective, a teenage mother may not be sufficiently mature to adequately and accurately observe her baby's needs (Ward & Carlson, 1995).

She meant well

Participants commented on their mothers in positive and negative ways. There was greater overall positive commentary than negative. These positive constructions are outlined in the three subthemes below.

She cared for me through providing

Palesa: Deep down I know that my mother loves me. She is away because she loves me; she is working because she wants to support me.

Tshepo: I remember the time that she was up in Johannesburg, and the time that she used to bring us clothes and food, you know groceries when she came home, that was probably once in every three or four months.

Thenjiwe: ...my mother and father were supporting me as well, they were sending money and clothes and everything. But in terms of being there, it was my grandmother who was there for me.

Participants volunteered that they perceived their mothers to be caring through the provision of food, clothes and financial support. Understanding that their mother had to go away to work so that the family could buy food and clothes would be something that a young child could understand. In the apartheid context this was a typical situation with the oppressive, restrictive and divisive legislation regarding where Black South Africans were permitted to live.

She gave me special care when she was around

The individual love, focus and attention remembered in the quotes below are indicative of how participants remember receiving a special kind of input from their mothers that they perhaps did not received from grandmothers. This issue was also evident in the individual summaries. Participants volunteered information about times that they received individual special attention, and that this had been meaningful to them. Being one of a number of children with one grandmother did not lend itself towards individualised attention.

> *Lebo: And I used to enjoy when my mother was at home, as much as she was this.. what.. sometimes she would be a disciplinarian.. yes. But it was nice when my mother was home. Even when I was at school I would be anxious to get home, I want go home, I want to see my mother. I wouldn't even play outside like I usually do, just to be with her. ... Yes, what I really liked about her being around, as much as she was a disciplinarian, but there were some things that I wouldn't have been able to do with my grandmother. There would be a nice change in it, she would cook nice food everyday, she would come up with interesting things, but my grandmother was a good cook as well, but it would be nice to eat other things as well. ... Yes, she would really come with the variety, and it was good to get that.*
>
> *Mpho: my mom would make sure that I was scrubbed properly and combed properly* [for school inspections]. *That kind of thing at my granny you would never get.*
>
> *Tshepo: my mother and I were extremely close. We have been very very close. ... My mother was really, she was the type of person who would sacrifice anything for me. And I mean, even, that's why, even today, I respect her so much. She would even go barefoot, but she would make sure that I have got things. She couldn't afford to pay for my university education but even so, wherever she could she made sure… she committed herself.*

Interestingly it was the male participants who commented on this experience of individualised attention from their mothers. Equally interesting is the 'focus on the mother' of two female participants, below. This focus on their mothers suffering rather than their own may be pertinent from a gendered perspective. Girls are typically socialised to nurture and think about and care for others (Ampofo, 2001). Sibongile's perspective (below) on her birth having been a 'mistake' and the impact of this on her mother's life is striking.

She suffered too.

Sibongile has consciously reflected on how her mother's life would have been if she had not been born. She is referring to the issue of her mother having been very young when she was born. Lulu makes exceptions for her mother because she lost her mother when she was very young, as indicated by Lulu. She excuses her and sees her as having done her best. This is a contradiction as Lulu is later openly negative about her mother's neglect when she was malnourished and unwell while being cared for by her mother's aunt.

> *Sibongile: ...and I think if I wasn't born, I'm not saying I'm a mistake, okay, I am a mistake, but here I am now. But I think if I hadn't have been born then my mother would have been far, she would have finished school. But she did not manage to continue.*
>
> *Lulu: My relationship with my Mom has always been mostly good and she tried in her way, I actually understand like everything we have been through together, because I can imagine from her side how it must have been for her, in her whole entire life, not to have her mother, cos when she was two her mother passed away. I can imagine from her side. ... Yes, I can imagine from her side. At least I had her and she's also just trying in her way that she knows best, to show support, you know what I mean. Even though her love for me became a bit, I can't say too much, but it became a bit weird.*

She did not mean well.

Participants related perceptions of mother as 'bad', that she had ill intent towards them. It is not surprising that these quotes are made by Lerato, Vusi and Lulu, the participants who reported overwhelmingly negative early childhood experiences.

> *Lerato: My Mum never appreciated me. She was always you know, swearing at me.*
>
> *Vusi: Because she was irresponsible, she gave me up as a baby when I was eight days old, and that was it.*
>
> *Lulu: Yes yes, my Mom did know very well* (about Lulu being unwell and poorly cared for by relatives), *cos she used to see me and stuff, when she used to come over and when I was around here in Joburg as well. So she knew very well.*

She was bad.

Some participants described feeling strongly that their mother had malicious intentions towards them as children. There is strong feeling in Lerato's interview narrative regarding the physical, verbal and sexual abuse she described having been subjected to in childhood.

> *Lerato: my Mum would say that the Grade 12 that I'm doing is the same as Sub A... She would swear, she would say bad things about me, a retarded somebody, slow learner somebody, you*

know, those kinds of bad words. By then, for me, I think, it hurt me much because all of the things were going on inside me. I couldn't be able to speak out about them. They were always inside, inside my heart...

Vusi: Because she was irresponsible, she gave me up as a baby when I was eight days old, and that was it. The subject was never explored. ... she [my mother's sister] *said that my mother gave birth to me and as she came back there was really no support from the fathers side and she got a bit gatvol and she started to go and drop me off there.*

Lerato and Vusi experienced their mothers' behaviours as distressing and painful. There is evidence that these circumstances are perceived by them both to have had long-lasting consequences in their lives. Moreover, the intergenerational transmission of attachment insecurity is manifest in that Lerato considers herself to be unable to care for her child herself.

She did not arrange good care for me.

Lerato, Lulu and Vusi described feeling angry about the manner in which they were treated, implicating their mothers as being negligent in their lack of care or concern for their wellbeing.

Lerato: *I was asking myself, why does my Mum go with my other brothers and sisters, because I was always always alone with that Granny.*

Lulu: Yes yes, my Mom did know very well, cos she used to see me and stuff, when she used to come over and when I was around here in Joburg as well. So she knew very well. Um, But I doubt that there would have ever said that I must maybe come out here. .... Uncle Robert made it happen. Cos I mean, I've seen my brother, he stayed there up until he finished matric.

Vusi: And as much as we, I knew that there was a rationale behind that, it did not really justify her actions.... ... But you know. Um, ultimately I thought that forgiving her was the best thing I could do, not for her but for myself,

Theme Three: Experiences of separation.

Young children's separation experiences from their attachment figures are notoriously difficult. Bowlby wrote about protest, despair and detachment being the three stages repeatedly observed in young British children separated from their parents for hospitalisation, over a four year period (Kobak & Madsen, 2008). Palesa and Pumi in particular were affected by separations that they remember clearly.

Separation experiences, coping with change.

Participants spoke about the experiences of separation with intensity and emotion. Those participants who remember the separation experiences clearly refer to the experience of feeling alone with difficult feelings. It would have been ideal for these children to have been able to talk about these experiences with an adult who could have provided support and containment through the transition.

> *Palesa: she took me away* [back to Eastern Cape after a difficult year of separation]. *And when we got home they told me that my mother was working and had to leave us again so that she can put something on the table. Yes, I had to accept that.*
>
> *Palesa: ... it was terribly painful for me* [when her mother left her] *because I really needed to be with her. Maybe to tell her..... I wanted to tell her what had happened to me in that period. It was not easy to cope, but then I had to, you know, I had to use my coping, like you know, to tell my mind that you know, my grandmother is here for me, even if my mother is not here.*
>
> *Palesa: She would come home twice a year, at least. ... You know, I was SO SO excited. For me it was like she couldn't go back at the end of the time. .... And when she was going back we used to walk her to the taxi or bus, and when she left I used to cry, I used to cry. .... Yes, I used to cry myself to sleep (Laughs).*

Palesa's laughter is understood to be an unconscious defensive strategy utilised in the face of painful memories from early childhood.

Pumi's described moving to Venda because her parents had by then married and were adhering to the traditional patrilineal practice of the wife and children being absorbed into the paternal family (Varga, 1997). Her description of her experience, in being cared for by her unfamiliar and seemingly rather 'scary' paternal grandmother, learning a new language and starting school at the same time seemed to illustrate her dismissing her difficulties at the time. She seems to have internalised that she was "shy" and "slow" at school without reflecting on the objectively stressful nature of the circumstances she faced.

> *Pumi: I remember when I first went there I did not go with my Mom, I went with my aunt. I can't really say anything cos I was young, but okay, it was a bit different because my Mom wasn't there and I was going to a different place. ... ...Not scary, but I did not want to be staying there with people that I did not know. ... I was speaking Tswana, and I had to learn the language, and get to know my Granny. I remember, back in the day she used to drink so she was a bit scary. ... She was scary. They used to call her, whenever kids were naughty in the community, they would call her name and kids would behave, so she was (laughs)… ... She was scary, I was also a bit scared of her (laughs) Ja....Pumi: ... when I started school she* [mother] *wasn't there, like, my my Dads brothers wife took me to my first day of school, my Mom wasn't around. Pumi: ...I think I was a bit shy at school, and it wasn't so great. I mean I wasn't doing so great at school, for the first few years, like Grade 1 and 2. I think I was a bit slow.*

Lulu's separation from her father after a year of her living with her parents in Johannesburg was very painful for her. She seems to experience ongoing emotional distress about it and was noticeably preoccupied with the memory while relating this unexpected separation and permanent loss.

> *Lulu: Ja they were. And my Dad also did not make it very simple as well, just when I thought Mommy Daddy yes, I can have a normal life, YES, I used to dream of eating jam and bread (laughs), because that was my happy meal type of thing you know. So it was like, at least I'm going to eat jam and bread every day now. I was just so so happy. And then my Dad decides to leave. ... ...one Friday he decides to drop me off at school as usual and then um, he just did not come back. ... I'm actually getting over it now, I've actually, I'm coming to terms with it this year only, after all this long time. I haven't been able to speak about my Dad without crying. .... just literally disappeared. He left me with a.. those days there was a five rand note, he left me with a five rand note, so I'm thinking party, and its Friday you know. I'm sure I was buying everyone everything and myself as well. Little did I know that was the last time I was seeing him. .... I have never heard from him again. He is still alive because I am still in contact with one of his sons...*

Lulu's description of jam and bread being her 'happy meal', and how this meant being with her parents is moving and poignant. She seems to have found it difficult to make sense of the close bond she shared with her father during that year, and what his leaving may have meant about his feelings for her.

Mpho relates a memory of his mother leaving to go back to work when he was a young child. His mother trying to avoid telling him is understandable in the sense that the separation would have been painful for her too.

> *Mpho: ...well, I remember, one of the memories, from being a child, was crying and running after the car. I remember how my Mum would hide that she was leaving. I remember that I would catch on. I remember that it was always difficult, for her as well. She would make up some story, say she was going to the neighbour's house and disappear from there. Because I always cried when she left. Ja*

Tshepo illustrates how difficult parting from his grandfather was for him as a child, although he does minimise the meaning of his grandfather giving him money as he left. This is emblematic of Tshepo's narrative.

> *Tshepo:* [on saying goodbye to his grandfather when he left to go back to Johannesburg to work as a migrant labourer] *I remember I used to walk with him to the taxi station, and then he will give me a R2 or a R5. It was nothing but it was something to me.* [Laughs]

I don't like this new place!

The comments below highlight acute awareness and clear memories of change, from diet to the perceived wealth of a community.

> *Pumi: Financially there was a big difference. I did not get to eat what I used to eat..*
> *Researcher:*
> Researcher: So there was a change in your diet, and the environment?
> *Pumi: ... and the buildings too, back in the day there was all those round houses, back in Rustenburg there were nice houses, in Venda it was like poor... And you look at other families, they were well off, and we were from this poor family.*
>
> *Lulu: okay, I stayed in a coloured area, which was in the town, but not like nice town, like very weird town, sort of like, um, in the coloured area, sort of like shacks, those sorts of houses.*

I had to grow up quickly.

The quotes below are strongly illustrative of positive constructions of premature maturation. These may be in defence of having to forego or give up on 'being' a baby or toddler earlier, and in its place was pride about being older and more responsible. Being without their own mother was evident to and stressed by both Sibongile and Mpho. Being one of a group of children had an up side and possibly a hidden or defended against downside.

> *Sibongile: It makes you very responsible, because you are not staying with your mother, you are not staying with you own mother. You are staying with your cousins and you aunts and other children..... It was nice, I enjoyed that. I don't know how it was gonna be if I was with my mother and father. Cos my mother fell pregnant at a younger stage... She was still in high school... And they were both students, my father was also a student at high school.*
>
> *Mpho: You see there were, we lived with my mother's sisters as well. It was quite a big family. So, and also there were other kids, um, I think from an early ... I've never been a demanding child that needs eh, eh… let me think, what… nurturing ... I almost feel that both my mom and my grandmother would always treat me like I was much older than I was... I remember the first time I had to go and take a bus alone, she* [mother] *had bought a camera, so she was taking photos of me by the bus stop, and I had on a nice Pierre Cardin jersey, with six buttons and she was saying "you are dressed like an old man, so you can go on this trip on your own", cos I was scared.*

Theme Four: Why am I different?

