

**THE ADOLESCENT FATHER'S EXPERIENCE  
OF THE  
ABORTION HIS PARTNER HAD**

by

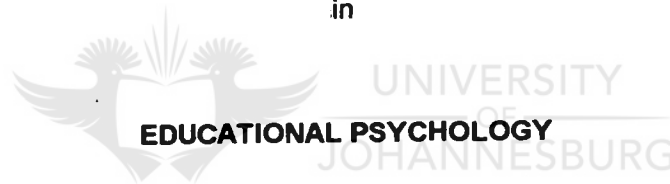
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**This mini- dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Pieter, whom  
I love dearly. Without his love, support, encouragement and  
endless willingness to help where necessary, my end goal , namely  
this dissertation would never have been achieved.**



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## SUMMARY.

Abortion is now legal in South Africa, bringing with it issues that have never before had to be addressed. Nobody denies that abortion has an effect on women but very few people realise that abortion also has an impact on men.

Various research projects have been done on how abortion effects women, however very little is known on how it effects men. Consequently the aim of this research is to find out how the adolescent father experiences the abortion his partner had. Knowledge of this experience is important, as the way in which this experience is perceived will effect the further development of the adolescent father. New insights into the adolescent father's experience can be used by the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can reach his full potential.

An explorative, descriptive, contextual and qualitative design was followed to conduct this research. Phenomenological interviews were conducted with three adolescent fathers whose partners had undergone an abortion. After the interviews had been recorded on audiotape and transcribed, themes were identified.

The result brought the following manifested experiences to light:

The loss of a relationship with his girlfriend and baby due to the abortion, feelings of guilt and helplessness as a result of not being involved in the abortion, exclusion from the decision together with not being acknowledged as the father, a need to accept responsibility for their actions and overwhelming thoughts about the abortion and the future.



Guidelines for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can reach his full potential, are discussed in accordance with the above mentioned themes.

It is clear that adolescent fathers are deeply effected by the abortion that their partners undergo. Consequently it is firmly believed, that by acknowledging that adolescent fathers are also effected by the abortion and allowing them to tell their story, they will be better able to help their partners and themselves to meet the challenge of an abortion.



# OPSOMMING

Die wettiging van aborsie in Suid- Afrika het verskeie sake meegebring wat nog nooit voorheen aangespreek is nie. Niemand kan ontken dat aborsie 'n uitwerking op vrouens het nie, maar baie min besef dat dit ook 'n groot invloed op mans het.

Verskeie navorsingsprojekte is reeds afgehandel oor die invloed wat aborsie op vrouens het, maar die invloed wat dit op mans het is nog selde onder die vergrootglas geneem. Die doel van hierdie navorsingsprojek is om vas te stel presies hoe die adolessente vader, deur dië aborsie wat sy vriendin gehad het, beïnvloed word. Die gepaardgaande kennis wat hierdeur opgedoen word is van uiterste belang, omdat die manier hoe die adolessente vader hierdie ervaring ervaar 'n definitiewe invloed op sy verdere ontwikkeling sal he. Nuwe insigte wat verkry word kan met groot vrug deur die opvoedkundige sielkundige aangewend word om die adolessente vader te help om hulpbronne te benut sodat hy sy volle potensiaal kan bereik.

Die navorsing is kwalitatief, verkennend, beskrywend en kontekstueel van aard.

Fenomenologiese onderhoude is met drie adolessente vaders wie se vriendinne aborsies gehad het, gevoer.

Nadat die onderhoude op oudioband geneem en getranskribeer is, is temas geïdentifiseer.

Die resultate het die volgende gemanifesteerde ervarings na vore gebring:

Die verlies van 'n verhouding met 'n meisie en baba as gevolg van die aborsie, skuldgevoelens en gevoelens van magteloosheid as gevolg van die feit dat die adolessente vader nie enigsins by die aborsie betrokke was nie, geen deelname aan besluitneming oor die aborsie en geen erkenning van vaderskap nie, 'n behoefte om verantwoordelikheid vir hulfe aksies te aanvaar en oorweldigende gedagtegang oor die aborsie en die toekoms.

Riglyne vir die opvoedkundige sielkundige, om die adolessente vader te help om al sy hulpbronne te benut sodat hy sy volle potensiaal in die lewe kan bereik, word bespreek aan die hand van die bogenoemde temas.

Dit is duidelik dat adolessente vaders negatief geaffekteer word deur die aborsies wat hulle vriendinne ondergaan. Daar word dus vas geglo dat deur die wete dat adolessente vaders beïnvloed word en deur hulle die geleentheid te bied om hulle stories te vertel, hulle hulself en hulle vriendinne kan bystaan en help om die aborsie en die gevolge van die aborsie deur te werk.



## CHAPTER 1

### RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 RATIONALE

For you created my inmost being  
you knit me together  
in my mother's womb  
I praise you because I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made  
in the secret place.

When I was woven together  
in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

(David in Psalm 139: 13-16)

Abortion! While people are still debating whether abortion is right or wrong, it has been legalised in South Africa. Therefore it no longer matters whether people agree with it or not, it is now an

**issue that society has to deal with. Professionals are expected to put their personal beliefs aside in order to help people through the abortion.**

**However it is only possible to help people effectively if one knows what the implications of an abortion are and the long term effect it has on peoples lives. Before we can find out about the implications, we need to ask ourselves: "What is abortion?"**

**Van Niekerk (1991:43) describes abortion as "the abortion of a live fetus of a woman". Lamb (1988:117) goes one step further and mentions factors that are to be considered when thinking about an abortion namely:-**

- **whether a person is morally responsible for the maintenance of another life.**
- **the degrees of responsibility held by the parents.**
- **economic and material conditions which may have a bearing on the decision not to continue with the abortion.**

**However, knowing what abortion is and what factors to keep in mind when considering an abortion, doesn't help a person to prepare for the emotional effects that go with an abortion.**

**That being so legal abortion has created a need to explore and describe the effect abortion has on all parties involved. The law (Act No 92 of 1996) states that nobody can be denied an abortion, even adolescent girls, ie the law stipulates**

- **that only the pregnant woman's consent is required**
- **in the case of a juvenile the doctor or midwife must advise her to speak to her parents or family before deciding on the abortion. However, the abortion may not be refused if she does not follow this advice.**

This in itself creates the problem that the man, specifically the adolescent father, has no say in the abortion. This creates the problem that the adolescent fathers are left with unresolved issues that aren't taken into consideration as they are not considered important. This also implies that fathers aren't receiving counselling as the assumption is that they are not affected by the abortion that their partner undergoes.

The new law does state that non-compulsory counselling must be provided before and after the abortion. However this counselling is only intended for women. On this issue the Beeld, (Sat 5 April 1997:5) ran an article on the counselling provided by three institutions. The counselling varied, the first institution told the reporter that they had a choice and touched on what effect an abortion would have on the rest of her life, the second institution briefly mentioned choices and then went on to convince the reporter that abortion was the best option. The last institution had no counselling to offer. In all three instances it was accepted that the person was going to have the abortion and that the reporter just needed more information about the procedure. In all three instances it is obvious that counselling isn't a priority and it seems that the father's involvement and emotions are not taken into consideration. The survey shows that although the law has been passed all the required infrastructure is not in place. Counselling, which should form an integral part of the abortion process, is lacking.

Even more importantly, there is no counselling for men. Counselling, according to Thompson and Rudolph (1992:18) is a process during which a trained professional forms a trusting relationship with a person who needs assistance. This relationship focuses on personal meaning of experiences, feelings, behaviours, alternatives, consequences and goals. Counselling provides a unique opportunity for individuals to explore and express their ideas and feelings in a non-evaluative, non-threatening environment. This implies that by being able to discuss and explore the experience, will help to put the abortion into perspective. This immediately shows that the fact that the proper counselling facilities aren't available is going to stand in the way of the adolescent father working through the abortion of his partner successfully. Unfortunately, it

seems that although it is the woman who is having the abortion, the other parties involved, especially her partner, have been pushed aside. Therefore this study is aimed at the adolescent father whose girlfriend has undergone an abortion. At this early stage of the implementation of the new law, not much is being done for the adolescent father, who is still busy developing his own identity and who is now in the process of mourning his lost child. An article in the Rapport (Sun 18 May 1997) reflects the man's inability legally to stop his partner from having an abortion. The man, although an adult, has no say. In the article it is clear that Dr. Tzitzivacos, who is the father, feels that he has no control over the situation and that his rights as a father are being denied. This article makes one wonder what emotional effect it has on the adolescent father and how it influences his development.

As the father in the study is an adolescent, it is important to know the various developmental phases of adolescence. The reason being that the stage of adolescence the father finds himself in will affect the way he experiences the abortion his partner has undergone.

