

**Graphic family sculpting as a visual data
collection technique in parent-adolescent
relational research**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree *Masters of Arts in Positive
Psychology* at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North West
University

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Summary

Considering the relative newness of the field of positive psychology in South Africa, the need for empirical research, including research regarding research techniques that could have a unique contribution to our knowledge within this field, becomes clear. Positive relationships and relational well-being is a prominent construct in the field of positive psychology. The parent-adolescent relationship specifically, is of interest due to its foundational nature and the change that the parent-adolescent relationship undergoes due to changes during adolescence. While various studies point to the usefulness of visual data collection techniques with populations that tend to be harder to reach, including adolescents, social sciences and the field of psychology has been slow to realise the potential of visual techniques. The aim of this study is therefore to describe graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data collection technique by illustrating its use in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships in a South African context. The findings are indicative that graphic family sculpting as a projective visual data collection method can produce rich and insightful information with regard to families, family dynamics, and family relationships. The findings are also indicative that the technique can be used to suggest relational family dynamics and interactions that are more effective.

Key words: Graphic family sculpting, parent-adolescent relationship, positive psychology, positive relationships, relational well-being

Permission to Submit Study for Examination Purposes

As the supervisor of the study entitled *Graphic family sculpting as a visual data collection technique in parent-adolescent relational research*, I hereby give permission that the study as indicated above may be submitted by the candidate, V Koen, for the purpose of examination in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Positive Psychology.



C. van Eeden.

Supervisor

Prof. C van Eeden

Declaration by Researcher

I, Vicki Koen, hereby declare that the study entitled *Graphic family sculpting as a visual data collection technique in parent-adolescent relational research* is a product of my own work and that all cited sources have been acknowledged and referenced. The article that forms part of this mini-dissertation, namely *Graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data-collection method: An example of South African female adolescents*, has been published in the Journal of Family Studies and is included in this mini-dissertation for examination purposes in accordance with the journal's author agreement.



Dr V Koen

Declaration by Language Editor

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11 June 2018

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that the dissertation with the title *Graphic family sculpting as a visual data collection technique in parent-adolescent relational research* has been edited. I am a registered member of the South African Translators' Institute and a qualified language practitioner.

I hereby acknowledge that sections one and three of this document have undergone a proper and professional language edit and section two has been proofread. The onus rests on the client to accept or reject any changes suggested.

Yours sincerely



Wendy Barrow

MA (Language Practice) – NWU

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Preface

This mini dissertation entitled *Graphic family sculpting as a visual data collection technique in parent-adolescent relational research* is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree Master of Arts in Positive Psychology. The curriculum of this degree consists of a total of 180 credits of which the mini-dissertation makes up 60 credits.

In line with rule 4.10.5 of the North-West University's latest General Academic Rules, the research product is submitted in the form of a research article. Regarding the format of the research product, the same rule indicates that the product must be presented for examination purposes as an integrated unit, supplemented with a problem statement, an introduction and a synoptic conclusion as prescribed by faculty rules and the manuscript submission guidelines, or the url link to the manuscript guidelines, of the journal or journals concerned. This mini-dissertation therefore consists of three sections: 1) introduction and problem statement, 2) journal guidelines and article, and 3) conclusions.

The article included in this mini-dissertation, *Graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data-collection method: An example of South African female adolescents*, has been published in the Journal of Family Studies and is included in this mini-dissertation for examination purposes in accordance with the Journal's author agreement, which states that the author has the right to include the article in a thesis or dissertation that is not to be published commercially, provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction and Problem Statement

Positive psychology is focused on the scientific study of optimal human functioning, human flourishing, and what enables individuals and communities to thrive (International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA), 2007; Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). According to Wissing (2014), this focus is partly regarded as the result of the once unbalanced and one-sided focus of traditional psychology on human pathology and deficits. While the field of positive psychology does not disregard the essential role that traditional psychology fulfils, the reasoning behind the field of positive psychology is that, in order to gain a balanced and complementary view of a person or persons, one cannot only regard half of a person and focus on human weakness, but that one needs to regard the gestalt, including human strengths.