The feeling of being different was pertinent for those participants who felt the 'odd one out', being left behind by family or living in a situation where they were the only one without their mother present. Also, some were aware of the feeling that they were unwanted, perhaps because of financial stress, or for some it was because it was not customary for them to be living with maternal grandparents.

Others had their parents, where are mine?

> *Lerato: it was like; I was asking myself, why does my Mum go with my other brothers and sisters, because I was always always alone with that Granny.*

> Researcher: I wonder how it was for you when your aunt had her own children?
> *Sibongile: I was happy because nothing really changed. I was always the first born of her, so nothing really changed, I was just happy that there were new babies at home, a new baby was coming.*

There is evidence that Sibongile had established a secure attachment with her aunt and so the arrival of her children was not experienced negatively. However, the emergence of sibling rivalry is normal and commonplace in families. Therefore, the stated absence of these feelings is interesting. Perhaps feelings of sibling rivalry have been 'forgotten'.

> *Lulu: And then um, my cousins were staying with their parents as well, under the same roof. So I was like the only one who did not have their mother there with me. All I remember really was like rejection, like a whole lot of rejection and trying to fit in. Obviously they could see that I was trying and they used to take advantage of that.*

In contrast, Lulu remembered feeling alone and unprotected, even at a very young age. She felt that her not having her mother with her left her vulnerable to abuse.

Mpho was raised in a group of children with his maternal grandmother. She had nine of her own children, one son a month older than Mpho, and she cared for some of her grand children too. Mpho felt closest to his cousin who was in a similar situation to himself. He remembers a number of occasions when comments were made about him 'going home' to his father's family.

> *Mpho: I was closer to Leli, who was my cousin... Ja, so I think I was maybe more protective of him and closer to him, because we were the two boys that were not staying with our mothers ... it highlighted, I told you that there had always been times when, when I was told, when are you going home, when are you going to your fathers house. It highlighted that you know.*

> *Vusi: ...when I grew up I think at about the age of um, 8, 9, 10,11, 12, I realized that I was somehow different. All the other kids had a mother figure that that they had someone they could refer to as mother. For me, I had my grandmother, who I called Mum, and my father also did not really play an active role in my upbringing.*

They did not actually want me there

Four of the participants mentioned feeling unwanted by their non-parental caregivers. In some cases this feeling was perceived in a subtle way, but it was clear and distressing nevertheless. A feeling of not being

wanted would undermine emotional security for a child if protracted (Downey, Lebolt, Rincon & Freitas, 1998). For Palesa, not being wanted by her father's girlfriend was clearly evident and this would have been very distressing for her, an already traumatised young child.

> *Palesa: what I saw is that my father noticed that his girlfriend doesn't love us...*
>
> *Vusi:* [on having to leave his aunt's home and go back to his Granny] *it was sugar coated around the fact that I need to go and look after my Gran. Dineo's husband was not entirely happy about having a child that is not his in the household, and um, and um, taking care of somebody else's child. They had a child now; we sort of grew up like brother and sister. And I think those were the emotions that surrounded me being taken back to my grandmother. But I think it was just somehow sugar coated.*
>
> *Thenjiwe: Eh, I think that was one of my first lessons to realize that my grandmother actually gave me everything and more than anyone else could have, you know what I mean. Because you know, um, you find that my aunt is the, is married, okay, and um, and the family for my aunt wouldn't be as accepting, the family for the husband wouldn't be as accepting as my aunt would be. And she always had to defend me, and she said* [to her husbands family that] *her parents are giving money so that she can stay here.*

Theme Five: Fathers

Eight out of the ten participants in this group experienced conflict with or some significant issue related to their biological father. Experiences and feelings ranged from not ever having known their father, to relationships characterised by conflict, abuse, fear and neglect. Out of these eight participants, three had meaningful relationships with other men who stood in for their biological father, and with whom they developed a meaningful attachment. These men could be referred to as 'social' and 'economic' fathers (Morrell, 2006).

I did not ever know him

> *Sibongile:* [about her father] *Yes, I know him. My mother tried to look for him but it was too late, he passed away. ...I was about to see him, like tomorrow, but he passed away tonight...Ja, so I saw him in a coffin, so I don't really really know him. I can't say much about him…* (Cries) *...but it always touches me... it was 95....I was so looking forward to seeing him...but then ja. He was sick. ... [*about her parents relationship while they were at school] *That time, I don't know if it was a serious relationship, but the fact that I was born, it was serious.*

Sibongile clearly grapples with her perception of her biological parents' relationship, and her conception being part of it. She perceives herself to be a 'mistake' but she stresses that for her, even if her parents' relationship was not committed and serious, her having been conceived makes it serious.

Tshepo: I never knew my father, up until, up to now. He was alive up until sometime this year, this year in February. His family came to tell us that he had passed away but that was three weeks after he was buried. But I mean I've been living all my life without knowing my father. The family situation that I grew under never, for me I never really had a need to go and find him to find out who he is, to find my identity, because I felt like I belonged the ____ family. I mean normally you take the fathers surname but for me, I took my mothers surname. I mean he wasn't around, they had me when they were still young, they weren't married.

Tshepo appears to have been less emotionally distressed by not knowing his father. He had his grandfather as a real or 'social' father (Morrell, 2006) who he felt treated him as a son, and as important. Therefore, the loss of his real father seemed not to affect him as much. However, he never felt comfortable to ask his mother questions about her relationship with his father, and he tended to avoid emotional aspects of his history.

Vusi: my father also did not really play an active role in my upbringing. I only knew about him when... just before he passed on, just before I was 14.

Despite Vusi's father not having played a role in his upbringing, he has great significance in his life. It was never openly acknowledged in the family that his father (who lived in the same house) was actually his biological father. Vusi was told by family members that his biological father had wrapped him up in plastic bags, as a very small infant, and put him in a water pipe. Vusi's 8-year-old cousin observed this and took him out of the water pipe and back to his paternal grandmother.

He was not a big part of my life.

For Mpho, Lebo and Vusi there were varying degrees of ambivalence and conflict expressed regarding their biological fathers.

Mpho's stepfather was ultimately more important to him than his biological father, although he has always been a part of his biological father's wider family.

Mpho: (Laughs)… I mean our relationship went through a lot… (laughs), I mean when he passed away he was still my dad but we were not in touch. I mean I hadn't seen him for years and I heard he was sick, I went to see him at the hospital, and later on I went to bury him.

Lebo: Ja, and I'm also glad that my mother did not get married to my father.

Lebo: *Ja, no, I am. I think I'm better off. I like my father, but the choices that he is making in life, and the kind of lifestyle that he leads, where... he's getting a bit better now, I think cos he is older, so he is a bit more of a family man than he used to be.*

Lebo was openly critical of his father's lifestyle and did not enjoy a close relationship with him as he grew older.

> *Vusi: I do understand that a lot of fathers don't actually play an active role in, you know, in the black culture. Um.., they don't really play an active role in the upbringing of the children. So I thought, okay, with the father I can understand but with the mother.....*

Vusi expresses his observation that fathers tend not to be involved fathers in Black culture. It seems that he reluctantly accepts this.

Men/Fathers/grandfathers can be punitive and abusive.

Three out of the ten participants referred to receiving severely punitive parenting from fathers, and in Tshepos's extended family situation, from other male kin as well. Palesa's father was never violent to her but he was extremely violent towards her mother. Dawes, Kropiwnicki, Kafaar and Richter (2005) stress that despite there being limited data available, corporal punishment appears to be widely utilised in South Africa. Dawes et al. (2005) found that 57% of parents use smacking as a form of discipline and about a third of parents beat their children severely. Interestingly, unlike the profile in this study, Dawes et al. (2005, p. 19) identified that it is "women who are the overwhelming majority when it comes to administering corporal punishment (the ratio is 7 women : 1 man)".

> *Palesa: my father was too abusive to my mother, yes. He took her to the, a nearby veld and then he was trying to slaughter her. He was using that* [sjambok] *to beat my mother. Her body was full of wounds. And then a neighbour organized a car to take my mother back home.....* [on men as partners] *that is why I'm saying that men can be nice and then at the same time they can be horrible. You will never know what the man is like. You can never know what he can turn to be.*

Lerato's experience of her father's abuse of her mother appears to have had a lasting impact on her feelings about men. She does state that the father of her children, with whom she was involved for eight years was not physically violent towards her, but she maintains a fear of and a stereotype about men in general.

> *Lerato: You know when my father beats me, he just take everything, it doesn't mean… .... anything that he came across, anything… .... my father took, I don't remember that thing, it was a very hard thing, it was a steel thing that he beated me with all over my body. I was running, I went to the other room, and I fainted, and he was beating me...*

Lerato's account of the severe beatings she received from her father are particularly traumatic. She later referred to how her mother explained this abuse of Lerato as being her father's way of dealing with his stress.

> *Tshepo: I mean if my other uncles found children* [playing], *I mean they would beat you just for playing. ...Eh, you know, that's how they* [uncles] *valued the livestock. And everybody knew it in the village. Every night there would be a child crying in our family. ...and sometimes they were*

beating us for nothing... other times we used to sleep outside, or other times they would beat you for things that happened five days ago.

Tshepo referred to this punitive treatment a number of times in his narrative. He was not evidently emotional about it during the interview. He did state that he had longed for his mother when he and his cousins were being treated harshly, he felt that she would have protected him, or perhaps he was longing for her and felt alone and frightened. After this he said that women had no say in his family so it would not have made any difference if she had been there or not.

The good stories

The quotes below 'stand out' as being strikingly clear and positive, in contrast to the stories of suffering. They were made by three of the male participants.

Mpho: [about his mother's new partner, from when he was in Grade 3] *Well… I think he was shy, in the way that adults that can feel uneasy around kids, but we, I mean he quickly became a father, you know...we would spend time on our own, well obviously most of the time when we see each other my Mom was around, but he would always ask me what's going on, and how school was going.*

Lebo: *... he would come and see me often, and he used to buy me stuff, and I would like that. Sometimes what my mother can't do, and my grandmother can't do, then I know I would go to my father and he would do it for me.*

Tshepo: I mean you know the family situation that I was under, it was my grandfather, my grandfather took pure role of a father to me. Because I was first born in my family, everybody else was his child, so they called him Baba. Nobody, nobody taught me that he was grandfather, so I adopted this and called him father. .... I've always looked up to him. ... Yes, definitely. Because I mean, the thing with him was that he was supportive. ... My grandfather was the greatest. I mean I do remember telling him that I wanted takkies like this, he wouldn't buy those for me. He told me that he would buy anything for me that was to do with school or church. ... I did not, I did not fear things when he was around. ... And when he was around he, we knew we would have good things, we would have meat, we would have good food, because he used to bring that.

Tshepo's comment was made at the beginning of his interview, as an introduction to his relationship with his close attachment figures. In his case it was his grandfather. He appears to remember his grandfather as a supportive and protective provider. Like Tshepo, Mpho's memories of his step-father were positively portrayed in terms of the quality of the relationship. Lebo's portrayal are less about the quality of the relationship and more a depiction of how he may have appreciated having his father in the background as a provider.

Theme Six: Perspective taking.

This theme is closely associated with reflective function as it relates to participants reflecting about their lives and how their experiences have shaped their current perspectives. The issues addressed in this theme require a level of metacognition (thinking about thinking), or merely reflecting on the impact of personal experiences on their lives.

When I was a baby/young child.

Participants were asked what they knew about themselves as babies. This question was posed as a means to elicit participants' reflections about their babyhood. Sibongile and Lulu's responses were illuminating and referred implicitly to deeper experiences. Lulu quickly became very distressed by the memories evoked of her early life.

> *Sibongile: Ja* (laughs), *they used to tell me that I used a cry a lot, a lot, I used to cry a lot. I used to, um, sick for love. I used to cry for my Granny, especially for both of them. At that time my aunt finished for school and she did not have money for university for that year and she did not have anything to do except looking after me for that year. So they used to take turns, today it's my Granny, tomorrow it's my aunt looking after me.*
>
> Researcher: Do you think maybe you cried because of that?
> *Sibongile: No, I don't think so, I think maybe I was just a crying baby, some babies are like that.*

Sibongile appeared to dismiss the possibility that she may have been crying because she was distressed, she preferred to avoid considering the possibility of her distress as an infant.

> *Lulu: Apparently I was very shy, ja, I wasn't like* (laughs) *I am now* (laughs) *Now Im really happy, Im kind of overboard, Im really happy and I try not to let things affect me* (Cries, coughs… silence) *...I think that is maybe why I'm so very happy now because Im trying to make up for all those bad times.*

Lulu's comment about being very shy is possibly another way of describing her having been a detached baby as an infant. She was separated from her parents at six months, at the time that she would have been establishing her attachment to her mother and father. Given her descriptions of the circumstances at her caregiver, there may not have been sensitive attuned caregiving, and she may have become detached.