Louw, Gerdes & Meyer(1985:341) summarises the phases as follows:

In early adolescence (13-15 years) the adolescent becomes concerned with issues of the body. They start to separate from their parents and identify with people other than their partner. In this stage the young adolescent boy is inclined to want to ignore the consequences of his sexual activity. While in middle adolescence (14-17years) they become less concerned with their bodies and become more concerned with basic concepts of development such as separation from parents, peer group influences, heterosexual experimentation and expression of feelings. During late adolescence (16-19 years) most biological changes are finished. They should start to accept themselves intellectually and sexually. Vocational skills and adult sexual roles are also acquired. It is during this stage that they prepare for adulthood.

Hartlingh (1994:3) says that development implies being on the way to adulthood. Therefore adulthood is the child's future, so the way a child experiences his future is influenced by his past experiences. This implies that the adolescent father, whose adolescent partner has had an abortion, is forced to change his future. Therefore it is important that the adolescent father receives guidance so that he can still have a bright future. According to Oberholzer (Engelbrecht, Kok en van Biljon, 1989:10) a child cannot become someone unless he is supported by adults. This includes a need for relationships which form the basis of social life. The implication is therefore that relationships play an important role in helping the adolescent father deal with the situation as positively as possible. Together with this Langveld (Engelbrecht, Kok en van Biljon, 1989:10) maintains that the most basic characteristic of a person is that he/she wants to be "someone". Therefore the adolescent father plays an important role in guiding his own development. It can be said that the adolescent's experience of various influences, specifically in this instance, the abortion, and the way these influences affect him will depend on how he perceives these influences. Consequently when the adolescent father's partner has had an abortion it is a choice that has been made and therefore they have to face the consequences of this choice. Unfortunately, the adolescent father had no say in this decision, which must have an effect on how he perceives the experience.

Therefore the aim of this study is to get as much information as possible on how the adolescent father experiences the abortion his adolescent partner had. This information will help to gain new insights into the effect the abortion has had on adolescent fathers. These insights will be used to describe guidelines for educational psychologists to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so he can achieve his full potential.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The legalisation of abortion in South Africa has created a new field to be studied. A part of this new field is that there is very little research on how the adolescent father experiences the abortion his partner underwent. It is important to learn about this because the way he perceived



this experience will affect his future behaviour. The problem is that only the adolescent girl is allowed to decide whether she wants to keep the baby or not. However, the adolescent father's consent is not required, implying that his views and opinions are not important. The father seems to be pushed aside while his feelings about the experience seem to be neglected. Therefore this study aims to give the father the opportunity to express himself about the abortion and to highlight his needs. The new insights will help to see what the needs of the adolescent father are and how he can be helped.

The research questions now raised are:

How do adolescent fathers experience the abortion that their adolescent partners had?

What guidelines can be described for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential?

### **1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study has dual aims namely:

- 1.3.1 To explore and describe how adolescent fathers, whose adolescent partners have had an abortion, experienced the abortion.
- 1.3.2 To describe guidelines which can be used by the educational psychologist. These guidelines will be used to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

### **1.4 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE**

Van Niekerk (1988:13) says that the educational psychologist is concerned with the development of the child and because of a honest concern about the child, feels obliged to help and support

him/her. Therefore it is important in this study to determine how the experience affected the adolescents' development so that they can be assisted by the educational psychologist to mobilise their resources so that they achieve their full potential.

The educational psychologist is primarily concerned with a child's development and how any obstacles in this development affect the child. The end goal of development is to be able to reach one's full potential. Included in the educational psychologist's task is assisting the child in its educational environment. That being so, it is of the utmost importance, that the educational psychologist is equipped to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that the abortion has a minimal effect on his development.

An adolescent, as well as an adult, have to answer to the community for their actions. This is connected to the choices and decisions he has made depending on his values (Van Niekerk, 1986:13). These choices are dependent on his affective, cognitive and normative development. So from an educational psychologists point of view the researcher is interested in the choices that the adolescent has made, the effect it has had on him and how it effected his development.

According to Thompson et al. (1992:8) all children at some time or another experience difficulty adjusting to changes and the accompanying stress or conflict can lead to behavioural problems. This can effect their development. Thompson et al (1992:8) also says that there are various factors which add to this stress such as:

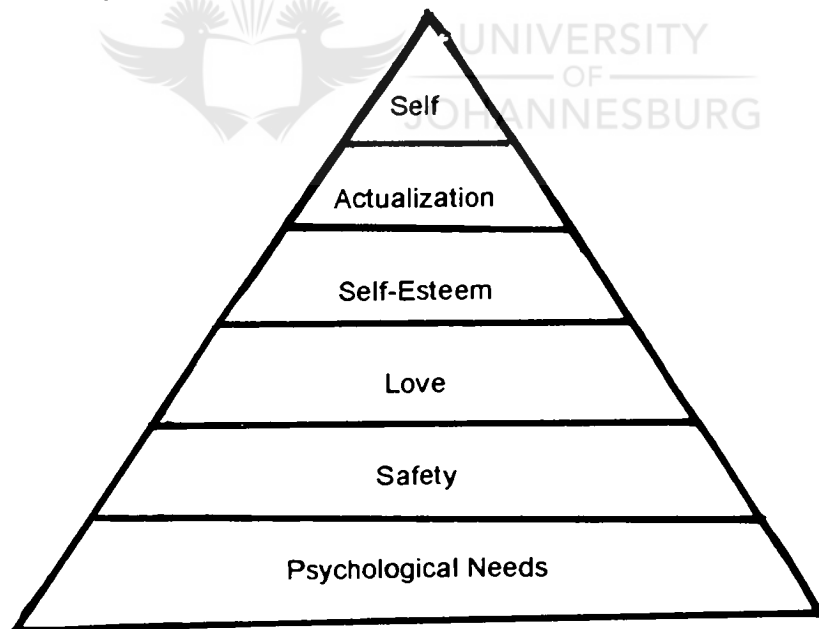
- \* The home:- Adolescent's need warm, loving and stable home environments in order to grow and develop in a healthy manner. However in todays families children often don't find someone to listen to or someone to provide the care and guidance they need.

- \* Society:- besides insecure and unstable homes they are also confronted with an unstable, conflict ridden society.
- \* Values:- adolescents are trying to form values in a constantly changing world. Concepts of what is "right" and "wrong" seem to change or vary everyday, depending on who we are talking to.

I agree with Thompson and feel that taking the above factors into consideration we are faced with the dilemma of adolescents who are expected to develop normally in an ever changing world. Therefore, when the adolescent father is faced with the dilemma of abortion, who does he have to help him through this dilemma?

Continuing on this train of thought, according to Maslow (Thompson et al. 1992:11) people have basic needs which must be met in order to reach their potential.

Figure 1.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



This diagram indicates that the lowest need must first be met before the next need can be met. Although Maslow's (Thompson et al. 1992:11) hierarchy makes sense, it is a very simplistic way of explaining the complexity of human behaviour. However it does help to show that if the adolescent father has unmet needs, due to the abortion his partner had, he will have difficulty reaching his full

potential (self-actualisation). Therefore, the educational psychologist must assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

## **1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The research design will be discussed briefly in this chapter while it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **1.5.1. Research design**

As there is little known about the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion, this is a qualitative explorative, descriptive and contextual research design (Mouton & Marais, 1992: 45-46).

### **1.5.2. Research method**

Research takes place in two phases namely the exploration and description of the adolescent father's experience, of the abortion his adolescent partner had. This is so that new insights can be gained. These insights are used in the second phase to draw up guidelines to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

#### **1.5.2.1. Phase 1: Exploration and description of the adolescent father's experience of the abortion his adolescent partner had.**

In this research the researcher is interested in the meaning the adolescent father attaches to his experience. At the same time it must be kept in mind that each individual's experience is unique which will limit the transferability of the information gathered. However all information will be used to draw certain conclusions which will be used to assist the adolescent fathers. The method to obtain this information will now be discussed.

First of all sampling is done in order to select participants for this study. These participants will be purposefully selected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:201) as they all must comply to the following criteria:

- the father must be an adolescent- that is between 13-19 years
- the woman who has undergone the abortion must be an adolescent.

Data will be gathered using a semi-structured form of interviewing called phenomenological interviewing (Poggenpoel, 1993:1-3). The central question that will be asked during these interviews will be:

" Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had."

Every interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Field notes will be taken after each interview to describe the interview situation and to describe the researcher's impressions and experiences. Accurate field notes ensure that detail is not lost, that the context is understood and makes data analysis easier (Wilson, 1989:434). Follow up interviews will be done to ensure the data is a true reflection of participants' experiences (Kvale, 1983:174).

After data has been gathered, it will be analysed from transcribed interviews as well as from field notes. Tesch's descriptive analysis will be used (Creswell, 1994:155).

Once the data has been analysed relevant literature and information on similar studies will be compared with findings of this study. In this way similarities, differences and unique contributions of the study will be identified (Poggenpoel, 1993:3).

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Once the data has been analysed relevant literature and information on similar studies will be compared with findings of this study. In this way similarities, differences and unique contributions of the study will be identified (Poggenpoel, 1993:3).