One of the more prominent constructs applicable to the field of positive psychology, is that of positive relationships or relational well-being. Hornby (2001) defines a relationship as the manner in which two human beings behave towards each other. The Dictionary of Psychology (Reber & Reber, 2001) refers to a primary relationship as a relationship that is based on emotional ties and commitment between two people and as being basic and long-lasting in nature.

The Mental Health Continuum Model of Keyes (2002) consists of three main components, including psychological or personal well-being, social well-being, and emotional well-being. The component of psychological or personal well-being includes the facet of positive relations, which refers to having relationships with others that are characterised by warmth, trust and satisfaction; being empathetic, affectionate and intimate with others; and having a grasp of the give-and-take nature of relationships with others (Keyes, 2002). Ryff's (1995) Model of Psychological Well-being identifies six categories of well-being, including the experience of positive relationships with others, similar to the description of Keyes (2002)

given above. Seligman's (2011) PERMA model argues that well-being consists of five prominent elements. One of these elements is positive relationships, which Seligman (2011) argues is of great import in the well-being of people as well as a central facet of people's flourishing; also, because the experience of positive relationships with others can contribute to people's experience of meaning in their lives. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build model of positive emotions also alludes to the role of having relationships with and interacting with others, in the experience of positive emotions.

The parent-adolescent relationship specifically, is regarded to be a foundational relationship due to its foundational role in the attachment and relatedness development of human beings (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The developmental phase of adolescence is often regarded as a stormy period in which there is a lot of conflict between parents and adolescents (Louw & Louw, 2007). In contrast to this, psychologists generally concur that the perceived negative behaviour of adolescents is not nearly as problematic as it once appeared to be and that adolescence is a normal period of development during which most adolescents do not experience any significant maladjustment and mostly share the values of their parents (Louw & Louw, 2007). However, the quality of the relationship between parents and their adolescents, is the determining factor in this regard (Louw & Louw, 2014).

The relationship between parents and adolescents undergoes notable changes during the period of adolescence, which can lead to adolescents questioning parental values and parent rules, distance between parents and adolescents, and argumentativeness. Yet, empirical evidence suggests that conflict between parents and adolescents is not nearly as intense as initially perceived and that adolescents mostly get along well with their parents, and also respect their parents (Louw & Louw, 2007). Furthermore, conflict that is experienced between parents and their adolescent children usually does not lead to permanent damage in their relationship. It should be noted that a certain amount of conflict is inevitable and may in

fact be necessary for the personality development of adolescents (Louw & Louw, 2007). Kocayoruk (2012) and Vallerand (2000) suggest that a positively experienced parent-adolescent relationship can facilitate the development of autonomy, relatedness, competence, and self-motivation.

The field of positive psychology is still relatively emergent in South Africa. The necessity to contribute to empirical knowledge in this field in a South African context is called for. Such contribution includes empirical knowledge on research techniques that can uniquely enhance the field. In the light of this, this study's focus is on graphic family sculpting as a visual data collection technique in parent-adolescent relational research in the South African context. Positive relationships and relational well-being is one of the more prominent constructs in positive psychology (Du Toit, Wissing, & Khumalo, 2014), but are also fields of concern in South Africa, since research by Holborn and Eddy (2011) have indicated the serious challenges in restoring the quality of family life of many African families after the damages done by the apartheid system and the labour practices of that dispensation.

Working in the field of psychological research, I have been questioned about the use of graphic family sculpting in research and for presenting it as a possible qualitative data collection method in research methodology modules. I soon discovered that the negative view to visual and projective data collection was not limited purely to the graphic family sculpting technique and that other researchers and academics have had similar experiences. The work of various authors suggest that social sciences have been slow to realise the potential of visual methods in research (Collier, 2002; Frith, Riley, Archer, & Gleeson, 2005; Goodwin, 2002; Lynn & Lea, 2005; Mead, 1995; Rose, 2000). As Frith et al. (2005) explained, however, the use of visual methods in research could to strengthen research in the field of psychology by, for example, enabling researchers to reach harder-to-reach populations, by

giving participants different means by which to express themselves and expanding the experience and understanding of both researchers and their audiences regarding the topic of investigation.