Vusi's response is more congruent with the difficult circumstances of his early life. He clearly articulates how he feels about both his mother and his father's actions with regard to his birth.

> *Vusi: I heard bits and pieces of stories from my siblings and other family members, I felt a bit angry, I felt a bit frustrated, and I just remember feeling very resentful towards, towards her, and*

just wondering, you know, what kind of a mother would leave a child at such a tender age. You know eight days is just too… too young. And you know then, to make matters worse, when I heard that my father was actually trying to actually kill me in a way, by dumping me in some dump, it actually made matters even worse. I said okay fine, I do understand when mother is actually doing this, she was probably going through stuff, but what my father was trying to do did make matters worse.

Thenjiwe answers the question about what she knew about her babyhood at the beginning of the interview, before she began to feel more comfortable. She denies any difficulty at that early stage, on being taken to her grandmother, and describes this as a normal part of life. Interestingly this is something that she later expresses distress about. It is of relevance that Thenjiwe was taken to her grandmother at eight months, as stated in her individual commentary, as it is by this age that a secure attachment is normally formed (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Thenjiwe: When I was eight months, then I went back to the Eastern Cape to stay with my grandmother, ah… who's the mother to my mother. ... And I have no recollection of any of that, and they said I was eight months, and I grew up there, and um, for me there was nothing strange with that cos most of us, my brothers, I'm from a big family, we all um, were raised by our grandparents.

My family

Participants were asked about their family relationships and circumstances in order to gain insight into their perceptions of their experiences.

Pumi expresses how she could not imagine that anyone noticed how she experienced the move to Venda. Her response is suggestive of her having felt invisible, and her adjustment experiences not important.

Pumi: [her perception on whether her parents noticed her response to the move to Venda] *I don't think that they did understand because I did not understand myself, they might have affected me but I wouldn't have known what was affecting me at school, why am I failing, why am I like this. I am sure that they couldn't have picked that up. ... these people, like they are so, what can I say, like those old people, like they are not educated so they can't really… ... they did not think about that, I was only... if you could be fed and have a place to sleep, they did not see all the other things around it, the little things, as long as you fed and you have a place to crash, that's all that counted.*

Mpho reflects on how he compared himself to other people he met while at boarding school, and he is grateful for the family that he had. He refers to how first born children born out of wedlock were often abandoned by their mothers and stepfathers.

Mpho: I actually think, um, because I had, I knew people who were born when their mothers were young and they later married, um, not to their fathers you know, I always thought I had it much better than most people I knew, I still feel like that, you know, when it comes to step parents I was lucky. .... I had a, I had my Mum, I mean she did not sort of dump me at my grandparents, you know like, I know people who were not acknowledged as, you know, their mother's son.

Tshepo and Thenjiwe reflect in a largely positive way about their family experiences, seeming to have constructed a positive perception of their global family experience. This seems to be a largely adaptive process and is likely to indicate relatively good integration of their experiences as adults.

> *Tshepo: But my grandmother was there really. And a lot of things that I know today I learned from her. I mean hoeing, and this is how we plant these things, these are really basic skills.*
>
> *Tshepo: But the point that I'm trying to make is that because the family brought us up in a particular way, for me, I'm grateful actually. At that time, to some extent I felt a pain. How come my family is like this? How come other children are playing but we are not allowed to play? We always had to be in on the hide-out, we had to be on the run all the time.*
>
> *Thenjiwe: Yes, I had it easier with my grandmother than it would have been with my father, cos my father was very very strict. And even though it was like that, the fact that I was not with my parents....*

My own children.

Six out of ten participants commented on this issue in response to a direct question on how they would want their own children raised. Lulu was unable to answer directly and expressed the feeling that she is not managing taking care of her little girl while working full time. She expressed possibly taking her to live with her mother in Estcourt where she spent her first six years. Lulu seems to find it very difficult to provide a stable environment for her daughter.

Vusi was quite clear that he did not think that he would have children because of his own early experience. Thenjiwe has her children with her now but did leave them both with her parents for a number of years in their early childhood. Lerato is not able to care for her own daughter although she did express the strong desire to be able to provide a stable environment for her.

The other responses can be categorised as falling into one of the following two categories:

Those participants who are adamant that they will raise their own children (Palesa, Sibongile, Pumi, Tshepo), and those participants who think that parents should ideally raise their children themselves but are not averse to the role of grandparents as caregivers (Lebo, Mpho).

> *Sibongile: Yes, I always think about that. My kids, when I have kids I don't want them to.. I want them to live with me and their father.*
>
> *Pumi: Wow, I would want to raise my own kids, I wouldn't send them anywhere. ... I just don't think other people would love you as much as your parents, support you and be there for you as their parent would. I don't think that they can. Just the understanding. Other people would just feed you and clothe you but, sometimes you just wanna be held. ... You don't ever feel that with other people.*

Vusi said (recording machine had failed) that he has thought about adopting an orphan but he worries that he would either abuse the child or over indulge it. He can't work out which approach he would adopt, but he is sure that he would not be able to raise a child due to his own experiences.

How has my childhood impacted on me?

What stands out in the selected responses to the question on how participants thought their childhood experiences had impacted on them as adults, those who had traumatic experiences in childhood expressed clearly and succinctly the impact of their particular circumstances.

Lerato: I don't have friends, because like…… I don't have close friends. Even now I pray to my God to have my own accommodation. I pray to God, is this pattern that I have, is this from my childhood, now look at my life, my daughter is staying far away from me. This is not my intention. But the situation is forcing me. .....I don't want my daughter to be traumatized.

Researcher: It sounds like you are quite resilient, that you coped okay?
Pumi: I think you have to be, it's the only way.
Researcher: So your moves contributed to you being resilient, or you were resilient before?
Pumi: I think it contributed, to being young and not being with my parents. I mean I did not have much of a choice.

Lulu: Then in Std. 7 I failed because that is when I was starting to hang around with just whoever I thought loved me. .... I was a rebellious child you know. I was always in trouble, always in trouble. I was in trouble at school cos I was smoking in the bathroom... Ja, [silence]*... so I've always just been looking for love, all the time, all the time.. all the time. And sometimes people took advantage you know. .. I feel like I... um... (pauses), I am still looking for love but now um, I can say that I know better, you know ... cos I can say that I've sort of come out of this rollercoaster you know. I'm not saying that I'm cool now or anything, but at least I've learned so much stuff.*

Vusi: You know the kids at school who had a mother figure and a father figure in their lives, whether the father was long dead, or not there, those kids who had a stable mother figure turned out to be slightly more stable, more stable than I am. This has actually helped me to understand myself, and and and… I have tried not to be too hard on myself.

These quotes powerfully depict an important aspect of this study, the impact of difficulties in early childhood and disruptions in caregiving. Vusi's closing comment is moving and poignant, he is aware of the impact of his childhood on his adulthood, and he tries to be understanding of himself.

4.3 Level Two: Analysis of narratives according to attachment concepts and principles.

Introductory comments

After considering the circumstances for Black children in apartheid South Africa it is relevant and of theoretical value to analyse the ten narratives across another dimension. This dimension focuses specifically on how attachment security in childhood may be continued into adulthood, based on internalised relationships in early childhood. These internalisations are believed to impact on adult adjustment and 'state of mind'.

As with the AAI, participants' responses to interview questions in this study offer scope for analysis in terms of their attachment style or 'state of mind' and the association between their childhood experiences and their adult adjustment. Larose and Bernier (2001, p.96), in a paper investigating attachment 'state of mind' in adolescents report that there are research findings to suggest that "ego resilience" and broad "social competence" are associated with autonomous 'state of mind', but not with dismissing or preoccupied states of mind. Given that this study utilises a qualitative methodology the analysis is based on the coherence of the narratives and will produce conclusions about adult attachment styles that are tentative and broad in nature.

Each participant narrative was analysed across eight focus areas. These areas were based on attachment theory, therefore this level of analysis is inductive or theory driven. The focus areas analysed are: A general history and impressions of each participant, the emotional tone of the interview, evidence of an internalised secure base, the coherence of the narrative, ease of access to memories, reflective function, (tentative comments about) attachment style and mediating factors (risk and protective).

The individual analyses of participants' narratives are included: seven in Appendix E, and three in this chapter. These three analyses were selected because they are striking in their presentation and are posited to be characteristic of secure (coherent), preoccupied (emotional presentation) and dismissing (unemotional and avoidant) states of mind.

Analysis of narrative coherence

The broad analysis that follows focuses particularly on narrative coherence and presumed adult attachment 'state of mind'.

An analysis of narrative coherence is outlined first as it is considered by theorists to be central to adult attachment classification. Fiese and Sameroff (1999, p. 7) suggest that "the coherence of the narrative is considered a benchmark for evaluating integrity of the self". Coherence is descriptively referred to in each classification. Dismissing individuals are deemed to have "low coherence of mind" (Levy et al., 2006, p.1029), secure autonomous adults demonstrate "a high degree of coherence" (Levy et al., 2006, p.1029), "preoccupied individuals have a tendency toward incoherence in their descriptions" (Levy et al., 2006, p.1029), and disorganized individuals tend to demonstrate "lapses in the monitoring of reasoning or discourse when discussing experiences of loss and abuse" (Levy et al., 2006, p.1029).

Consistency, organisation, flexibility and congruence between affect and content are the criteria proposed by Fiese and Sameroff (1999) for assessing coherence in narratives, particularly narratives that are related to life stories and 'meaning making'.

Participants' narratives were analyzed for coherence and the following impressions are provided:
Low coherence was noted in the narratives of those participants who reported experiencing sudden disruptions in caregiving, abuse, neglect and abandonment in childhood. Lerato, Vusi, Lulu, Tshepo, Pumi and Thenjiwe demonstrated various lapses in coherence during their narratives, or generally low coherence. In contrast, Palesa, Sibongile, Mpho and Lebo's narratives were generally coherent. It is considered that this coherence is associated with stability in early caregiving relationships of these four participants.

It is suggested that the group of participants demonstrating low narrative coherence may be classified in either the preoccupied or dismissing classifications and that their early childhood years were characterised by degrees of instability.

Tentative analysis of adult attachment /adult 'state of mind'

As previously stated, classification of adult attachment, particularly in the AAI assessment, is reserved for highly trained, practised and registered clinicians. The adult attachment classifications provided in this report are associated with theory and the assessment of narrative coherence. They are tentative and not intended to be conclusive.

Based on analysis of coherence and impressions gained from the emotional tone of each interview, it is suggested that Tshepo, Pumi and Thenjiwe's adult attachment styles may be characterised as dismissing. Tshepo and Thenjiwe tended to idealise their attachment figures (Tshepo's paternal grandfather and mother, Thenjiwe's maternal grandmother), with supporting evidence of these idealised relationships being sparse. Thenjiwe experienced significant early disruption in the establishment of her attachment with her mother (at eight months which is considered to be a particularly sensitive time for the establishment of attachment), and Tshepo's mother and grandfather both left the family home as migrant workers in his early childhood. In addition, his home seemed to be a punitive and harsh environment for young children. He did not describe his maternal grandmother to be a significant attachment figure from who he received individualised, sensitive and responsive caregiving. Both Thenjiwe and Tshepo provided positive overarching constructions of their childhoods, consistent with a more dismissing style of attachment.

Idealisation of a caregiver is not evident in Pumi's narrative. However, she did appear to establish early attachment bonds with her maternal grandmother and her own mother, but these were reportedly disrupted when she moved between Rustenburg and Johannesburg, and then substantially disrupted at age 6, when she moved to Venda for cultural reasons. She did not appear to forge a meaningful attachment relationship with her paternal grandmother, with sensitive and responsive care being largely absent during her middle childhood. Pumi does appear to have largely constructed her experiences positively; she does not foreground the difficulties she experienced in moving to Venda and because she did not experience any substantial support or assistance from caregivers, she seems to have undermined the importance and relevance of these difficulties in her formative years. Pumi implied that her move to her paternal grandmother was not so bad, *"it was quite an experience, at least I have something to tell"* (laughs).

Pumi did state clearly that she would never leave her own children with grandparents or alternative caregivers which seems to suggest that despite her dismissing the impact of the Venda years on her development, she does let "slip' her perspective in another way.

> *Pumi: Just the love and the support. I just don't think other people would love you as much as your parents, [or] support you and be there for you as their parent would. I don't think that they can. Just the understanding. Other people would just feed you and clothe you but, sometimes you just wanna be held, or*

It is suggested that Lerato, Vusi and Lulu tend towards a preoccupied style of attachment. They all spoke articulately and seemingly with ease about their experiences but became distressed or agitated when relating details of their attachment relationships. Lulu and Lerato were both tearful and emotionally distressed throughout their interviews. They both describe ongoing complexity and difficulty in their adult relationships with their parents. Lerato's narrative responses were very long and the content not always coherent in terms of chronology. She did not seem to reference the interviewer or be able to monitor her story so that it may be contextually clear for the listener. Lulu's narrative was less incoherent and more interactive with the interviewer. She was better able to monitor the way in which she explained her experiences, but there was some evidence of confluence of positive and painful memories and positive and negative emotions in the same sentence. However, she was more distressed about her experiences than positive. Lulu has experienced an enduring, supportive and caring relationship with an adult and she has also been in psychotherapy. These are likely to have assisted her in developing some coherence.