#### **1.5.2.2. Phase 2: Description of guidelines to assist the adolescent fathers whose partners had an abortion.**

Insights from the study and the literature control in phase one are used to draw up guidelines for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

This is done by interpreting the themes which were identified in phase one (Creswell, 1994:154). The themes will help to identify areas where the adolescent father needs assistance so that guidelines can be drawn up for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent fathers to mobilise their resources so that they can achieve their full potential.

#### **1.5.3. Measures to ensure trustworthiness**

Guba's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 290-301) criteria for trustworthiness will be used in this study. These criteria are truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality, they will be discussed in depth in chapter two.

#### **1.5.4 Ethical measures**

The researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informant (Creswell, 1994:165). Therefore it is important that participants are assured of privacy and that their identity will be protected and that they are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time (The South African Nursing association, 1991:5). These ethical measures will be described in depth in chapter two.

#### **1.6 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusions and recommendations will be made from the findings of the study. Limitations identified in the study will be highlighted.

#### **1.7 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1: Rationale and overview

Chapter 2: Research design and method

Chapter 3: Discussion of results and literature control

Chapter 4: Description of guidelines to assist adolescent fathers whose partners have had an abortion. Included in this chapter are conclusions, limitations and recommendations with regards to the study.



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### **1.3. SUMMARY**

In this chapter a review has been given of the rationale, problem statement, goals, research design and method that is going to be used in this study. In chapter two the research method and design will be discussed in more detail.





# **CHAPTER 2**

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the research strategy will be discussed. The rationale, aims of the study as well as the research design and method will be looked into.

### **2.2 RATIONALE**

The legalisation of abortion in South Africa has brought numerous problems with it. An adolescent girl can decide to have an abortion without considering her partner's viewpoint.

Therefore, in this mini-dissertation the researcher is going to look at the adolescent father, who has no say in his adolescent partner having an abortion. The reason being that as much information as possible needs to be gathered, so that the adolescent father's experience of the abortion can be better understood. This understanding will be used to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

### **2.3 GOALS OF THE STUDY**

This study has dual aims namely:-

- 2.3.1 To explore and describe how adolescent fathers whose adolescent partners have had an abortion, experience the abortion.
  
- 2.3.2. To describe guidelines which can be used by the educational psychologist. These guidelines will be used to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

## 2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a qualitative design as in this research the researcher is primarily concerned with the process which the adolescent father goes through when his partner undergoes an abortion. Together with this I want to find out how the adolescent father experiences the abortion and makes sense of it. Fieldwork will be done so that the adolescent father's experience can be explored in a natural setting. The initial research is inductive (Merriam, 1988: 19-20) as there is no existing theoretical framework regarding the adolescent father's experience regarding his partner's abortion.

Secondly as there is very little known about the effect of an abortion on the adolescent father, there is a need to find out how he experiences the abortion so that guidelines can be formulated. This being so, the design of this research is qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual which is directed at obtaining insight and understanding into the adolescent father's experience of the abortion which was undergone by his partner. These four aspects will now be discussed.

### Qualitative

A qualitative approach is used so that a holistic picture of the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion can be obtained. Qualitative research is characterised by the fact that the researcher is trying to get to the heart and soul of the issue in order to understand it (Mouton & Marais 1992:175).

Miles and Huberman (1984 in Lincoln & Guba, 1985:16) summarises the qualitative researcher as follows " he attempts to capture data on the perception of local actors from the inside through a process of deep tentiveness, of empathetic understanding (Verstehen), and of suspending or " bracketing " preconceptions about the topic under discussion." Therefore, due to the new abortion law, a need has arisen to find out more about the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion.

### **Explorative**

This term implies that research is being done on a relatively unknown topic so that the topic can be explored and information gathered (Mouton & Marais , 1992:45). This information can be used for further research, to obtain insight and understanding and to formulate a hypothesis.

As abortion is a new field for researchers in South Africa little research has been conducted. There is thus not a lot known about the effect abortion has on all the people involved. It is therefore important to explore (Mouton, 1996:103) the adolescent fathers' experience so that new insights can be gained. These new insights can be used to draw up guidelines for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

### **Descriptive**

The research aims require an accurate and detailed description of the theme. The experience that has to be interpreted must be described in order to come to a better understanding of the experience. Obtaining insight and understanding is an interactional process:

"...understanding requires that one is able to enter into, or take the point of view of another's experience." (Denzin, 1989:120).

Once the meaning, the adolescent father attaches to his experience of the abortion has been explored, an accurate description will be given of the insights obtained through words or pictures (Creswell, 1994:145).

### **Contextual**

The information obtained is specifically about the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion. So it is important to remain within the unique experience of the adolescent father. This implies that in this research I will focus on the specific context and meanings of the adolescent fathers' experience of their partners' abortion.

These cases will be analysed by reconstructing the information and staying close to the subject and the participants (Mouton, 1996:169). The information will be interpreted within an educational psychologist's perspective which will make the study even more context bound.

## **2.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research will be conducted in two phases namely the exploration and description of the adolescent father's experience of the abortion his adolescent partner underwent. The second phase involves drawing up guidelines for educational psychologists to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

Here follows a detailed description of phase one:

### **2.5.1 Phase 1: Exploration and description of the adolescent father's experience of the abortion his adolescent partner underwent**

This phase consists of the following components namely: sampling, data gathering, data analysis and literature control. Each component will now be discussed.

#### **2.5.1.1 SAMPLING**

The aim of this research is to study how the adolescent father experiences his partner's abortion so that the results can be transferred to a defined population. Therefore the target population for this study are adolescent fathers', between 13 and 19 years of age, whose adolescent partners' have undergone a legal abortion.

The participants will be purposefully selected (Creswell,1994:148) so they can answer the research question which is:

" Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had."

Besides being able to answer the research question they must conform to the following criteria:

- the father of the aborted fetus must be an adolescent between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age
- the adolescent father's partner must be an adolescent who has undergone an abortion.

Interviews will be conducted until the data is saturated as evidenced in repeating themes (Creswell, 1994:148).

#### **2.5.1.2 Data gathering**

This entails the collection of data through various procedures. These procedures will now be discussed. The researcher's role in all of this is to create an open environment (Poggenpoel, 1993:2) so that the adolescent fathers can express themselves freely. Empathy and intuition will help to reconstruct the inherent significance of structures and the self understanding of the individual (Mouton, 1996:169).

It is also important that the following communication skills be applied, namely:-

- reflecting my understanding of the young adolescent father's perceptions, experiences and feelings about the abortion.
- to be able to rephrase statements made by the adolescent fathers
- to be able to summarise the content of the interview for the participant. This will enable me to check if my understanding of the experience is correct.
- to be able to request clarifications when responses are vague, unclear or confusing

- to be able to request examples and descriptions (Poggenpoel, 1993:8).

Data is gathered by using the following two procedures namely phenomenological interviews and field notes. Each one will now be discussed.

#### **2.5.1.2.1. Phenomenological interviews**

The Phenomenological method is an inductive, explorative and descriptive research method.

The goal is to describe the structure of the person's experience as well as to describe the experience (Omery, 1983:50). This method is of value, because it will help to explore the meaning and structure of the experience of the adolescent father whose partner had an abortion.

During the interview no assumptions will be made as an open mind will be kept. The reason being that as much information as possible needs to be gathered (Omery, 1983: 61) so that an accurate description of the adolescent father's experience can be given and guidelines can be drawn up to assist the adolescent.

The phenomenological interview is semi-structured which means the focus is on themes identified in the interview (Kvale, 1983:174). These interviews focus on the adolescent's life world where the researcher seeks to understand the adolescent's experience and the meaning he attaches to it within his life world. At the same time it focuses on certain themes which can change if the researcher is sensitive to it. The information is obtained through interpersonal interaction which can be a positive experience (Kvale, 1983:175).

A pilot study is planned to identify possible obstacles in gathering data (Poggenpoel, 1993:2). If problems occur during the pilot study, the necessary adjustments will be made and interviewing will continue.

The question that will be asked during each interview will be:

" Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had."

Questions following the main question will be guided by the conversation and asked in order to obtain a clearer picture of the experience. Interviews will be concluded as themes become saturated as evidenced in repeating themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:202). The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed word for word. After data has been analysed, a follow up interview will be conducted. This will help to determine if results are a true reflection of the real experience of the adolescent father.

The typed out version together with the tape constitute the material used for the interpretation of meaning (Kvale, 1983:174).The second way of gathering information is by using field notes.

This method will now be discussed.

#### **2.5.1.2.2 Field Notes**

Directly after each interview field notes will be made about the interview situation and the researchers impressions there of.

Field notes are divided by Wilson (1989:434–435) into four categories, namely: -

- observational notes which are descriptions of the events as experienced through watching and listening.
- theoretical notes which are purposeful attempts to derive meaning from the observational notes.
- methodological notes which are instructions to oneself, being critical of one's tactics and reminders about methodological approaches that might be fruitful.
- personal notes which are notes about one's own reactions, reflections and experiences.