Various studies point to the successful use of visual data collection methods with harder-to-reach populations, including adolescents (Bolton, Pole, & Mizen, 2001; Hanna & Jacobs, 1993; Sparrman, 2005). Zartler and Richter (2014) argued that the use of visual methods in the collection of data can enable younger participants such as adolescents, to verbalise their thoughts and can facilitate narratives regarding aspects that are not displayed. Cameron and Theron (2011) point to the necessity of conducting visual research with younger participants in order to give them a voice and to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. Cameron and Theron (2011) further argued that adolescents have powerful statements regarding their personal experiences and that their visual narratives have the potential to inform theory and practice, since they can be powerful, insightful, engaging and authentic in nature. While there are various visual methods that can be applied in research and data collection, the proposed study's focus is on graphic family sculpting with regard to parent-adolescent relational research.

Perkins (1999) described family sculpting as a visual representation of a client's current familial situation based on his/her experience thereof, which allows practitioners to explore and gain insight into a client's family dynamics. Perkins (1999) also eluded to different forms of family sculpting. The first of these is the actual use of family members, where clients arrange or place their actual family members as they wish. In the second form of family sculpting, clients use surrogates that represent their respective family members. Lastly, there are symbolic representations of family sculpting that make use of drawn diagrams.

Graphic family sculpting is a form of family sculpting symbolic representation. The technique was developed by a South African psychologist (Venter, 1993) as a projective

therapeutic technique with the purpose of enabling family members to understand and make sense of their emotional experiences regarding family matters. Considering the use of symbolic representation, graphic family sculpting requires that participants separately draw their current family on an unused A4 page by representing every member of their family with a circle and to then provide other appropriate, written information on their drawing or sculpting (Venter, 1993). Research by Venter (1993) has found graphic family sculpting to be therapeutic in family therapy with troubled families, but also in enhancing family communication, relatedness and well-being.

The aim of this study is to describe graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data collection technique, by illustrating its use in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships in the South African context.

Conclusion

The first section of this study presents the background of the study, including the introduction and problem statement. The following section offers the journal guidelines of the Journal of Family Studies in which the article has been published, as well as the article.

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SECTION 2

JOURNAL GUIDELINES AND ARTICLE

Journal Guidelines

The article has been published the *Journal of Family Studies*. The author instructions of the journal are as follows:

Manuscript format and style guidelines

The manuscript must be in English¹, and the spelling and punctuation style consistent. The *Journal of Family Studies* allows a manuscript of 5000 – 8000 words and must include a word count. Compilation of the manuscript is prescribed: Title page (including Acknowledgements); abstract (150 words); keywords (3-10); main text (with concise section headings); acknowledgements; references; appendices (as appropriate).

Times New Roman is prescribed as Font, with the font size, 12 point and margins of at least 2.5 cm. The guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition) for manuscript and references must be followed. The manuscripts must be submitted with no identifying information in a PDF format.

Title page format and guidelines

This must be a separate PDF file including the title of the article and the full names of the author and co-authors. The author's current positions, affiliations, email addresses, telephone and fax numbers should be included. One author must be identified as the corresponding author, with an email address displayed in the article PDF and the online article.

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The author who submits the manuscript to *Journal of Family Studies* undertakes that it has not been published anywhere else and is not under consideration by another journal but committed to publish in the *Journal of Family Studies* by submission of the manuscript.

Manuscript submission

¹ The reader should please note that although the dissertation is written in UK English, the article that was submitted to the *Journal of Family Studies* was written in US English.

Journal of Family Studies ScholarOne Manuscripts website is used for the online submission and peer-review process. Authors will have to set up an online account on the TAYLOR & FRANCIS submission centre. A new submission can be initiated from this account. Authors will be required to provide certain information e.g. author names, contact information, keywords and abstract. The title page and main document should then be uploaded separately to be ready for a blind review.

Ethics and responsibility

Ethical conduct of all participants involved is of utmost importance.

- All authors are represented accurately.
- The data is original and represents the research accurately.
- Materials from other sources are referenced correctly.
- Participants are credited and consent was obtained for publication.
- Conflict of interest are declared.
- Research ethic guidelines are followed.
- Errors will be reported to the journal editor and corrected.
- The manuscript has been submitted only to *Journal of Family Studies*.