Vusi was engaging and highly articulate in his two interviews. He was able to express feelings openly and also described two previous periods of psychotherapy which he believes to have been helpful to him. Vusi's early infancy and childhood history is traumatic and characterised by disruptions in caregiving and periods where he did not feel wanted. Having been told about his abandonment at eight days-old by his mother, and his biological father's later attempt to drown him, Vusi describes that even if he had not been told, he would have 'known' these things about himself.

> *Vusi: You know what, I'm actually, I'm very pleased I know. Because in the past I was thinking that, you know, what you don't know wont hurt you, but in this instance it actually proved to be what I know, what I know actually happened in the past actually helped me in the sense of trying to find myself... I've got this erratic personality, when I could do these things, that I'm just very jumpy and uncertain, that I, at least I know that you know, part of my childhood had a lot to do with it.*

It is likely that Vusi has a preoccupied attachment as his narrative coherence was noted to deteriorate when he was speaking about his mother and father, also when he related the details of his early childhood, particularly in the first interview.

Lebo, Mpho, Palesa and Sibongile are all likely to be classified as having a secure / autonomous adult 'state of mind'. This tentative classification is based on their narrative coherence and the presence of stability in their early childhood relationships.

Mpho, Lulu and Tshepo's individual analyses are included as they are striking in the way that they illuminate the secure (Mpho), preoccupied (Lulu) and dismissing (Tshepo) adult states of mind.

Mpho

General history and impressions

Mpho is a 28-year-old brand manager. He is a single man. Mpho was born at the end of his mother's matric year. His grandmother had a baby son a month before he was born, and she raised the two boys. Mpho said that his mother *"did not have ways of raising me"*. Mpho only has memories from when he was 4 years. He described a conflictual relationship with his uncle (born a month before him), but he did develop a close bond with his cousin who was born two years after him. Mpho said that he and his cousin were both sons of the daughters in the family and were both set apart in that way. Their bond seemed to be based on identifying with each other.

Mpho described there being a subtle but clear message from relatives that they were living in the wrong place. He said that it was not the cultural norm for children of a mother to live on the maternal side: "*Ja, so from time to time there would be, if we had done something, there would be a comment like, you know, when are you going home, you know"*. Mpho did visit his father's family throughout his childhood and adolescence. His parents were not married but remained a couple until he was in Grade 2. Mpho reported witnessing his father being violent with his mother when they were still a couple.

Mpho described himself to have grown up quickly. He said, "*I've never been a demanding child that needs eh, eh… let me think, what… nurturing. I've always found myself in the position where I was helping my grandmother look after the other kids"*. It seems that Mpho's grandmother identified that he was a competent child and she gave him responsibilities (she had nine children of her own. She had one more child after her son who was born a month before Mpho): "*I almost feel that both my mom and my grandmother would always treat me like I was much older than I was"*.

Mpho remembers visits from his parents when he was a child. He reports that he would be distressed when they left."*One of the memories, from being a child, was crying and running after the car. I remember how my Mum would hide that she was leaving".*

Mpho did live with his mother for two years when he was in grades 2 and 3. He related how his mother would make sure that he was washed and cared for: "*That kind of thing at my granny you would never get".* Mpho said that his grandfather drank heavily and was violent towards the children during his childhood; they had to keep away from him. Also, Mpho described how the conflict with his 'uncle' intensified. There was an incident where he and his 'uncle' had a fight and his grandfather beat him so severely that he needed medical treatment. He said that his grandfather did not beat his own son; it was he who was singled out. Mpho went to stay with his grandmother's sisters for some time and was ultimately asked by his grandfather [in a family meeting] to come back. He did apologise to Mpho for the beating.

Emotional tone of the interview

Mpho was forthcoming and sincere throughout the hour long interview and did not express overt emotion. He did use adaptive defensive strategies, for instance, he described himself as not being demanding (a hint of a positive construction), and in the same sentence associates his lack of nurturing needs with this. This is suggestive of Mpho possibly having had to do without individualised attention and he has constructed this positively. It is likely that Mpho developed these strategies early in his childhood.

Internalised secure base

Mpho's stability in his early childhood and his relationship with his grandmother indicate a secure base.

Coherence of narrative

Mpho's narrative was fairly well organised in response to being questioned, although it was noted that he did not seem to have the contents of his story in a coherent whole. He did not easily volunteer spontaneous information, or elaborate. There was consistency in his narrative, a way of seeing himself and his life that was consistent throughout. Mpho seemed to be affectively congruent throughout the interview and he demonstrated flexibility in his ideas about himself and others. Mpho did present his childhood story and experiences from both negative and positive perspectives, thereby demonstrating balance and coherence.

Access to memories

Mpho did seem able to access memories and describe them.

Reflective function

Mpho has thought about himself and seems to have evaluated his experience as a child as being good overall. This is in comparison to people he was at boarding school with who were born to their mothers before marriage and were disowned. However, this aspect of his childhood does seem to be a dominant issue for him, and one that caused him pain and distress. He was able to express the negative and more challenging aspects of his childhood.

Attachment

Mpho appeared to have fairly secure attachment with evidence of a possibly dismissive style emerging under stress. Mpho seems to have grown up minimising his needs although he was able to describe this aspect about himself in a balanced and mature manner, and reflect on both positive and negative aspects of his childhood experience.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors evident in Mpho's childhood were his ongoing and regular contact with his mother, which endured throughout his childhood and the time spent living with her in his foundation phase years of school. Mpho was raised in stable and consistent home where he knew what to expect. He had routines and visited his father's family as well, with whom he was welcome and cared for. He was able to choose to live with his mother when he was 6 or 7 years old.

The consistency of Mpho's early life with his grandparents is a protective factor. He was not moved around and his grandmother seemed to notice his seemingly rather premature responsible nature and rewarded him for it. Mpho's close relationship with his stepfather and his ongoing relationships with his father's family were described to be meaningful. He reported being admired by others as being fortunate, and he also did well at school, both of which would be self esteem 'boosters'.

The risk factors identified in Mpho's life were that his mother was a teenager when he was born and "did not have ways of raising" him. This meant that he did not experience the individual care and special focus of his own mother and essentially became one of a pair of babies as his uncle was born a month before him. Ivey (2009, p. 120), in a chapter outlining Bion's conceptualisation of how mothers ideally contain their baby's experiences, comments that it is particularly challenging for mothers of twins to "contain, differentiate and process the experiences of both babies". In this case, Mpho was not her own baby and he may have not received the degree of individualized attention that he would have with his own mother.

Mpho's mother was not open about leaving each time, and did not openly address his distress. This could have contributed to Mpho feeling confused about his emotions as he grew up. He may also have developed a belief that his feelings were not easy for his adult caregivers to deal with.

Lulu

General history and impressions

Lulu is a 27-year-old single woman with one daughter aged 2 years. She has been living with the father of her child until recently. Lulu reported that she was born in Johannesburg and lived with her parents until she was 6 months old. She was then taken to Estcourt in KwaZulu Natal by her mother and left with her mother's aunt, various other children (cousins) and their mothers (her aunts). She described being the only child living there without her mother present. She said, *"All I remember really was like rejection, like a whole lot of rejection and trying to fit in"*. She reports receiving punitive treatment, hidings and being beaten up. She reported that her father's employer used to send healthy food to her school as there were concerns about her being malnourished.

When Lulu was asked what she knows about herself as a baby she said, *"Apparently I was very shy, ja..., I wasn't like (laughs)... I am now. (laughs) Now I'm really happy, I'm kind of overboard, I'm really happy and I try not to let things affect me* (cries, coughs… silence).

Lulu used to visit her parents every school holiday in Johannesburg. They lived with and worked for a family in Northcliff. When Lulu was about 6 or 7 years old she was observed by her father's employer to be in poor health and emotionally distressed. Based on the suggestion of her father's employer she was brought to Johannesburg to live with her parents. About that transition she said, *"I thought Mommy, Daddy yes, I can have a normal life, yes. I used to dream of eating jam and bread (laughs), because that was my happy meal. So it was like, at least I'm going to eat jam and bread every day now ...."*

Lulu lived with her parents for a year, her Grade 2 year. Her father would take her to and fetch her from school each day; she said she got very close to him over that period. Unexpectedly, at the end of that year he dropped her at school one Friday and never returned. Her mother had to fetch her later that evening from school. She has never spoken to her father again although she does know that he is still alive as she has had contact with one of his sons from another relationship. Lulu described this as being a devastating loss for her: *"I'm actually getting over it now, I've actually, I'm coming to terms with it this year only, after all this long time. I haven't been able to speak about my Dad without crying"*.

Lulu reported that her relationship with her mother was difficult, "*Oh my Mom, my relationship with my Mom, it was okay, it wasn't great. I could never like speak to her about anything because I feel like I couldn't trust her. Up until this day I feel like I can't trust her."* Lulu reported having become rebellious as a result of her distress. She reported that *"I've always just been looking for love, all the time, all the time, all the time"*. Lulu has developed and maintained a close relationship with her father's employer, Uncle Robert and his family. Her daughter has spent a lot of time with Uncle Robert and his family and he is and has been Lulu's primary support over her life, to date. *"I can say that throughout everything it was just Uncle Robert that helped me. He has helped me with so much"* (cries for some time).

Emotional tone of the interview

Lulu was tearful throughout the interview. Her distress was easily evoked and her traumatic memories very accessible. She was anxious and agitated at times during the interview. This seemed to be related to the powerful emotional impact of describing her experiences.

Internalised Secure base

Lulu appears to have had a poor early experience of a secure base. Later she has appeared to have internalised security from her relationship with Uncle Robert. It seems that her internalisation of her other attachment figures is characterised by a lack of warmth and security.

Coherence of narrative

Lulu communicated her narrative primarily from an affective perspective. Her memories of her childhood evoked extremely traumatic and painful emotions for her early in the interview process. This endured throughout the interview. There was consistency in the way that Lulu explained her childhood experiences. She provided contextual information that made it easier to follow her story. She also spontaneously provided details and physical descriptions of the places she had lived in. This enabled the listener to develop a textured understanding of her story. Lulu organised her narrative in a rather spontaneous way. The order of her narrative appeared to be guided by her emotional state.

Access to memories

Lulu described her early childhood in broad detail, with the traumatic memories being most prominent in her story. She described her first six or seven years as being "terrible". She did not appear to be employing effective defensive strategies in managing these memories.

Reflective function

Lulu did demonstrate some reflective function, possibly developed in her relationship with Uncle Robert and his family, also through her therapy process with a psychologist. She refers to being clearer about the causes of the difficulties she experiences and has reflected on how her need for love has resulted in her searching for it in her life, not always in relationships that can offer her stability.

Attachment

It is suggested that Lulu is insecurely attached, with a preoccupied attachment style. Under stress it is possible that she may manifest a disorganised attachment style.

Mediating factors evident –

Protective factors Lulu's life were her return from Estcourt, away from her mother's aunt, and back to her parents. The enduring relationship with Uncle Robert and his family has been a substantial protective factor.

The risk factors identified in Lulu's life are being sent away as an infant before her attachment to her mother would have become firmly established. Reports of neglect and abuse in her early childhood and a lack of a secure base appear to have had a lasting effect on Lulu. Moreover, Lulu's fathers disappearance at age 7 and the lack of trust in the relationship with her mother have undermined her felt security.

Tshepo

General history and impressions

Tshepo is a 30-year-old married man with one infant son. He is fairly recently married. Tshepo seemed to be pleased to be asked for the interview, but it was evident that he found the nature of the questions difficult to engage with. He seemed much more comfortable in providing factual information about his life and his childhood. Interestingly, at the end of the interview it seemed as though Tshepo may have reflected on the nature of his responses to my questions. He commented to me as we walked out of the interview room that he had gone into a lot of detail, and that perhaps he missed the point of the questions. It is possible that talking about his childhood had evoked deeper feelings for Tshepo, and that this led to his comment about having missed the point of my questions.

Tshepo came across as a good historian. He seems to have reflected on his life, and in particular the substantial change he has made from his more traditional 'kinship' extended family in childhood to his

professional adulthood and fatherhood in a Western and nuclear family. Tshepo presented as being very proud of his achievements and mentioned his successes a number of times during the interview.

"I feel proud, in fact, even in my life I think I chose the right path..."

"I was the first person, you know out of all the boys I grew up with I was the first to go to university and be a graduate..."

"I think I was among the brightest children at the school..."