### 2.5.1.3. Data analysis

The data to be analysed will come from transcribed interviews and field notes. Omery (1983:61) says that this data must be reported in the natural language of the event, as the information was obtained from a natural setting. Data is analysed so that specific information about the adolescent father's experience can be obtained from all the information gathered.

Creswell (1994:153) suggests several points that will guide the analysis of data:-

- data analysis will be conducted simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation and narrative report writing
- to base the process on data "reduction" and interpretation a large amount of information will be reduced to certain patterns, categories or themes which will then be interpreted.
- information will be represented in matrices. Therefore the information will be displayed in a spatial format which represents the information systematically.

Tesch's (Creswell,1994:154-155) descriptive analysis will be used. This is because all the information is reduced to themes and then interpreted. Tesch called this process " de contextualisation" and " re contextualisation ". The final goal being a larger consolidated picture. In other words the aim is to understand rather than to explain the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion. The following eight steps of Tesch will be followed:

1. Transcripts will be read over to get a sense of the whole. Ideas that come to mind will be written down.
2. The most interesting transcript will be read in order to try and find the underlying meaning of the adolescent father's experience. Thoughts will be written in the margin.
3. Once this procedure has been followed with all information, a list of all topics will be made. Similar topics will be clustered together and arranged in major topics, unique topics and left overs.



4. Topics will be abbreviated as they are coded and written next to the appropriate segment in the text.
5. The most descriptive wordings for topics will be turned into categories. Topics that relate to each other as they arise will be grouped together.
6. Once a final decision is made an abbreviation will be allocated for each category, these codes will then be arranged alphabetically.
7. Data material belonging to each category will be assembled and a preliminary analysis performed.
8. As the need arises, existing data will be recorded (Creswell, 1994:155).

A protocol about the method used will be handed to the independent coder together with clean sets of transcripts and field notes. The independent coder is a person who has knowledge about qualitative research so that they can code and categorise the data on their own (Krefting, 1990:216). After this has been done the independent coder and researcher will meet in order to obtain consensus about the themes and the relationship between them.

#### **2.5.1.4 Literature control**

A literature control is conducted to compare obtained results with results of other research projects to identify similarities, differences and the unique contribution of the research (Poggenpoel, 1993:3).

#### **2.5.2 Phase 2: Describing guidelines to assist the adolescent fathers whose partners had an abortion.**

Data collection and data analysis for the second phase of the research will now be discussed.

### **2.5.2.1 Data collection**

Using the results gathered in phase 1 guidelines are formulated so that the educational psychologist can assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources in order to achieve his full potential. This is done by using logical inferences. According to Copi (1986:3) this is the process where conclusions are made from supporting evidence that is, the themes identified in phase one. The guidelines will then be discussed with the study leaders and an educational psychologist to ensure the applicability of the guidelines.

### **2.5.2.2 Data-analysis**

A Literature control will be used to describe and verify the guidelines. After this the guidelines will be discussed so the the educational psychologist can assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources to achieve his full potential.

## **2.5.3 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Guba's model in Krefting (1990:215) will be used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The model is based on the identification of four aspects namely truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. These aspects will now be discussed together with the control measures.

### **2.5.3.1 Truth value**

Truth value reflects the confidence the researcher has in the truth of her findings including the context in which the interview took place (Krefting, 1990:215). The truth value will be obtained from the discovery of the adolescent father's experience of the abortion and how he lived and perceived the event.

The control measure for truth value, is credibility and will now be discussed:

## **Credibility**

It is my job as researcher to represent the reality of the adolescent father as accurately as possible. This will be ensured by applying the following techniques:

- Prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 302) which allows the researcher to spend more time with the adolescent fathers. This will allow the researcher time to check their perspectives and also give the adolescents an opportunity to become accustomed to the researcher. As rapport increases the adolescent fathers will volunteer different and more sensitive information. Then once the researcher has gotten to know the adolescent father the interview will be conducted, taped, transcribed and decoded.
- Member checking where the adolescent father will serve as a check throughout the analysis process. Discussions regarding my interpretations of the adolescent father's reality and meaning will help to ensure the truth value of the data (Creswell, 1994:167).
- Reflective observations where continuous observations will be made and at the end of each interview notes will be made. Mouton (1996:156) maintains that because various methods complement each other, their respective shortcomings can balance out. Therefore data on the adolescent fathers' experience of the abortion will be collected through multiple sources such as interviews and observations (Creswell, 1994:167).
- Literature control will also be used so that findings can be compared to other literature in order to identify similarities, differences and unique contributions.
- Peer examination will take place where the study leaders will criticise the methodology, trustworthiness, ethics and findings of the study. The critique will help the researcher to remain open and honest. This will help eliminate emotions which may influence the researcher's better judgment (Creswell, 1994:168).
- Structural coherence will help that the focus of the study consistently remains on the adolescent father's experience of the abortion his partner underwent.
- Triangulation implies that data about the adolescent father's experience of his partner's abortion is collected in various ways (Krefting, 1990:219).

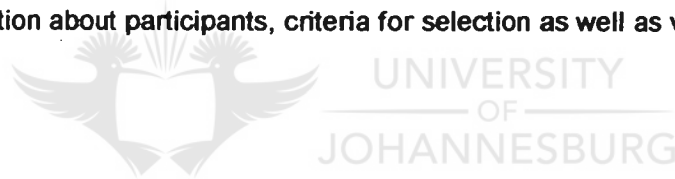
### **2.5.3.2 Applicability**

As this research is of a qualitative nature, the adolescent father's experience of the abortion will be studied in its natural context. Therefore few variables can be controlled. Each situation is unique so there is very little chance of generalising findings (Krefting, 1990:216). Applicability is therefore the degree to which the results of this study can be applied in similar contexts, on different respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290).

Transferability which is the control measure to ensure applicability will now be discussed.

#### **Transferability**

Krefting (1990:220) says that transferability of the study is the responsibility of the person who wants to apply the findings of the study, rather than the researcher. However, to make transferability possible the researcher aims to provide a 'dense' data base. This data will include background information about participants, criteria for selection as well as verbatim quotes from interviews.



### **2.5.3.3 Consistency**

According to Mouton (1996:144) consistency implies that using the same research design with a different group under a different set of circumstances will lead to the same observations. Guba (1981 in Lincoln & Guba, 1985:316) points out that consistency is not possible without the application of dependability. Therefore dependability, which is the control measure for consistency will now be discussed.

#### **Dependability**

Mouton (1996:148-155) mentions that the following aspects can affect the dependability of the data namely:

- the researcher may have characteristics which will put a distance between participants and researchers. At the same time data can be influenced by my prejudices, expectations, attitudes, opinions and beliefs.
- the participants who may be flattered to take part in the research, thereby influencing the insights obtained. This is called the Hawthorn effect.
- the participants may perceive themselves in a certain role which might lead to the participant asking himself the question " What kind of person should I be as I answer these questions or do these tasks?". This will invite responses that measure imaginary attitudes and opinions.

To counteract the above mentioned points it is important to emphasise the uniqueness of each participant as well as the uniqueness of their experience. Therefore to increase dependability exact methods of data gathering, analysis and interpretation will be described. This will give information as to how repeatable the study might be (Krefting, 1990:220).

Stepwise replication is another technique that will be used to ensure dependability (Krefting, 1990:220). This means that for each interview the same steps will be taken, namely: explain what will be expected of the subject, ask for written permission for participation in the study, allow time to get use to the tape recorder before starting with the interview.

Lastly a code -recode procedure will be followed (Krefting, 1990:221). This entails that the researcher will code the transcribed interview after which a protocol for the analysis of data will be given to an independent coder, who is experienced in qualitative research, to code. This protocol will include the following components:

- (a) a heading
- (b) instructions for the interviewer (opening statements)
- (c) the key research question: "  
"Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had? "
- (d) probes to follow key questions

- (e) space for recording the researcher's reflective notes (Creswell, 1994:152). Once the independent person has coded the interview we will meet to discuss the results and get a consensus.

#### **2.5.3.4. Neutrality**

Neutrality is the exclusion of the researcher's own prejudices from the research procedure and results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:300). In other words it refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives (Krefting, 1990:216).

Confirmability which is the control measure to ensure neutrality will now be discussed.

#### **Confirmability**

There are three measures which will be used to assure confirmability in this study, namely: auditability, reflexive analysis and triangulation. These will now be discussed:

- (a) **Auditability:** This suggests that another researcher could arrive at comparable conclusions, given the same data and research context. In order to make an audit possible a record will be kept of the following:
- raw data which includes field notes, and audio recordings.
  - data reduction and analysis products which include qualitative summaries, condensed notes and theoretical notes.
  - data reconstruction and synthesis products which consist of thematic categories, interpretations and inferences.
  - process notes which include procedures, design strategies and trustworthiness notes.
  - materials related to intentions and dispositions which include the study proposal and field journal.
  - instrument development information which include: pilot forms, survey format and schedules (Krefting, 1990:221).

- (b) **Reflexive analysis:** the researcher will keep a journal in order to reflect information about herself and the methods she used. The journal will consist of three sections, namely a daily schedule, personal diary and notes about the methodology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:327).
- (c) **Triangulation:** This is where my sources will be tested against another source in order to test the reliability of the data. Differences that occur will help to describe the adolescent father's experience of the abortion.

#### **2.5.4 Ethical measures**

Below follows a discussion of the ethical measures to be followed (The South African Nursing Association, 1991:5).

##### **\* Informed permission**

Written permission will be obtained from the adolescent fathers, whose adolescent partners have had an abortion. Permission will also be obtained from any institutions involved.

##### **\* Confidentiality and anonymity**

Names of participants will not be used. If the anonymity of any participants is in danger, the research records will be destroyed.

##### **\* Privacy**

The researcher will ensure that the subjects are treated with respect at all times. They will be allowed to express themselves freely, without interruptions or fear that their private thoughts and behaviour will later be used to embarrass them.

**\* Termination**

The research will be terminated with a specific subject if he so chooses, even though he initially gave permission to partake in the research. Research will also be terminated if it does not meet the standard initially set.

**\* Offering research assistance**

Feedback on results and recommendations will be given to the relevant people as soon as possible, in order to give priority value to themes.

**2.6 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

At the end of the study conclusions and recommendations will be made about the research results. Limitations will also be highlighted.

**2.7 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the research design and method has been discussed in depth together with measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical measures.





## CHAPTER 3

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

Give sorrow words

The grief that does not speak  
whispers the o'erfraught heart  
and bids it break.

The tragedy of Macbeth, Act IV, Scene III

William Shakespeare.

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the research will be outlined and discussed. After this the results will be verified using relevant literature.



#### 3.2 DETAILS OF DATA

Three interviews were conducted with adolescent fathers whose partners had undergone abortions.

##### 3.2.1 DATA ANALYSIS

As mentioned in chapter two data will be analysed using Tesch's (Creswell, 1994:55) descriptive approach. Field notes will be integrated as part of the discussion. The question that was posed to each individual during the interview was:

"Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had?"

### **3.2.1.1 CODING**

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The whole transcription was then analysed so that themes could be identified by underlying words and sentences. Themes that were related were grouped together and field notes were incorporated.

A protocol was drawn up and given to an independent coder, who is experienced in qualitative research, a meeting took place between the researcher and coder so that consensus could be reached about the results and identified themes.

### **3.3 Discussion of results.**

The results and literature control are presented in an integrated manner to ensure continuity and to make reading easy.

The five themes that were identified and which are going to be discussed are: The loss of a relationship with his girlfriend and baby due to the abortion, feelings of guilt and helplessness as a result of not being involved in the abortion, exclusion from the decision together with not being acknowledged as the father a need to accept responsibility for their actions and overwhelming thoughts about the abortion and the future.

#### **3.3.1 Background information**

In order to understand the results better, it is important to give background information on each respondent. This will also help to highlight the uniqueness of each situation and explain why each respondent experienced each theme in a different manner.

Here follows a brief summary of the background of each respondent:

**Respondent A:**

A and his girlfriend were good friends and did a lot together. They went away for a weekend, which was the only time that they were intimate and this is when she fell pregnant. Once she found out that she was pregnant the relationship deteriorated. She never told him that she was pregnant or considering an abortion. Her parents also did not know. He only found out about the abortion a few weeks after it had taken place and was told by one of her friends. As she has not spoken to him since the abortion, she does not know that he agrees with her decision to have an abortion. Later on in the interview he also mentioned that his own parents did not know about the abortion, and that his father must never know as his father had told him never to get a girl pregnant.

**Respondent B:**

B and his girlfriend went out for two years before she fell pregnant and had the abortion. B says that when his girlfriend fell pregnant, her parents felt that history was repeating itself, as they had been forced to marry. Due to this the mother encouraged her daughter to have an abortion. Although B knew about the possibility of an abortion, he was never involved in the decision. Therefore, even though he was against the abortion and wanted to get married this was never considered as an option. However, he did support her decision and stood by her after the abortion. She seemingly had difficulty coming to terms with the abortion which affected her personality. She started to shut B out eventually resulting in the termination of their relationship.

**Respondent C**

C did not want the baby and encouraged his partner to have an abortion. After the abortion they are still together, however his partner is having difficulty coming to terms with the abortion which seemingly makes her regress, as evidenced in her playing with teddy bears and watching animated videos like the Lion King. He is having difficulty coming to terms with the consequences of their decision.

The identified themes will now be discussed.

### **3.3.2 THEME 1: LOSS OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND AND BABY DUE TO THE ABORTION**

Although research was not done on the quality of the relationships before the abortion, it was evident from all three interviews that after the abortions their relationships were affected. The affect on each respondent will now be discussed:

Respondent A mentioned that before the abortion they had spoken about "being there" for each other in bad times, he had apparently assured her that he would support her. However, when she did fall pregnant she did not tell him. He was upset that she didn't trust him enough to tell him so that he could support her. It hurt him to think that she didn't take him at his word especially since he wasn't against the abortion and would have just liked the opportunity to be 'there' for her. Unfortunately the relationship ended without him having an opportunity to prove himself. Statements such as the following reflect this:

"Time and time when she didn't return my message, I decided she was not going to tell me"

"It's just I can't approach her and she hasn't told me."

Respondent B felt that he and his girlfriend had a good relationship before the abortion. This made it harder for him to accept the ending of their relationship, as he felt if she had been allowed to make her own decision, together with him, their relationship would not have ended. He supported her through the abortion and they continued their relationship for a while after the abortion. However she changed a lot due to the abortion and pushed him away. The statements below clearly reflect this:

"Sy het my heeltemal verstoot en ek kon nie eintlik naby haar kom nie."

**"Daar's soos ek se die kind wat weg is van my af en die meisie vir wie ek lief was."**

Although respondent C and his girlfriend are still together, their relationship has changed a lot. Due to the fact that his partner is having difficulty accepting the abortion she apparently regresses to childish behaviour, as evidenced in her playing with teddy bears and watching animated videos. The implications of this is that their relationship has changed from a normal man\woman relationship, to one where he has to look after her while his own needs are not being met.

During all the interviews it was obvious that the adolescent fathers experienced the loss of their relationships harder than the abortion itself. While the woman mourns the loss of her baby, the adolescent father mourns the loss of his partner, as well as his baby.

Shostak and McClouth (1984: 111) found in their research that men were set back by the entire experience and many dwelled on their multiple losses (the affair, the woman, the unborn child, the sense of being unable to manage their lives.)

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Tatelbaum (1981: 29) says that a sense of impoverishment is characteristic of mourning. Therefore at this painful time companionship is their greatest need. Unfortunately in all three instances the adolescent fathers seemed not only to mourn the loss of their child but also experienced a deep sense of loss as their relationships deteriorated. The Pro-life Activist's Encyclopedia (Internet 1997: 6) says that woman re-experience abortion in many ways and consequently behave in ways to avoid stimuli associated with abortions.

They are namely:

- feelings of detachment or of estrangement from others
- withdrawal in relationships and/or reduced communication

- restricted range of affection, eg. unable to have loving feelings.

This explains why relationships after an abortion are so hard hit. Suppression of grief can incapacitate a person by causing his/her emotions to be deadened or distorted so the relationship suffers and functioning becomes impaired (Tatelbaum, 1981: 50). This is further confirmed by studies (Pro Life activist's Encyclopedia, Internet 1997: 14) that have shown that more than eighty percent of the relationships break up within two months after the abortion. An extract from one of the respondents in Shostak and McClouth (1984: 120) sums this theme up.

"Horrible ..... we broke up. Like, after it happened there was nothing between us. She lost her love for me. I don't know why. If it was going to happen or not I don't know, but things really went down the drain."

### **3.3.3 THEME 2: FEELINGS OF GUILT AND HELPLESSNESS, AS A RESULT OF NOT BEING INVOLVED IN THE ABORTION.**

"Guilt is an uncomfortable or painful feeling that results from doing something that violates or breaks a personal standard or value." (Whitfield, 1989:43)

Feelings of guilt are reflected in the following statements:

"Apparently she was not well during .....obviously it affects me at the moment"

"Ek het gevoel soos die vark in die verhaal asof dit net ewe skielik net ek was wat dit veroorsaak het"

Epanchin and Paul (1987: 63) states that moral behaviour by adolescents is defined by individual conscience in accordance with ethical principles chosen by the individual on a consistent basis. This explains why each individual experiences guilt about different aspects.

Throughout the interviews the adolescent fathers expressed this guilt together with feelings of helplessness. In respondent A these feelings were highlighted by the fact that he was not told about the abortion and only found out about it later.