"I mean I could have been becoming a genius or something...."

"I mean there wasn't anyone guiding me; somehow I think I was a miracle child"

Tshepo's mother was 16 when she had him and she went back to school after he had been born. He said that he has never known his father although he does know that his brother (who was born two years after him) had the same father as him, but he is not sure about the father of his youngest brother. Tshepo took his mother's surname and was raised by his maternal grandfather as his son. Tshepo acknowledged that this is unusual and said that his mother's younger sister also had two children as a very young woman. They were also raised by their maternal grandparents. Tshepo initially said that he did not remember his mother much in his very early childhood but later seemed to indicate that she was a significant attachment figure for him, particularly when she was at home. He portrayed his maternal grandfather as his most significant attachment figure, although it is not clear if this was a relationship that developed early in his infancy or a little later in his childhood.

The children in Tshepo's family were not permitted to play much from when they were able to work on the family land. He said that they were expected to collect water and take care of cattle. These tasks were prioritised over schooling. *"...although we never really played because my family did not allow us to play as children. They actually made us work"*. Tshepo did report that he was singled out in the family as being clever and was favoured by the adult men in his family.

All the men in the family, uncles and other adult men were all permitted to discipline the children. Tshepo described how the children were treated harshly and regularly beaten by the adult men in the family. *"Every night there would be a child crying in our family. And sometimes they were beating us for nothing"*. Tshepo's grandfather was his role model and he enjoyed a very close relationship with him. Sadly he died the day after Tshepo got his matric results; this was a very painful and deep loss for him.

Tshepo then joined his mother in Johannesburg one full year after completing matric. The experience of living with his mother was clearly remembered, *"I mean, the way it happened, to me it was like being her child again, because when I came up here to Joburg..."*.

Tshepo made six significant disclosures related to his emotional experience of childhood:

i. He experienced a lack of general sensitivity to his needs as a child, especially in relation to the harsh and punitive approach to discipline in his family.
ii. Tshepo remembers being frightened and distressed when he was 5 years old and had lost a piece of his thumb in an accident at home. He was dropped at the hospital and left there alone.
iii. His grandfather was a very important attachment figure in his life and this loss was very difficult for Tshepo, especially as he was leaving school.
iv. Despite this close bond with his mother and his grandfather, he does not remember really getting any substantial guidance in his life, from any adult. He feels that it is a miracle that he managed to do so well at school and get himself through university.
v. Tshepo was confused by not being able to talk about certain important aspects of his life with any adult. He said that he wished that he could have talked to his mother about his deeper experiences and asked her questions that he had about his father, among other things.
vi. Tshepo loved his mother deeply and did not really understand why she had left him as a child and gone to Johannesburg.

Emotional tone of the interview

Tshepo came across as defending against experiencing emotion. He was neutral, proud and cheerful. He was the only participant who seemed to lack an intuitive understanding of the meaning of attachment when the purpose of the research was explained. He asked a lot of questions from an intellectual perspective.

Internalised secure base

Tshepo stayed in one place throughout his childhood and seemed to have experienced a sense of community and belonging in his family. There is evidence of Tshepo having internalised an adequately secure base.

Coherence of narrative

Tshepo's narrative was noticeably tangential and circumstantial in the beginning of the interview, which was immediately after the purpose of the research project had been explained to him in some depth. It is

postulated that this could have evoked a defensive response which seemed to result in Tshepo wishing to talk about the history of his family and his career rather than his early relationships. However, Tshepo's narrative was fairly coherent after this. He did relate parts of his history out of sequence and moved forwards and backwards over his history, but the consistency and organisation of his narrative were intact. Tshepo did not demonstrate flexibility in his narrative regarding how others around him experienced things. However, reflection of this nature was not directly requested. Tshepo's narrative was somewhat incongruent in terms of his expressed affect and the nature of certain of his disclosures, especially those listed above.

Access to memories

Tshepo was able to provide a rich history of his life, in general and in specific ways. He was particularly vocal about the punitive discipline received by the children in his family, and the ways that children worked. He remembered feeling some envy towards other children in his village who were allowed to play.

Reflective function

Tshepo demonstrated considerable intellectual insight into his formative experiences, in the family and at school. However, Tshepo seems not to have reflected much on his personal and emotional experience of growing up, or if he has, it was not evident in the interview. Tshepo did not seem to feel comfortable to talk about his emotional experiences.

Attachment

When Tshepo began the interview he presented his grandfather as his primary attachment figure. He said that his grandfather, *"took* [the] *pure role of father*". He seemed to idealise his grandfather. It emerged later in the interview that Tshepo's mother was a significant attachment figure and that he remembers experiences of her being nurturing when he was a young child Later in the interview Tshepo described the following: *"I think I loved her the most. There has always been this special connection with her. I mean I do remember, even when she came home, when she was in Joburg, she would give us money when she leaves. Even when I was in the college in 1997, if she gave me a R20, I wouldn't spend it. It felt special to me that it was from her. I do remember that I used to hold on to things that were from her and not want to get rid of them".*

Attachment style

It is suggested that Tshepo is generally dismissive in his attachment style.

Mediating factors evident:

The protective factors evident in Tshepo's narrative are as follows:
His close relationship with his grandfather and his mother were stressed by Tshepo. Tshepo was very proud of his academic success and the special status that this afforded him in his family. While he did not report his relationship with his grandmother to be significantly close, her presence was stable and she was protective as far as she could be in terms of punishments from uncles. Tshepo's close knit village community and his family identity were important to him and a likely protective factor.

Risk factors identified in Tshepo's narrative are:
Tshepo stressed very punitive discipline in the family from a range of male adult relatives towards the children. He also reported the traumatic loss of the top of his thumb at age 5, after which he was hospitalised without any close adult support. Tshepo reported feeling confusion about where his mother was when she left to look for work, and also that he could not ask her about his biological father.

Tshepo was born to a teenage mother who returned to school and was therefore unable to take care of him. She left to work in Johannesburg when he was a child, but he does not remember what age he was. His other attachment figure (grandfather) was a migrant worker and away from home for most of each year.

4. 3 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides both deductive and inductive analysis of the participants' childhood experiences. They are understood in the apartheid South Africa context. The analysis broadly suggests that attachment security and stability in early caretaking relationships are important and are associated with secure and autonomous 'state of mind' in adulthood.

Chapter five provides a range of conclusions drawn from the interview narratives. These conclusions provide added insight into the context, experiences and perspectives of participants as well as valuable ideas requiring further research.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Broadly, this research suggests that quality, stability and continuity in early caretaking relationships are related to more secure and autonomous adult states of mind. The circumstances for Black South African families during the late 1970s and 1980s profoundly impacted on the capacity of parents and extended families to provide stability and continuity in caregiving for children. Moreover, it is suggested that over several decades the impact of colonialisation, urbanisation and migrancy have contributed to the disruption in caregiving arrangements for young children to become 'normalised' and sometimes even overlooked.

It is also likely that the intergenerational transmission of attachment security remains a feature in the socio-political milieu in South Africa, and that disruption in early caregiving endures in many families following the formal dissolution of apartheid.

The conceptualisation of the approach to methodology for this study developed over the course of the year. The level of engagement of the participants in interviews, the wide scope of participants' circumstances and the author's enthusiasm led to a dilemma; how to maximise the potential of analysis and produce a research report of limited scope. It was with these factors in mind that two levels of analysis were conducted, one to provide a themed analysis of circumstances, perspective and experiences, another to comment more specifically on adult attachment style or 'state of mind'.

5.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are provided in two sections, in line with the analysis. Firstly, conclusions that were drawn from the thematic content analysis, secondly those emerging from the analysis of adult attachment styles, based on narrative coherence.

5.2.1 Thematic Content Analysis - Conclusions

The thematic content analysis provides findings that are used to answer to the first two research questions. These address the experiences and perceptions of participants' on their separations from their parents or caregiver, and secondly, the identified risk and protective factors. The themes identified provide rich and diverse answers, particularly to question one.

Some participants described experiencing confusion in their early childhoods regarding sudden or unexpected changes in caregiver, their environment or circumstances. In most cases participants described feeling confused but there not being a supportive caregiver available to provide age appropriate support and guidance. Participants also described experiencing confusion about who their biological parents were. Both forms of confusion seemed to be limited to children under the age of eight.

Participants' perspectives on their mothers were mixed; both positive and negative opinions were expressed. Positive perspectives were largely associated with experiences of special and individual love, care and attention, clothes, food, toys and money. Some participants were aware of their mother's suffering, either as a result of her own lack of support and care as a child, or because she was perceived to have had no choice but to leave them to go and work, or return to school.

In this study, out of four participants whose mothers were adolescents when they were born, two had close relationships with their mothers as young children (Tshepo and Mpho) and the other two (Sibongile and Lebo) reported some emotional distance from their mothers, preferring the stability of their relationships with their primary caregivers.

Negative perspectives about mothers were expressed in the context of marked neglect, abandonment and abuse.

Experiences of separation were largely referred to as being very traumatic by participants, especially those separations that took place in early childhood, were unexpected and/or were associated by trauma. It was also noted that two participants mentioned being very emotionally distressed at the end of each of their mothers' visits (or grandfather), did not experience individualised or sensitive and responsive care from their permanent alternative caregiver (Mpho and Tshepo). It is assumed that the lack of individualised and sensitive care made each separation more difficult.

The experience of being 'different' or unwanted was stressed by some participants. Being set apart in a group of children through not having their own mother present was one of the scenarios presented (Lulu, Mpho and Vusi). In addition, having the feeling that they were not wanted or not important to their caregivers was also presented (Vusi, Mpho, Thenjiwe, Lerato, Pumi and Lulu). The implication of this experience for a child in terms of emotional security, self esteem and optimal development is significant.

For a number of participants, complex relationships with their fathers and grandfathers were reported. These relationship dynamics included: never knowing their fathers and feeling unwanted or confused and distressed about this (Tshepo, Sibongile, and Vusi), being abused by and/or frightened of their father, grandfather or male relatives (Lerato, Palesa, Vusi, Tshepo and Mpho) and abandoned by their father (Lulu and Vusi). Absent fathers was also reported, largely because of migrancy. A lack of guidance and support from father figures is widely reported in South Africa, during apartheid and since (Morrell, 2006). Participants' reports are emblematic of a large proportion of the social discourse about fathers in South African society.

In reflecting on their childhood experiences participants varied in their portrayals. Those four participants who are tentatively assessed to have an autonomous adult 'state of mind' were relatively balanced in their appraisals; there were positive and negative aspects of their experiences to report (cf. De Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van Ijzendoorn, 2001). Those who were deemed to be dismissing tended to make their experiences seem to have minimal impact on them (cf. Hesse, 1996), and those who were deemed to be preoccupied presented a largely negative appraisal of their experiences (cf. Hesse, 1996).

Of great relevance to this study is the view about whether participants thought that children should be raised by their parents or their grandparents. The overwhelming opinion was that children should be raised by their parents. This shared opinion provides meaningful weight and is promoted as a conclusion in this study.

Mediating factors appeared to be relevant and significant to nine participant's adjustment during childhood. Protective factors that are stand out across participants are:

i. Sustained relationships with siblings or cousins.
ii. At least one close and supportive relationship with an adult during early childhood.
iii. Stability and continuity in early caregiving relationships.
iv. Academic achievement.

Risk factors that stand out:

i. Abuse, neglect and abandonment.
ii. Lack of stability in early childhood caregiving relationships.
iii. Separation from a primary caregiver at a sensitive time in development and insensitive alternative caregivers (as in the cases of Thenjiwe, Lerato, Palesa, Tshepo, Lulu and Pumi).

5.2.2 Narrative coherence and adult 'state of mind': broad conclusions

Research question three is a theoretical question relating to the findings of the inductive analysis of adult attachment or 'state of mind'. The conclusions below are provided as a means to answer this research question.

Participants were noted to employ defensive strategies in relation to memories of abandonment and unmet childhood needs. These defensive strategies were noted to be laughter when relating painful memories, minimising comments about the impact of these experiences and avoidance of emotional content. These strategies could be understood to be adaptive in terms of general adult functioning, but maladaptive if they are habitually utilised in close relationships.

The degree of narrative coherence across participants did seem to be broadly related to evidence of stability of attachment relationships in early childhood.

Severe neglect, abuse and early childhood difficulties seem related to a predominantly preoccupied attachment presentation in this group of participants. There was evidence of participants becoming noticeably less coherent in their narrative when speaking about distressing childhood memories, experiences and separations. These changes in coherence are seen to be the result of complex neurobiological maturational processes in the case of children, particularly preschool children (Pynoos, Steinberg & Piacentini, 1999). Pynoos et al. (1999) refer to the particular vulnerability of young children to traumatic experiences, the neurobiological (and cognitive) outcomes being understood to decrease with age.

A number of participants mentioned that intimate conversations between adults and children were not customary in their childhood cultural setting. Dawes (1994) suggests that children being able to speak openly about their experiences with a close and supportive adult are of great importance and value. Having or not having access to this support is either a protective or risk factor in development and adjustment (Dawes, 1994).