"You know I couldn't do anything. She had it already"

On the other hand B's partner's mother made the decision for them, regardless of what they wanted. This explains the following statement:

"Dit was 'n gevoel van magteloosheid."

C's helplessness was due to the fact that he had possibly encouraged the decision for an abortion and was now unable to help his partner work through the abortion.

Tatelbaum(1981: 36) says that helplessness and guilt often persist because of an unwillingness to share the problem and when these feelings are not confronted many physical and emotional problems may arise from stifling these feelings. A respondent from research done by Shostak and Mclouth (1984: 116) puts whatTatelbaum says into words:

".....We'd lost something, and part of the problem was that we never did get to talk about what was happening. Everything was so hush-hush. It was all such a big secret and whenever any feelings came up, we didn't have the time of the freedom to talk about them."

The Pro-life Activist's Encyclopedia (Internet, 1997: 14) sums it up by saying that men who are commanded not to interfere in the abortion must suppress their feelings of helplessness and outrage at the injustice of the system.

### **3.3.4 THEME 3: EXCLUSION FROM THE DECISION ABOUT THE ABORTION TOGETHER WITH NOT BEING ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE FATHER**


The participants in the research each experienced this differently. This is now briefly going to be discussed.

A was never told about the pregnancy thereby denying him the opportunity to decide together with his partner on the future of their unborn child. Statements such as those mentioned below reflect the strong desire to be part of the decision, even though he did not have a problem with the fact that she had had the abortion.

" We could have gone through that together .....decide together"

" It was just the fact that she was hiding it from me"

" I should not have been left out"



B on the other hand knew about the pregnancy, however he was not involved in the decision regarding the abortion. He felt that his partner's mother used her own experience, of having to get married, to influence her daughter, he also felt that his partner was unable to think clearly and just followed her mother's advice without thinking about the consequences. His role was never acknowledged and what he wanted never considered.

"Ek het geen se gehad nie en dis tog my kind"

"Hoekom bly die besluit net oor aan die ma?"

These statements reflect the need to be acknowledged.



C on the other hand encouraged his partner to have the abortion, although the final decision was hers.

Louw(1988: 102) says that sharing is important in relationships especially when it comes to personal and intimate matters. Tubbs and Moss (1983: 209) add to this by saying that self-disclosure forms an important part of a relationship and adds that it is unusual for a relationship to continue when one person has disclosed more than the other. Together with this he says that self disclosure implies that a basic level of trust had been achieved. The implications of this is that due to the pregnancy and the abortion the adolescent father's partner has lost trust in him which results in her not including him in the decision.

Shostak and Mclouth (1984: 30) found that many of the men relegated the decision - one of the most important they had known thus far in their lives -largely to their partners. When they first learned of the pregnancy many asked their partners what they felt must be done. Shostak continues by saying that it's not that men don't have reactions of their own its just they have to keep them to themselves. An extract, from on of the respondent's in Shostak's research, puts the male's position into words. (Shostak and Mclouth, 1984: 131)

"I never wanted marriage or anything so I had no right to tell her anything. But, it still hurts not to be asked nuthin, not to have my opinion considered. I would have liked her to at least ask me what I thought. I would probably have said, 'Go ahead and do it,' but at least I would have counted for something"

Feelings of not being acknowledged as the father are closely linked to being left out of the decision. Once again it is important to point out the uniqueness of each individual's situation in order to understand their feelings better.

In respondent A's case the fact that she never actually told him that he was the father, worried him. Even though he felt that he was not ready to become a father, he still needed to know.

"It's just she should have told me ..... I'd have been a father"

Respondent B felt strongly that it was his child and that he had a right to decide what was going to happen to his child.

Unfortunately circumstances wouldn't allow that. This shows in the following statements:

"Dit was iets wat ek geen se in gehad het nie en dis tog my kind ook"

"Ek voel dis iets van my wat weg is"

The Lawrie Fraser case (Beeld, 2 Oktober 1997: 4) is confirmation of the father's need to be acknowledged and have a say in the future of his child. In parliament, in Cape Town they are busy changing the law so that the unwed father has more rights. These rights will include the father having access to his children and being allowed to obtain guardianship of his child. Furthermore, these babies will not be allowed to be given up for adoption unless the father has been informed in writing. (Beeld, Aug 15: 1997: 5) The changing of the law acknowledges the fact that fathers need to be acknowledged and allowed a say in the future of their unborn child.

### **3.3.5 THEME 4: A NEED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ACTIONS**

Louw (1985: 372) says that for the western adolescent the following values are important:

- respect for the individual irrespective of race, religion or sex
- an awareness of social responsibility

One of the developmental tasks of the adolescent is to develop socially acceptable behaviour and to develop intellectual skills so that the individual can accept responsibility.

This developmental task comes strongly to the forefront in this theme, where the adolescent fathers feel denied the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions. Once again the uniqueness of each situation is reflected in how each adolescent wanted to take responsibility.

A, although not ready for fatherhood, was prepared to accept responsibility in another way. He wanted to help her financially by paying for the abortion as well as being able to offer her emotional support.

"If she had just told me I would have been there for her all the time."

"..... she paid quite a bit of money to get it done, I would have paid the whole amount.."

"I would have supported her all the way"

On the other hand, B was against the abortion and felt that it was his responsibility to marry his partner, so that they could have the child. However, this option was not considered thereby denying him the opportunity to take responsibility. He did try to support her after the abortion but she pushed him away.

Statements such as these below reflect this:

"Ek het geweet wat ek kan doen om te help en niks daarvan wou sy aanvaar nie"

"..... ek het gevoel dat ek sal die ding doen, ek sal die eerbare ding doen en ek sal ...  
ons kon trou, ek was baie lief vir haar gewees en toe wou sy skielik niks meer van my af  
weet nie"

C, accepted responsibility by enforcing the abortion, as he felt that they weren't ready for a baby.

The Pro-life Activist's Encyclopedia (Internet, 1997: 14) says that since a father has no rights whatsoever in the pregnancy, he may remain aloof from the mother because his child might be killed at any time, based purely upon her whim.

Vince, a respondent in Shostak and Mclouth's research (1984: 217) sums it up.

"I stressed to her..... I loved her, would share the child raising and I was beginning to love the baby. In June 1979 she aborted the baby without my knowledge or consent."

### **3.3.6 THEME 5: OVERWHELMING THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ABORTION AND THE FUTURE**

In all three cases the adolescent fathers found that thoughts of the abortion overwhelmed them.

Respondent A kept thinking about the abortion his partner underwent and how different things would have been if she had the baby.

"You can't stop thinking about it ..... you always think about it..... what she's actually going through at the time."

"You just think about it ..... about having a kid, 'Jislaaik' if she'd fallen pregnant or something like and had the kid, I'd have been a father"

Respondent B kept on thinking about how things could have been different. He could have had a family, a wife and a child. Instead, these dreams will not be realised and he has to start building a new relationship. B felt that he had not only lost a partner and a baby but also his future.

"....ek kon nie eintlik op die oomblik dink aan ander dinge nie"

**"My hele toekoms is weg.... daar's nie meer 'n toekoms vir my nie. Dit is hoofsaaklik maar net ..... iets is weggevat"**

Respondent C said that all he seems to see these days are babies and children. He continued to say that he felt that he had made the wrong decision and that they would have been able to look after the baby. He now has this feeling that he has lost a part of himself.

Shostak and Mclouth (1984: 107-108) found that while the intensity of fetus imagery seems to fade over time, related attitudes do not and the frequency of "occasional" thoughts about the fetus remain unchanged. One of Shostak's respondents said that it was the unborn "kid" that remained the focus of his reflections, and he could not separate his feelings of a fatherhood lost from his girlfriend's decision to abort.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION:**

The interviews that were conducted have shown that adolescent fathers are deeply affected by the abortion their partner undergoes. The research has shown that an unwillingness to share feelings and to mourn together increases the negative affect of abortion. While an inability or unwillingness to communicate may be harmful, establishing emotional and behavioural patterns that not only hurt men and women individually but interfere with their ability to engage in loving relationships with one another.

The research shows that the legalisation of abortion in South Africa not only affects the woman involved but also her partner. This emphasises the importance of assisting all parties involved in the abortion.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION OF GUIDELINES TO ASSIST ADOLESCENT FATHERS WHOSE PARTNERS HAD AN ABORTION

Tears unwashed  
are stones upon the heart  
that choke the healing  
stream

Herman Melville (source unknown)

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the results of this research were discussed. This was done by discussing the five central themes identified. These themes are:

The loss of a relationship with his girlfriend and baby due to the abortion, feelings of guilt and helplessness as a result of not being involved in the abortion, exclusion from the decision together with not being acknowledged as the father, a need to accept responsibility for their actions and overwhelming thoughts about the abortion and the future.

Guidelines will now be discussed so that an educational psychologist can assist the adolescent to mobilise his resources.

#### 4.2 GUIDELINES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

These guidelines will be given in an integrated fashion as it is firmly believed that the themes, although discussed separately are interlinked.

#### **4.2.1 GUIDELINES FOR WORKING THROUGH FEELINGS OF GUILT AND HELPLESSNESS, EXCLUSION FROM THE DECISION, A NEED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY AND OVERWHELMING THOUGHTS DUE TO THE ABORTION**

Generally men are considered to be the silent partners in the abortion process, having no say in the decision and being denied the opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions and to express their feelings. Consequently for the reason mentioned above it is important to encourage the adolescent father to tell his story. Therefore the objective ( Egan, 1986: 34) when doing this is to allow him to ventilate his feelings, thoughts and behaviours. By giving him the opportunity to do this it will help the adolescent father to put the abortion into perspective and to use this as a starting point for constructive change. This also enables the educational psychologist to focus on resources the adolescent has, that can be mobilised so that the adolescent can reach his full potential. Together with this the educational psychologist can challenge the adolescent to make him aware of, as well as to understand his feelings.

Skills that the educational psychologist would need to help the adolescent father tell his story would be:

- Empathy, which is the ability to enter into and understand the world of another person and to communicate this understanding to him/her ( Egan, 1986: 95)
- Active and reflective listening where the therapist listens for the feelings and deeper meaning behind what is being said
- Summarising so that all the issues that need to be worked on can be identified

Once the issues have been identified, the adolescent father can then prioritise the issues and work on them.

The guidelines for the themes that were identified when the adolescent fathers were telling their story in the research will now briefly be discussed.

#### **4.2.1.1 Feelings of guilt and helplessness**

These feelings need to be expressed so they can be reframed in such a manner that the adolescent does not see himself as a victim any more. Techniques that could be used here are:

- discussing the possibilities of what they would have liked to have done, together with the consequences thereof
- doing a role play (Hanley, 1994:29-30) where he expresses his feelings and puts into words what he would have liked to have done.

#### **4.2.1.2 Being excluded from the decision and a need to accept responsibility for their actions**

It is a fact that can not be denied that when a woman has an abortion the final decision is hers. Therefore the educational psychologist has to help the adolescent father to come to terms with the fact that he has no control over this, but he does have control over his future. This can be done by using cognitive skills where the adolescent re-enacts the past and envisions the future to consider the ramifications of his action (Trad 1993: 40). This will help the adolescent father to anticipate the outcome of his behaviour and provide him with strategies to predict and resolve emotions that he is likely to feel. It is also important here to point out to the adolescent that the consequence of being intimate with a girl, is that life can be conceived. The implications of this is that he will once again be put in a situation which may result in an abortion which will again put him in a situation where he has no control.

#### **4.2.1.3 Overwhelming thoughts about the abortion and the future**

These thoughts need to be expressed and then reframed in a positive manner so that the adolescent father can get a future perspective. It is very important here to do grief counselling where the adolescent is allowed to grieve for his baby. This grief can be expressed by exploring



feelings about the baby and working through his feelings before and after the abortion.

Techniques (Hanley, 1994:29-30) that can be used here are:

- to write a letter to the baby telling him/her about their thoughts and feelings
- a symbolic ceremony where the adolescent father has an opportunity to symbolically put the past behind him.

#### **4.2.2 GUIDELINES FOR WORKING THROUGH THE LOSS OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND AND BABY DUE TO THE ABORTION**

There are two objectives in this guideline, firstly to allow the adolescent father to grieve for the lost relationship and secondly to provide him with skills that will help him with future relationships, to counteract any apprehension which the adolescent feels towards future relationships.

##### **4.2.2.1 Grieving the lost relationship with his girlfriend and baby**

It is important that the adolescent father be allowed to grieve the loss of his relationship with his girlfriend and baby . This can be done by exploring and reviewing the circumstances, reality and psychological trauma associated with the abortion.

The educational psychologist must help the adolescent father to naturally release the affects related to the loss. This can be done by encouraging the adolescent father to discuss the relationship ie:-

- how it started
- it's rewarding and painful aspects
- patterns and nature of the interaction
- the roles each fulfilled

(Raphael and Nunn, 1988: 199-201)

#### 4.2.2.2 Skills for building relationships

In all abortion cases relationships are affected, therefore Hanley (1994: 29-30) says that it is important to use techniques of problem solving and assertiveness training to deal with estrangement from friends and relatives. Brink (1996: 24) gives the following suggestions.

\* **Conflict resolution:**

The following points can be practiced through role play to resolve conflict. These points will help couples in future relationships when there is something they do not agree on.

1. Begin with something positive
2. Be specific
3. Describe what the other person is doing or saying
4. No name calling
5. Express your feelings
6. Admit your contribution
7. Don't accuse
8. Be brief



These points will serve as a guide for positive conflict resolution.

\* **Problem solving:**

Once again the following points can be practiced through role play so that the adolescent father has skills to fall back on in future relationships.

1. Define the problem
2. Brainstorm
  - list all possible solutions
  - be creative

- don't be critical
  - compromise
  - think about changing your own behaviour
3. Choose a solution (evaluate, discuss, compromise)
4. Write a contract
- describe what each person will do and what will happen if he/she fails to do it
  - state how long the contract is good for
  - include reminders
  - sign the contract

It is important that the adolescent father is taught these skills together with effective listening and communication skills to regain his confidence so that future relationships will be positive and to minimise the negative affect of the abortion. Dinkmeyer(1990: 99+121) provides the following techniques to improve communication:-

- Effective listening by "hearing" both non verbal and verbal messages. Reflect (mirror) the person's feelings and circumstances of those feelings. Use open responses to encourage further communication.
- Use "I" messages to express one's own feelings and concerns. The format for an 'I message' is "When .....,I feel.....because ....."

Using these two techniques can not only help problem solving but also enhance the quality of a relationship.

Lastly the educational psychologist must emphasise the following aspects about a relationship:

- that it is important to share feelings and experiences with each other as this helps each partner to gain insight and a better understanding of the other.
- negative feelings must not be avoided but rather expressed. If these feelings are allowed to surface and be experienced they can be put into a useful perspective.

- emphasise the importance of communication, as lack of communication shows disinterest and a lack of concern for their partner.

All these guidelines are directed at assisting the adolescent to mobilise his resources so that he can reach his full potential. A holistic approach is recommended so that the adolescent can integrate and internalise the experience in a positive manner. I would like to conclude with these words from Stephen McCallister (abortion counsellor) in Shostak and Mclouth (1984: 241)

"A man repressing strong feelings, who finds himself confronted with uncomfortable or hostile professionals, and no positive role to play in resolving the pregnancy, doesn't have much incentive to involve himself or make his feelings known. Yet, we know from both women and men that involving the man is important. New avenues and opportunities for involvement of men in pregnancy counselling and abortion need to be adopted. Men will not be part of what is, in essence, a no-win situation. Men and women need roles other than those of victims and villains"

#### 4.3 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to describe and explore how the adolescent father experiences the abortion his partner had.

Five themes were identified namely:

The loss of a relationship with his girlfriend and baby due to the abortion, feelings of guilt and helplessness as a result of not being involved in the abortion, exclusion from the decision together with not being acknowledged as the father, a need to accept responsibility for their actions and overwhelming thoughts about the abortion and the future.

These themes were obtained through phenomenological interviews which were recorded on audiotape and transcribed together with fieldnotes based on observations. An independent coder was used to obtain consensus about the themes which were identified.

This research, together with other literature, shows that at least 80% of all relationships are affected by an abortion. The deterioration of the relationship is interlinked with the fact that the adolescent father is excluded from the decision to abort. This leads to fathers feeling helpless and guilty. The guilt may stem from a moral issue about abortion.

Adolescent fathers want to conform to the social norm which is to accept responsibility for their actions. This responsibility takes different forms, depending on the individual, it can range from offering financial support to wanting to marry his adolescent partner.

The second phase of this research was to formulate guidelines for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential. These guidelines are discussed in accordance with the identified themes. The educational psychologist must have a holistic approach which includes all five themes.

#### **4.4 LIMITATIONS**

Due to the sensitivity of the abortion issue, only three adolescent fathers were prepared to be interviewed. This means that interviews could not be done until the data was saturated.

Together with this very little research has been done on the affect abortion has on the male.

However, the themes that were identified could be be verified using the limited literature available.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations are made about the application possibilities of this research as well as the possibilities for further research.

#### **4.5.1 Application possibilities for the educational psychologist**

This research was done to explore and describe the adolescent father's experience of his partners abortion. Insight into the adolescent father's experience is essential in order to be able to assist him to mobilise his resources so that he can reach his full potential. The guidelines can be used by the educational psychologist to guide the adolescent father to reach his full potential.

Findings of the research can be published in magazine articles and used in radio or television programmes, to make the public more aware of men's feelings about the abortion. This will help to make people more sympathetic towards men and acknowledge their feelings.