Intergenerational transmission of attachment style is evident in this participant group. Three of the participants who experienced distress about separation from their parents have repeated the same process with their own children.

Participants did describe the qualitative aspects of their relationships with parents or caregivers in early childhood (0 to 5 years). Periods where individualised care was not available to participants seems to be associated with periods of distress and unresolved emotions.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the absence of other similar research in South Africa this study is by nature exploratory. The qualitative methodology enables in-depth and personal perspectives to be sought and reported on but does not provide verifiable truth about apartheid childhood for Black South African children.

In order to generate conclusions about adult attachment security of apartheid era children it would be necessary to utilise an instrument such as the AAI and score the narratives using a trained and registered clinician. This was not done in this study due to time, resource and financial constraints.

The tentative conclusions about adult attachment security provided in this report can be utilised to initiate discussion among interested South African scholars. Further research would be required to test the applicability of this kind of study and appropriate methodologies.

This study was limited by time and scope due to the course requirements of the Masters in Clinical Psychology.

5.4 REFLEXIVITY

This research has significantly extended the scope and depth of my insight and understanding into attachment concepts and processes. While I consider this progress proudly, I am simultaneously aware that I am just beginning.

The potential scope of the analysis has been the most revelatory learning process. In retrospect I can measure my progress by the sheer length of time it took for the various aspects of and meanings in the data to emerge. No doubt there is potential for several other analyses, awaiting time and focused energy.

I have observed the tenacity and resilience of participants in their narratives. I have also observed considerable pain and anguish. Both the efficacy and the failure of psychological defence mechanisms are plain to see in some of the narratives.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study is both meaningful and relevant in South Africa as children continue to be separated from their primary caregivers due to migrancy and socio economic imperatives. Also, divisions between rural and urban lives remain pertinent for many Black South Africans and many families remain separated in similar ways as during the apartheid era.

Awareness of the impact of early childhood separations for young children, particularly abrupt separations in the absence of suitable alternative caregiving arrangements needs to be disseminated in South African society. Further research into the psychological implications of separations is required in order to establish deeper understanding and knowledge.

This study represents part of a research interest and trajectory for the author. Collaboration with interested colleagues in order to pursue further research will be sought.

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Appendix A

Introduction to interview.

Thank you for your time, and as you know, my name is Francesca. I am completing a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology in 2010. This includes me doing a research project in an area of particular interest.

I am very interested in the experiences of Black South African people separated from their parents or primary caregivers during childhood, in the apartheid period. This fits into the framework of very interesting theory and research on a topic called Attachment. Attachment refers to the special relationship that exists between parents or caregivers and their children. In Psychology we have a lot to learn about this area, and in South Africa many researchers have highlighted the need to understand how these relationships are experienced and expressed culturally. Also, people who grew up during the racist apartheid era had different sorts of challenges as children, like parents being migrant workers and living with grandparents or relatives. We are interested in understanding these issues from people who experienced them, which is why I asked if I could interview you.

Interview schedule

1. Could you tell me what you know about your first 2 years?
2. Tell me about the people who were very important in your life when you were very young, under 5 years?
3. Tell me about the people who were very important in your life later, between 5 and 10?
4. I'm interested to know about the circumstances of when you left _____and went to _____?
5. What do you know about how you managed this change in your life?
6. What made your separation bearable, or worse?
7. Could you tell me about your relationship with _____ (first primary caregiver or parent) now? (i.e. do you think that your relationship with _____ would be better or worse if you hadn't been separated?).
8. Tell me about your brothers and sisters and whether they were with you through childhood?
9. How did the presence or loss of your brothers and sisters impact on you during the separation from your _____ (first primary caregiver)?
10. How do you feel about the care of your own children if you have any? If you don't have children yet, how would you approach caregiving?
11. What changes would you make in the care of you own children from your own experiences?

Appendix B

Participant Information sheet

Good day, my name is Francesca Chetwin. I am completing a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology in 2010. This includes me doing a research project in an area of particular interest. I am very interested in the experiences of Black South African people separated from their parents or primary caregivers during an apartheid-era childhood. This fits into the framework of very interesting theory and research on a topic called Attachment. Attachment refers to the special relationships that exist between parents or caregivers and their children. In Psychology we have a lot to learn about this area, and in South Africa many researchers have highlighted the need to understand how these relationships are expressed culturally. Also, people who grew up during the racist apartheid era had different sorts of challenges as children, like parents being migrant workers and living with grandparents or relatives. We are interested in understanding these issues from people who experienced them.

I am inviting you to be interviewed about your early childhood caregiver experiences, particularly up to the age of 14. The interview will be taped and then transcribed, and the transcriptions analysed so that I can understand in more depth the experiences of the group of people that are going to be in my study. I need to interview ten people. The results of this research will be reported in the form of a research report to Wits University School of Human and Community Development and may also be submitted for publication. A copy of the research report will be available in the University of the Witwatersrand Test Library after examination and will therefore be accessible to students and academics at the university.

Kindly note that the information you provide in the interviews will be anonymised. In other words, your interview transcripts will be marked with a pseudonym (a false name), which will make it impossible for you to be identified. All information about you will be kept in a password protected electronic file and/or a locked cupboard for six years, which means that your *confidentiality will be guaranteed*.

Your name and details will never be associated with the interview transcripts, only the pseudonym. Your interview transcript will be submitted as part of examination to the internal examiner only (my supervisor), and will not be available in the Test Library.

It is also very important that you know that you can withdraw at any time before or during or after our interview.

I am willing to make my research report available to you should you wish to see it.

While there are no direct benefits to taking part in this study, lots of people describe finding it meaningful to talk about their experiences to someone who is very interested. It is important to note that talking about things from when you were very young may make you feel uncomfortable or upset, and this may or may not surprise you. If you do feel upset I will be able to talk to you in the interview situation until you feel better, and will then refer you to someone should you need further assistance.

Please feel free to contact me if you think of something that you would like to ask me.

Researcher: Francesca Chetwin. Tel: 083 453 4575.

Research Supervisor: Professor Norman Duncan. Tel: 011 717 4524

Appendix C

Consent for interview to be recorded and transcribed.

I, _____, having read the participant information sheet, consent for my interview to be recorded and transcribed. I understand that:

1. **Access to the recording and transcription of my interview will be restricted to Francesca Chetwin, one research assistant (who will sign a confidentiality oath), and her research supervisor, Professor Norman Duncan.**
2. **The recording and transcription of my interview will be marked with a pseudonym (false name) to protect my identity.**

Signed: _____

Date:_____





Appendix D

Consent to Participate

I, _____, having read both the participant information sheet and the consent form for the interview to be recorded and transcribed, consent to participate in this research. In doing so, I understand that:

1. My participation in the study is voluntary.
2. Information about me will be kept confidential.
3. I do not have to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.
4. I may withdraw from the study at any time by instructing Francesca Chetwin that I would like my interview recording deleted and for my information to be deleted from the research study.
5. My interview information will be anonymised.
6. My anonymised information will be included in the research report written by Francesca Chetwin and may be submitted for publication following examination.
7. Direct quotations from the interview with me may be included in the research report.
8. Francesca Chetwin will provide me with a copy of the research report should I wish to see it.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E. 1

Palesa

General history and impressions

Palesa is a 27-year-old single mother of two sons aged 7 and 4 years. She is separated from the father of her children. Palesa reported that the relationship lasted for approximately 8 years and was not abusive. However, she expresses concern about forming another relationship, she describes men as *"being nice and then at the same time they can be horrible"*.

Palesa cares for her children herself and stresses that she is very protective of them. She relates this protective stance to her experiences as a young child, when her father was severely abusive towards her mother. Following a very traumatic beating, her mother returned to the Eastern Cape to recover, leaving Palesa (aged 6) and her 5-year-old brother in the care of their father. Due to his girlfriend not wanting to care for them, Palesa and her brother were left in the care of unfamiliar adults (her father's brother and his wife) for a year; Palesa was made to do housework during this time and care for younger children. Her brother became ill after some weeks and was taken away by their father. He was later reported to have died but during that year Palesa did not know what had happened to him. She was fetched by her mother at the end of that year and they returned to the Eastern Cape where she was cared for by her maternal grandmother. Her mother left her shortly after their return to the Eastern Cape to work. Palesa started Grade 1 at that same time. This was apparently a defining and extremely traumatic period of Palesa's life. Palesa kept contact with her mother over the rest of her childhood by letter and saw her once or twice a year. She describes always having felt her mother's love as unequivocal.

Emotional tone of the interview

Palesa was not tearful at any time during the interview. She immediately volunteered her memories of the difficulties she experienced in her childhood and stressed the emotional pain she experienced at that time. She was sincere and the emotional tone of the interview was serious and sober, although she did laugh at least three times when relating painful experiences. Palesa was also noticeably guarded about her 8-year relationship with the father of her children. This was at the end of the 54 minute interview.

Internalised secure base

It seems that Palesa did experience an adequate experience of secure base until age six. This appears to have been substantially undermined by her memories of her abusive father, the loss of her brother, the lengthy traumatic separation experience and regular moves in her childhood before age 7.

Coherence of narrative

Palesa's narrative was relatively consistent throughout. It was noted that her organisation of the chronology of events that took place during her separation from her mother were not easy to follow. This may reflect the presence of defensive psychological mechanisms in protection of her attachment system (Fraley, Davis & Shaver, 1998). Palesa appears to have linked her protective stance towards her own young children to her experience of abandonment as a young child, which demonstrates consistency in her narrative.

Access to memories

Palesa was able to easily recall and coherently express her experiences in response to questions.

Reflective function

Palesa demonstrated insight and awareness in relation to how she interpreted her experiences, making inferences about her parents' and her father's girlfriend's perspectives as well. This demonstrates that Palesa is likely to have developed reflective function during her early childhood and was able to use it to make sense of her environment in a period of great stress.

Attachment

Palesa reports that she was not separated from her mother before the traumatic separation at the age of 6. She had also witnessed her mother being beaten by her father, which she describes from the age of 4, although she is likely not to remember accurately before that. She appears to have established and maintained a secure attachment to her mother before and after their separation and continued to see her mother as a reliable caregiver. Palesa's coherent responses to interview questions are suggestive of a relatively autonomous 'state of mind'. Palesa laughed while speaking of distressing material which does

indicate a lack of congruence between affect and content. This may be indicative of a defensive strategy (Fraley, Davis & Shaver, 1998). It is possible that under stress a dismissive attachment style may emerge.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors evident in Palesa's reported experience are:

i. Her seemingly stable and secure attachment to her mother in her early childhood. She reports first having been separated from her mother at age 6.
ii. Palesa's mother's return and the subsequent years spent with her maternal grandmother, who she reported being close to.
iii. Palesa's enduring relationship with her mother which she experienced positively.

Risk factors

i. The events that took place at that time and over the following year were undoubtedly very traumatic.
ii. Palesa referred to how she was not assisted by her mother or grandmother to psychologically process her emotions about the traumatic period of 6 to 7 years. She described having needed to tell her mother and grandmother about her experiences but there never seemed to be an opportunity.

Appendix E. 2

Lerato

General history and impressions

Lerato is a 28-year-old mother of one daughter. She is unmarried, but is in a relationship. Her daughter lives with paternal relatives in KwaZulu Natal. Lerato presented for her interview in tears. She had come straight from an individual therapy session at Lefika La Phodisa (Art Therapy Centre). Due to her intense emotional distress the researcher offered her an opportunity to reschedule the appointment. She consistently declined this offer, and cried most of the way through the one hour long interview. Her therapy session had evoked intense emotions associated to her attachment system, hence the powerful descriptions of Lerato's early experiences in her family. Lerato immediately disclosed sexual abuse from an older woman entrusted with her care in Polokwane. She described this woman to be a "nanny granny". She said that this meant that she was not a blood relative of the family. Lerato reported that the nanny granny would drink traditional alcohol, sleep with her boyfriend and then come and sleep with her. She described not understanding what was going on at the time. She does not know how old she was then or for how long the abuse continued.

Lerato reported feeling unwanted and rejected by her mother, father and siblings. She joined her parents in Alexandra and the family then moved to Orange Farm. She reports receiving regular insults ('you are a retarded someone, your matric is the same as Sub A') and severe beatings at home. She perceived herself to be the only child in her family to be treated harshly. She reports that her mother endorsed her husband beating Lerato as a means to deal with his stress. A high school biology teacher who observed Lerato's back after a particularly severe beating with an iron rod encouraged Lerato to report the abuse but she felt too vulnerable to do so. She felt that she would not be able to face her father in court and at home as well.

Emotional tone of the interview

Lerato was distressed throughout the interview. She cried while talking, constantly dabbing her eyes with tissues. She appeared to be anxious throughout the interview, her hands moving constantly and her respiration was fast and shallow. Lerato presented as being intensely emotionally aroused and seemed to find it difficult to receive or process the empathic responses or comments made by the interviewer.