The results can be printed in a pamphlet, which could be available at clinics. This would provide the information, that the emotions being experienced by the male, are common feelings which are shared by a number of the men who have gone through the process. Included in the pamphlet could be suggestions for possible courses of action which may be taken to lessen the trauma of the abortion experience.



#### **4.5.2 Possibilities for further research**

There is a strong need for more research to be done on men and abortion. All information obtained together with the results of this research can be used to write a programme to assist men whose partners have had an abortion. At the same time more research needs to be done on the effect abortion has on relationships so that a programme can be drawn up to help couples to overcome the trauma of abortion without losing their relationship.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

There is very little known about the male's experience of abortion. This opens one's eyes to the stark and regrettable features of the scene - the absence of any helpful preparation for the experience, the embarrassment and sense of uselessness men feel during the abortion, the wish

to talk about it versus the social pressure to tell no one and the need to appear supportive regardless of their own ambivalence and heartache. This leads one to ask if there isn't a better way for males to help their partners and themselves meet the abortion challenge.



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## **ADDENDUM 1**

### **PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH.**

Dear Sir,

Request for permission to conduct research.

I am an M.Ed (Educational Psychology) student at the Rand Afrikaans University, at the moment I am busy doing a research project on how the adolescent father experiences the abortion his partner had.

The research is under the supervision of Professor C.P.H. Myburgh (Faculty of Education) and Professor M. Poggenpoel (Faculty of Nursing).

The aim of the study is to explore and describe how adolescent fathers, whose adolescent partners have had an abortion, experienced the abortion.

To complete the study I need interviews with adolescent fathers, between the ages of 13 and 19 years old, whose adolescent partners have had an abortion. The length of these interviews will be between 45 and 60 minutes. Each interview will be audiotaped.

To ensure each persons anonymity, I guarantee that the participants names will not be used in the study. Once the audiotapes have been transcribed, they will be destroyed. The transcribed material will only be used by myself and one independent coder.

The long-term advantage of this study is that these findings will be used to formulate guidelines for the educational psychologist to assist the adolescent father to mobilise his resources so that he can achieve his full potential.

A summary of the research findings will be made available to your organisation.

Signed at ..... on the ..... day of..... 1997.

.....

**K.J. Joubert (Mrs) BA, HDE, B.Ed (Educational Psychology)**

**M.Ed (Educational Psychology) Candidate.**

**Researcher**

.....

**Studyleader**

**Professor C.P.H. Myburgh**

**Faculty of Education.**



## ADDENDUM 2

### TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

RESEARCHER: Tell me how you experienced the abortion your partner had.

RESPONDENT: Well, I was just a little bit upset, I mean. I just wish....wish she had told me. I only found out a few weeks afterwards. I wish she had told me. I mean apparently she paid quite a bit of money to get it done. I mean I would have paid the whole amount, you know, - just wish she had told me. Apparently she didn't want to tell me because ....that hmm. You know she didn't want to tell me because she thought I wouldn't want her to have an abortion - you know what I mean. I mean it's all a..... I would have, I would have supported her all the way, sure, and umm....I don't know you just.... keep on wishing she had told you. You can't stop thinking about it, you know what I mean. You always think about it, and ....what she's actually going through at, at, at the time. But uhh....I don't know.

RESEARCHER: You say you keep on thinking about it. Can you tell me more about that?

RESPONDENT: Umm...When I say I keep on thinking about it, it's just .....you think about it.....About having a kid. "Jislaaik" if she'd fallen pregnant or something like and had the kid, I'd have been a father. I definitely would have

helped her out all the way, whether she fell pregnant or not. I just wish she had told me. Mean to find out from your friends, you know.

RESEARCHER: It sounds to me as if you really needed to be told.

RESPONDENT: Uhm....That's all it was. If I was told, I'd have felt much better. It's just the fact that she was hiding it from me.

RESEARCHER: So you say to me, if she had told you, you would have felt much better. Can you tell me more about that.

RESPONDENT: I would have felt, I don't know. It's just the thing ..... It's the fact she'd hide it from me. You know like ..... hide things from me..... especially that type of thing. If she had told me, I would have been there for her all the time, you know what I mean. Apparently she was not well during.....obviously it effects me at the moment. If she had told me I would have been there for her all the time.

RESEARCHER: So you feel you were denied the fact of being with her, or to be able to be there for her.

RESPONDENT: For me to be able to be there for her?

RESEARCHER: Uuh Uuh

RESPONDENT: I would have been... Moneywise, whatever she needed. Definitely.



RESEARCHER: Earlier on you spoke about being a father, can you tell me more about that.

RESPONDENT: About being a father?

RESEARCHER: Uuh Uuh

RESPONDENT: I don't want to be a father. Just if I, if I, if she'd fallen pregnant there's nothing that you can do about it, just support her.

RESEARCHER: Uhm.

RESPONDENT: But, uhh, I would have supported her all the way. What more can you do?

RESEARCHER: So you feel there is nothing that could have been done about it?

RESPONDENT: Could have done about what?

RESEARCHER: About the situation.

RESPONDENT: What could be done about it?

RESEARCHER: Uuhm.

RESPONDENT: I don't understand it.

RESEARCHER: You really wish that she had told you.

RESPONDENT: Uhm. Well, ..., I ..., yes. You know I couldn't do anything. She had it already.

RESEARCHER: And if she told you before, before she had the abortion?

RESPONDENT: I would've said to her, what do you want? I would have told her what I want and then we could have worked on that.

RESEARCHER: Can you tell me more about what you would have wanted?

RESPONDENT: The abortion. I would definitely have wanted the abortion. Cause, jeez, I mean, I am still young. I can't have a kid.

RESEARCHER: So you would also have chosen the abortion? What about the child?

RESPONDENT: Well, I mean it wasn't really even a month and a half. It can't really be that formed yet, you know what I mean? So I mean it wasn't really a kid. So that's still fine, but if she was three months pregnant, forget it - you then have the kid.

RESEARCHER: So it would've been different if she was further along?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, but three months down the line? No ways, that's, that's stupid. You can't go destroy something like that, ... it's a baby. I would have supported her anyway... The more I think about it...

RESEARCHER: And the more you think about it?

RESPONDENT: The more I think about it? Well you eventually start to learn to live with that, you know, the fact that you know you can do nothing about it. I mean all you can do is just wish she had told you.

RESEARCHER: You say you learn to live with it.

RESPONDENT: Because there's nothing you can do about it. So you just make the best of it.

RESEARCHER: Make the best of it?

RESPONDENT: Well, in the situation, she hasn't told me, so I mean, I can do nothing about it. There's no point in getting all morbid and everything about it if there's nothing you can do.

RESEARCHER: If you say there's no point in getting morbid about it, did you get morbid about it?

RESPONDENT: At first, well I mean for the first couple of weeks, ja, I was hoping that she would tell me. Time and time, when she didn't return my message, I clicked she wasn't going to tell me. So I mean now I'm just trying to forget about it.

RESEARCHER: So, if I listen to what you saying, you were morbid about the fact that she didn't tell you and not about the abortion.

**RESPONDENT:** Uhm...Both, she should have told me and then depending on the time, obviously if she had, had the abortion say now, four months down the line, I would have definitely opposed it, but I mean because... because now it was still early, a month and a half. I mean it wasn't that important to me.

**RESEARCHER:** So, it was more about her not telling you?

**RESPONDENT:** Hmm.... she should have told me .... definitely.

**RESEARCHER:** So you think it would have made a difference to you as a person if she had told you?

**RESPONDENT:** Hmm.....we could have gone through that together...decided together. You know....whatever. We could have gone through it together.

**RESEARCHER:** So, to me it sounds as though the fact that you were left out, hurt you the most.

**RESPONDENT:** Hmm, I shouldn't have been left out, ja...That is mainly the whole story on my part.

**RESEARCHER:** So, you feel left out?

**RESPONDENT:** Left out?

**RESEARCHER:** Uhm

**RESPONDENT:** Yes, I suppose. I mean, I'm getting over the idea now, but I still don't know what I would do if she had to come up to me and tell me , I don't know what I would do. I have to live with it.

**RESEARCHER:** Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

**RESPONDENT:** Not really. It's just she should have told me. That's all. I would have supported her, I would have been there for her. We could have gone through it together.

**RESEARCHER:** I can see it really hurts you.

**RESPONDENT:** I don't know. It's to late now, there's nothing I can do now. It's just I can't approach her, and she hasn't told me. She told one person and that person told me.



## **ADDENDUM 3**

### **PROTOCOL FOR INDEPENDENT CODER TO ANALYSE DATA**

Dear Colleague

Please code the transcripts of the interviews as follows:

1. Firstly read through the whole transcript. Ideas that come to mind can be written in the margin.
2. Read through the transcript again underlining words, sentences and themes that reflect the adolescent father's experience.
3. Identify the main categories in the data.
4. Subcategories are identified under each main category by grouping data in a logical manner.
5. The independent coder and researcher meet to obtain consensus about the themes and the relationship between them.

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