Internalised secure base

There was marked evidence of a lack of a secure base in Lerato's childhood.

Coherence of narrative

The coherence of Lerato's narrative in terms of affective congruence is noted. She related very painful memories and cried throughout the interview. Her affective state appeared to be dominant throughout the interview. This may have led to her cognitive abilities being overwhelmed at the time. The consistency of Lerato's narrative was notably lacking. She was not aware of many details of her history. She appeared to remember the traumatic events in particular and could not give a clear chronological account of them. She appeared to be rather inflexible in her perspectives about her life experiences. She found it difficult to account for any perspective but her own.

The organisational flow of Lerato's narrative was broadly inconsistent. Her narrative seemed to be affectively motivated. She was not able to provide any descriptive information about her early childhood with the exception of traumatic experiences. She spoke about her parents and relatives in a manner that was universally negative.

Access to memories

Lerato's memories appeared to be easily accessible during the interview. This is likely to be related to emotional arousal from her psychotherapy session before the interview. Also, because Lerato's early relationships with caregivers appear to have been characterised by abusive, neglectful and traumatic experiences, memories may have emerged in her mind that disrupted the continuity of her thought processes (see Liotti, 2004).

Reflective function

Lerato appeared to have limited reflective function. Based on her reported experiences and the quality of her narrative, it is suggested that Lerato was frightened by her caregivers and learned to anticipate rejecting behaviours. Instead of developing the capacity to understand and anticipate the thoughts and related behaviours of others (reflective function), Lerato may have developed a more defensive strategy to protect herself, such as dissociation (see Liotti, 2004).

Attachment

Lerato's narrative and the quality of the communication in the interview are suggestive of preoccupied and unresolved forms of attachment. Under stress Lerato becomes confused and her narrative becomes incoherent. It was also noted that she was circumstantial and tangential.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors in Lerato's description of her experiences were not evident. However, the risk factors are multiple. Her abandonment with the 'Nanny Granny' appears to be very traumatic for her. In addition, the sexual abuse that she reports during that period is particularly confusing and distressing for her. Lerato reports ongoing emotional and physical abuse in her family, throughout her formative years. Lerato did not report other relationships in her life that have been meaningful to her, apart from her current partner.

Appendix E.3

Sibongile

General history and impressions

Sibongile is a 26-year-old fourth year art student at a local university. She is single and has no children, but she is in a 5-year long serious relationship.

Sibongile reported that her mother was still at school when she was born. She said that her mother returned to school and she was "*my grandmother's daughter*". Sibongile reports that her grandmother and her aunt took care of her together. She reported that they would alternate looking after her. Each day they would swop. Interestingly, Sibongile described her aunt as her primary attachment figure throughout the interview stating that she is like her aunt's first-born hild. Their relationship remains strong currently, and her cousin (5 years younger) is like her sister. When asked what she knows about herself as a baby, Sibongile said, "*Ja (laughs), they used to tell me that I used a cry a lot, a lot, I used to cry a lot. I used to, um, sick for love. I used to cry for my Granny, especially for both of them".*

Sibongile was not sure when she found out that her aunt is not her mother. She thinks that she was told around the time that she turned 6 or 7. She described herself as becoming responsible very early because she was not with her own mother, but with her cousins and aunt. She reported having liked that.

Sibongile spoke about her father early in the 50 minute interview. She said she had not known him at all and quickly became very distressed. She reported that her mother had written to tell her father that she was pregnant but she did not hear back from him. She was never sure if he had received her letter. Later, when Sibongile was 21, her mother traced her father. They were due to meet but he died the night before the scheduled meeting. She only saw him in his coffin. She cried about this in the interview and said that it always touches her. She reported with some irony that she had been born from a relationship that was not serious, later adding that it was serious because she was the product of this union. She then said, "*I'm not saying I'm a mistake, okay, I am a mistake, but here I am now,"* seemingly in an effort to make some sense of her existence.

Emotional tone of the interview

Sibongile was emotional during the interview, especially about her father not having looked for her and taking an interest in her life. She reported sadness and anger about this. She appeared to be dismissing of her attachments to her biological mother and her grandmother at times during the interview, but clearly remains attached to her aunt. She describes herself as being somewhat dismissive of her attachment to her long term boyfriend. Sibongile was engaged and engaging in the interview and she was quickly distressed and tearful.

Internalised secure base

Sibongile appears to have had an adequately internalised secure base.

Coherence of narrative

Sibongile's narrative was reasonably coherent throughout the interview with a few notable inconsistencies. When she was describing the way that her grandmother and aunt described her in early infancy (as a baby who cried a lot) she was dismissive of possible causes for this. In addition, she referred to herself as her grandmother's daughter but yet expressed a clear preference for her aunt. She may have experienced confusion and disruption in developing her primary attachment by the reported daily changes in caregiver between her grandmother and her aunt.

Access to memories

Sibongile appeared able to recollect her experiences reasonably easily, and while she was distressed by some of her memories she was able to articulate her experiences.

Reflective function

Sibongile did not reference the experiences and perspectives of others in her narrative, but she was somewhat reflective about her own experiences and her tendency to expect to be abandoned by men.

Attachment

Sibongile's description of herself being dismissive of her needs in relation to her current long-term boyfriend is suggestive of a dismissive style of attachment.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors evident in Sibongile's childhood are:

i. an ongoing relationship with her grandmother and aunt that appears to have been stable
ii. a home life that Sibongile described as loving and supportive in general
iii. a very close 'sibling' relationship with her cousin

Risk factors evident:

i. possible disruption in the development of a stable primary attachment from daily alternating caregivers
ii. Possible 'insensitive' caregiving in relation to Sibongile being a baby that cried a great deal. She may have needed adjustments and greater sensitivity in her care.
iii. Finding out that her aunt was not her mother when she was 6 or 7 years old may have distressed Sibongile. In the interview she referred to not caring about that, but it is possible that she could have felt distressed and confused by this information at the time.
iv. Sibongile's sensitivity about her father's absence and lack of interest in her life.
v. Sibongile's mother was a teenager when she was born and returned to school after her birth.

Appendix E.4

Pumi

General history and impressions

Pumi is a 29-year-old single woman living with her parents in Johannesburg. She did not mention being in a relationship. Pumi was quite guarded in the interview and was quickly responsive to the questions posed. She appeared to be more comfortable to remain focused on more factual aspects of her childhood and seemed to avoid speaking about her emotional experiences. She was on her lunch break at work which may have contributed to this. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

Pumi was born in Bophuthatswana before her parents married, the first born child. She lived with her mother and her maternal grandparents up until the age of 2-3 years. Later her mother went to work in Johannesburg and Pumi remained with her maternal grandparents for some time. Pumi said that her brother was born around the time that she was 3 and that they had moved to Johannesburg at some point before she turned 6. She and her brother went to live in Venda with paternal grandmother when she was 6 years old, for traditional reasons, that when her parents married it was required that the children live with her father's family. Pumi did not know her paternal grandmother well and her mother did stay there for a period of time (unknown to her) but left before she started Grade 1. She had to learn a new language and adjust to life there.

Pumi said that she was frightened of her paternal grandmother and that she used to drink alcohol. She reported that many of the local children were also frightened of her and that children would behave themselves around her. She reported that when she started Grade 1 her aunt took her to school. Pumi described adjusting to life with her paternal grandparents to have been challenging for her. She had been living in a more wealthy community with her maternal grandparents; life in rural Venda was different. The family were poorer than her maternal grandparents and there were fewer resources. She implied that it was a rather insensitive environment, "*only if you could be fed and have a place to sleep, they did not see all the other things around it, the little things, as long as you fed and you have a place to crash, that's all that counted"*. Pumi did not develop a close relationship with her paternal grandmother and she perceived that her parents would not have anticipated the move to be difficult for her. Pumi said, "*I don't think that they did understand because I did not understand myself. They might have affected me but I wouldn't have known what was affecting me at school, why am I failing, why am I like this. I am sure that they couldn't have picked that up."* She reports having been *"slow"* and *"shy"* in her early years at

school. She stayed in Venda until the end of Grade 8, which was at the end of 1994. At that time her parents were allowed to buy a house in Johannesburg and Pumi and her two siblings moved to live with her parents.

Emotional tone of the interview

Pumi was quite matter of fact in the interview and spoke quickly. It is possible that being at work and having the interview during her 30 minute lunch hour prevented her from engaging more emotionally. However, she was forthcoming about her life experiences.

Internalised secure base

It is likely that Pumi had an adequate early secure base but after age 3 this appears to have been compromised.

Coherence of narrative

Pumi's narrative was fairly vague and the details of her childhood experiences were referred to in general terms. She appeared to avoid the deeper emotional aspects of her experience and spoke about emotive content in an unemotional manner. This was possibly an unconscious defensive strategy developed in middle childhood in response to her rather abrupt separation from her familiar caregivers. Pumi did not refer to her or her parents' reflections about their individual or family experiences. In fact, she seemed to be of the view that her parents and her grandparents were oblivious to her experiences as a child. The consistency of Pumi's narrative suggests that she may have experienced her childhood as being confusing. She appeared to find it difficult to describe her experiences in any order or context. This may be as a result of her having adopted defensive coping strategies.

Access to memories

It was evident that Pumi was not sure of the details of her early childhood and there is some evidence that she may avoid emotional memories.

Reflective function

Pumi seemed to lack reflective function to some degree. This may be because she was constrained by the interview context (place and time limit) and did not demonstrate her reflective processes. She did however appear to avoid reflection about the impact of her deeper experiences and the separation from her parents in her middle childhood.

Attachment

It is possible that Pumi falls into the dismissing attachment category. Alternatively, it is also possible that she was securely attached and her experiences in middle childhood evoked defences in protection of her attachment system. It is difficult to say more than that as she was guarded in disclosing information about her current relationships or details about her ongoing relationship with her parents.

Mediating factors evident

The following protective factors are identified:

i. Pumi lived with her mother during her infancy and early childhood until she was approximately 2 years. This may have facilitated the development of a secure attachment for her during this early period.
ii. Pumi living with her maternal grandmother until she was around 6 years was a likely protective factor as she was a constant presence in Pumi's life.
iii. Pumi has experienced ongoing relationships with both her parents who remain together in a seemingly stable family. She and her siblings visited their parents every school holiday.
iv. Pumi's siblings being with her at her paternal grandparents may have assisted in maintaining some measure of stability in her middle childhood years.

Risk factors identified are:

i. The disruption of Pumi's mother leaving her at the age of 2 – 3 may have been experienced by her as abandonment and could have resulted in her adopting defensive strategies in self protection, or experiencing extended loss, grief and despair.
ii. Pumi being taken to the relatively unknown environment at her paternal grandparents when she was 6 years is remembered by her as having been challenging, although she did express this ambiguously.

iii. Pumi was required to learn a new language in order to communicate and start formal schooling almost simultaneously. These are likely to have been stressful experiences, especially as she did not appear to have a caregiver who provided emotional support to her during that period. She expressed some surprise when asked if any of her caregivers may have been aware of her difficulties at the time.

Appendix E.5

Lebo

General history and impressions

Lebo is a 29-year-old social worker. He is single and lives in Johannesburg with his half-brother. Lebo reported that his mother was still in high school when he was born and as a result he grew up with his maternal grandparents. He was raised by them as if he was their last-born child. Lebo said that his mother and father did not have a serious relationship and it did not endure.

Lebo described his maternal grandmother to be his primary attachment figure. He said he enjoyed his mother's visits home, especially because of the toys and things that she brought for him, but his grandmother was his main attachment figure. He reports being very attached to his day mother and her family, as he spent a lot of time there. Both his grandparents worked during the day when he was a young child.

Lebo lived with his grandmother until she died when he was 18 years old. His grandfather died when he was about 5 years old.

Emotional tone of the interview

Lebo did not become emotional during the 47-minute interview. He was forthcoming and articulate but did appear to struggle in the beginning of the interview in remembering his early experiences. Lebo was relatively defended in the interview and did not become overtly emotionally distressed, although he did describe feeling deep distress after his grandmother passed away.

Internalised secure base

There is evidence of an internalised secure base for Lebo, particularly with his grandmother and his day mother.

Coherence of narrative

Lebo was easy to follow. His narrative was relatively organised and consistent although he avoided emotional content. Interestingly, Lebo did not seem to have flexibility in the way that he related to his mother's experience. He seems to feel ambivalently towards her and did contradict himself with regards to his feelings about her, a slight decrease in coherence was noted in his narrative when he was talking about his mother.

Access to memories

His access to memories appeared to be relatively good, Lebo remembered a traumatic experience from his early childhood fairly clearly, this was about when his aunt collapsed and died at home while he was with her. Lebo also remembered his feelings at the times when his mother would visit as he was growing up, and the conflictual feelings he experienced at the time.

Reflective function

Lebo's reflective function seemed somewhat limited by defences. He clearly idealised his grandmother. He does seem to attempt to understand mother but this is clearly challenging for him.

Attachment

There is evidence of secure attachment for Lebo, to his grandmother. However, as stated above there was some evidence of defences and idealisation in Lebo's narrative. Lebo did not seem able to reflect about his grandmother in a nuanced way.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors evident in Lebo's narrative

i. Close and consistent attachment bond maintained with his grandmother.
ii. Long-term and stable relationship with a day mother.
iii. Lebo communicated experiencing a sense of community in his childhood. He appreciated this.
iv. Lebo's strong faith and relationships within the church community are and have been important to him.

Risk factors evident:

i. Lebo's mother was a teenager when he was born. His relationship with her was severed fairly early. He reports having been made ill by her breast milk.

ii. Lebo reports experiencing ambivalence in his relationship with his mother as he grew up. It is postulated that he found his relationship with her confusing as it was outside of a context of a continuous relationship.

iii. Lebo witnessing the traumatic death of his aunt as a young child would be likely to have been frightening and confusing to him.

Appendix E.6

Vusi

General history and impressions

Vusi is a 29-year-old single man who works in a training department of a large corporation. He was interviewed twice due to electronic failure of the recording device in the first interview. The two interviews took place 4 days apart and were both 1 hour in duration.

Vusi has a traumatic history. "*...when I grew up I think at about the age of um, 8,9, 10,11, 12, I realized that I was somehow different. All the other kids had a mother figure that, that they had someone they could refer to as mother. For me, I had my grandmother, who I called Mum, and my father also did not really play an active role in my upbringing. I only knew about him when…, just before he passed on, just before I was 14. So as I was growing up, and I got to a later stage, I started asking questions. Cos I could see that, you know, normal families have a father figure and a mother figure, and all the families have more or less the same structure. And I needed to understand why, and* (coughs) *everybody tip toed around the subject because they thought I was too young. And eventually my grandmother told to me that I, you know, should really get to a stage when I stop asking that questions. Because she was irresponsible, she gave me up as a baby when I was eight days old, and that was it.*

Vusi said that he had been told formally and informally by cousins, that some time after his mother abandoned him at his paternal grandmother; his father [who was apparently living with his mother] had wrapped him in plastic bags and taken him to a large water pipe nearby. He put him into the water pipe but Vusi's cousin; an 8-year-old girl, had watched her uncle do this and followed him. When Vusi's father had disappeared she quickly took Vusi out of the water pipe and took him back home to his grandmother. While Vusi told this story he did cough regularly and demonstrated some distress non-verbally. His movements were quite sudden and jerky and he seemed slightly agitated.

Vusi described his childhood to be unsettled and that he had moved around a lot. He lived with his aunt and her husband for some time which he remembered positively. He reported that that was the closest he came to having a normal family and that he used to lie to people that his aunt and her husband were his parents. Vusi said that ultimately he was sent back to his grandmother because his aunt's husband did not

want to care for him anymore, but he was told that he must go and look after his grandmother who was getting old.

Vusi made contact with his mother during his early twenties on the encouragement of his partner, after they saw a film featuring a mother and son reunion. Ultimately she couldn't give him the answers that he wanted but she did encourage him to speak to her sister who has become a stable and supportive aunt to him in his adulthood. Vusi describes the current relationship with his mother as being somewhat unstable but does intend to maintain the relationship with her despite this.

Vusi described experiencing a lot of distress in his childhood and his early adulthood in trying to emotionally process and make sense of his experiences. When asked about how he remembers feeling as a child he said*"...I felt a bit angry, I felt a bit frustrated, and I just remember feeling very resentful towards, towards her, and just wondering, you know, what kind of a mother would leave a child at such a tender age. You know eight days is just too… too young. And you know then, to make matters worse, when I heard that my father was actually trying to actually kill me in a way, by dumping me in some dump, it actually made matters even worse. I said okay fine, I do understand when mother is actually doing this, she was probably going through stuff, but what my father was trying to do did make matters worse. So even though I was part of the family, I was surrounded by cousins and nephews and nieces, part of me always felt like the unwanted child, you know. And I tried to, you know when you look at yourself in the mirror, and you don't really really love yourself, and you have got that hatred for yourself, you are asking yourself, what is it, you know, how, could you be so bad that both your parents did not want you?"*

At the end of the second interview with Vusi I asked him how he feels about having been told about the details of his early life. He poignantly said, "*You know what, I'm actually, I'm very pleased I know. Because in the past I was thinking that, you know, what you don't know wont hurt you, but in this instance* ***it actually proved to be what I know,*** *what I know actually happened in the past actually helped me in the sense of trying to find myself. And when I, and when certain things happen in my life, where Ive got this erratic personality, when I could do these things, that I'm just very jumpy and uncertain, that I, at least I know that you know, part of my childhood had…, had a lot to do with it. You know the kids at school who had a mother figure and a father figure in their lives, whether the father was long dead, or not there, those kids who had a stable mother figure turned out to be slightly more stable, more stable than I am. This has actually helped me to understand myself, and and and…., I have tried not to be too hard on myself"*

Emotional tone of the interview

Vusi spoke quickly and articulately. He was not tearful at any time during the interview but he did seem agitated at times. He also repeated words at times and the tone and pace of his speech changed when he was talking about distressing matters. He reported feeling pleased that he had a second interview and reflected that it had been helpful for him to talk about his experiences. Vusi did seem to gloss over painful material at times, but this can be seen as adaptive given that he was in an interview not a therapy session. He reported that he has had two short episodes in therapy that he has found helpful.

Coherence of narrative

Vusi described his childhood history in a fairly disorganised manner. He contradicted himself a number of times in the first interview but clarified in the second interview that he did move between his aunt Dineo and his grandmother a great deal during his early childhood. He said that he mostly *"belonged to his gran"* but it was with Dineo that he received sensitive and consistent care. His narrative was a lot more coherent in the second interview. Overall, the coherence of Vusi's narrative varied, with him being very articulate and speaking quickly, depending on the degree of distress in the content of his story. He was noticeably less coherent at times.

Access to memories

Vusi's memory for dates was sketchy and contradictory at times.

Reflective function

Despite Vusi being articulate, his reflective function seemed somewhat variable. He demonstrated insight about himself, especially in the second interview, but in the first one he appeared to be employing defences, which, given his experiences are adaptive.

Attachment

Vusi presents with features of a preoccupied attachment that may become disorganised when under stress

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors evident in Vusi's narrative are:

i. His relationship with his aunt, Dineo.
ii. Vusi's relationship with his cousins
iii. Two of his teachers in high at high school were very significant attachment figures.
iv. His grandmother's care was a protective factor despite her seeming to lack some sensitivity at times.

Risk factors evident:

i. Abandonment by mother at 8 days old
ii. Attempted drowning by father in first few months.
iii. Confusion in childhood and lack of clarity about his circumstances. Not knowing who his parents were and not being told the truth.
iv. Hearing stories about his history second hand and indirectly.
v. Regular moves as a young child.
vi. Being sent back from his aunt to his grandmother at age 8 or 9.

Appendix E.7

Thenjiwe

General history and impressions

Thenjiwe is a 35-year-old divorced mother of two children. She currently lives with her children; (son aged 12 and daughter aged 10) in a rented apartment in Johannesburg. Thenjiwe was initially very reticent in the interview. It took some time for her to feel comfortable and to start to speak in more depth about her experiences. She reported that she is the 6th child in her family, she was born in Welkom in the Free State and taken to live with her maternal grandmother in Umtata when she was 8months old. Some of her older siblings lived with her maternal grandmother, others with her paternal grandmother. When Thenjiwe was born her father and mother lived together in a hostel at a mine where her father was employed. They were not allowed to have their children living with them at the time. After Thenjiwe was born her father was promoted and he was given a house to live in. As a result, Thenjiwe's younger sister and brother stayed in Welkom and were raised by their parents.

Thenjiwe said that in her family the first six children would be raised by either of their grandmothers until they completed Grade 9. They would then go to boarding school for the remainder of high school. Following that they would continue on to university. She described her father as being determined that all his children would get a tertiary education and he worked hard to provide for his children.

Thenjiwe reported not being told that her grandmother was not her actual mother. She said she called her grandmother and her mother Mama but that her grandmother was her primary caregiver and seemingly her attachment figure. An interesting and central aspect of Thenjiwe's narrative was her description of an intense feeling of rejection by her parents because her younger siblings were raised by their parents, and she was not. Despite her very close and enduring relationship with her younger sister, Thenjiwe described experiencing intense jealousy of her sister. "*...But I always had that thing, when it comes to my parents, my mother, I would always have that thing that they preferred her to me. But with her, there weren't any, actually she is my closest…, even today. She is more like a friend to me today. Ja"*

Thenjiwe said that because of this intense feeling of jealousy and rejection she took her grandmother's care *"for granted"* and only appreciated what she had done for her after she died.
Thenjiwe left her grandmother in Umtata at the end of her grade 9 year and went to another school in the town (also Umtata) to live with an aunt. She had to repeat Grade 9 due to problems at the rural school the

previous year. Then she went to boarding school and from there she went to university. At the end of her university degree she conceived and said the following; "*Then I went home and I got my baby. And my mother asked me to leave my baby cos I did not have a stable job. So she asked me to leave my son with him so that I can come and look for a job in Johannesburg, you know. Ja.* Thenjiwe had a daughter just over a year later, also with her son's father, but she kept her daughter with her as she felt her mother was too old to care for them both while so young. She then said; "*And it's a pity that my son now, is the one who is rebelling against me and saying why did I leave him with my parents?"* Thenjiwe took her daughter to live with her parents when she was five and last year she fetched both children and brought them to live with her in Johannesburg. Thenjiwe said, "*cos my son was starting to show signs, he was rebelling, he was getting very spoilt, I did not like his behaviour. So I decided to take them, they can come and stay with me, so I can show him, set boundaries, so he can learn what is wrong and what is right. So with my parents, what ever he wants he can get".*

Towards the end of the interview Thenjiwe, while speaking about her grandmother literally 'burst' into tears. She had been speaking about her experiences and she suddenly became overwhelmed with emotion. Thenjiwe then apologised for crying and seemed to feel ashamed. She stressed that she hadn't wanted to cry, and she also seemed surprised about the intensity of her emotion. She did say that she still thinks a lot about her grandmother even though she died many years ago now.

Emotional tone of the interview

Thenjiwe was reticent, serious and quite intense in the first half hour of the interview. She was relatively forthcoming in responding to questions and was perhaps feeling anxious. She did seem to be defending against her experience of loss despite speaking with some intensity about her jealousy of her sister and her feelings of rejection by her parents. This was constantly juxtaposed with her comments about how she did not know then what she knows now, that her parents did not prefer her sister to her. Then, in the second half of the interview her defences appeared to be overwhelmed and she became suddenly overwhelmed, as stated above. Thenjiwe did laugh quite a lot throughout the first half of the hour long interview.

Internalised secure base

Thenjiwe was separated from her mother at the time (8 months) that an attachment is usually becoming firmly established. This separation may have undermined her capacity to develop a secure attachment to her maternal grandmother.

Coherence of narrative

Thenjiwe presented with some evidence of incoherence in her narrative. She laughed a lot while relating serious issues, and she also cried suddenly and seemingly unexpectedly (for herself).
Thenjiwe described her experiences in an organised and fairly consistent way; it seems that she has developed strategies contributing towards some autonomy. However, the degree to which she seems to be preoccupied with herself and her experiences in her adulthood does suggest that she may lose coherence when recalling memories of her separation from her parents.

Access to memories
Thenjiwe's memories seemed to be readily available to her.

Reflective function

It is in this area that Thenjiwe seems to be somewhat compromised. She appears to have been thwarted in the implicit process of reflective function. Thenjiwe does not seem to be insightful about herself, and it was difficult for her to access her emotional experience during the interview.

Attachment

Thenjiwe's narrative was assessed as being more dismissing than autonomous. Her reported feelings and behaviour towards her grandmother are suggestive of unconscious anger.

Mediating factors evident

Protective factors identified in Thenjiwe's narrative:

i. Thenjiwe's parents were always together and in that sense the 'family' remained intact.
ii. Thenjiwe lived with her grandmother in one place throughout her early and middle childhood.
iii. Thenjiwe's relationship with her younger sister is enduring and supportive.
iv. Thenjiwe describes her family as caring and stable.
v. Thenjiwe's father's insistence on his eight children all receiving educational opportunities demonstrates strong care.

Risk factors evident are:

i. Thenjiwe was separated from her mother at a vulnerable time in her development.

ii. Thenjiwe's reported experience of her childhood is suggestive of an abandoned emotional experience, where she felt that her parents did not care about her.

iii. Given this situation, it seems that Thenjiwe's grandmother did not adequately provide sensitive response to Thenjiwe's experience, so as to contain her distress.

iv. Thenjiwe's moves (to her grandmother, then her aunt and then boarding school) may have contributed to her employing defensive structures that impeded her psychological development.