References

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Article

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Graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data-collection method: An example of South African female adolescents

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Abstract

Graphic family sculpting is a drawing technique which is a modified form of family sculpting. Initially developed by Chris Venter, the technique was intended as a projective, therapeutic technique to enable family members to understand and make sense of their emotional experiences of family matters. The aim of this article is to describe graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data collection technique by illustrating its use in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships in a South African context. African adolescent females (n = 30) between the ages of 13 and 18 were sampled through the implementation of purposeful sampling. The sculptings were analyzed with the use of guidelines provided by Venter and were thematically analyzed. The findings illustrate the value of graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data collection method and recommendations are made for the use of graphic family sculpting in research.

Keywords: *graphic family sculpting, parent-adolescent relationship, visual projective data collection method, South Africa*

Introduction and Problem Statement

Mead (1995) observes that social sciences are generally disciplines of words. Frith, Riley, Archer, and Gleeson (2005) and Rose (2000) point out that social sciences have a propensity to favor the verbal. The visual is often regarded as ‘unsystematic’, ‘heterogeneous’ or ‘multivocal’ (Goodwin, 2002; Lynn & Lea, 2005), resulting in an unwillingness to give the visual a more noteworthy position and to apply visual methods as a source of knowledge construction (Collier, 2002; Frith et al., 2005). Yet, as Lynn and Lea (2005) point out, the world we live in is strongly influenced by the visual. Harper (2002, p. 13) supports this argument and explains that “images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilizes less of the brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words.”

Frith et al. (2005) hold forth that the unique and distinctive visual medium has the potential to strengthen research and work in psychology and refer to three possible ways in which visual methods may do so: 1) Visual methods have proven to be effective in populations that are generally hard to reach or that are challenging to recruit and/or engage in research with the use of other methods (including children and adolescents) (Bolton, Pole & Mizen, 2001); 2) Visual methods have the potential to change the voice of the research by providing participants with a different way to express themselves; and 3) Visual methods can allow the researcher and audience to broaden their experience and comprehension of the topic under investigation since providing results both in visual and verbal/written form, can result in research that allows for a more in-depth and broader understanding.

Despite the historical marginalization of visual methods in social sciences (Frith et al., 2005; Guillemin, 2004; Lynn & Lea, 2005), existing literature points to an increase in the use of visual-, visual participatory-, and visual projective methods (also in social research) and

highlights the valuable role that these methods can play in research with participants of all ages (Clark, 2011; Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2015; Guillemin, 2004). This is also true in the case of South African research and is illustrated in the work of De Lange, Mitchell, and Stuart (2008), Govender and Reddy (2011), Theron, Geyer, Strydom, and Delpont (2010), Theron, Mitchell, Smith, and Stuart (2011), Roos and Ferreira (2008), Roos (2008); Roos (2012), and Koen, Van Eeden, and Rothmann (2012).

Evidence indicates that a variety of visual methods (also used in tandem with more traditional qualitative techniques such as interviewing) are increasingly being used for research purposes. Examples include drawings (Theron, Mitchell, Smith & Stuart, 2011), photovoice (Wang, 1999), photo essay (Casey & Dollinger, 2007; Harper, 2002), photo elicitation (Lorenz & Kolb, 2009), collage making, concept mapping (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010), and the Mmogo-method (Roos, 2008). Some of these methods reportedly play a valuable role in research with children, adolescents and families.

Bolton et al. (2001), Hanna and Jacobs (1993) and Sparrman (2005) illustrate that visual data collection methods have been successfully used with populations that tend to be hard to reach, including adolescents. Zartler and Richter (2014) explain that visual methods such as photographs can help youth to verbalize their thoughts and can also facilitate narrations on aspects that are not displayed. In research that implemented drawings and cartoons as a visual method, Cameron and Theron (2011) state the necessity of doing this type of research with youth and giving them a voice in order to understand their experiences. They go on to say that adolescents have powerful statements to make about their own experiences and the situations that they find themselves in, that their visual narratives can be powerful, insightful, engaging and veridical and have the potential to inform both theory and practice (Cameron & Theron, 2011). Certain visual methods, such as emotion maps can also be adapted to use through technology and are therefore well suited for research with youth (Gabb & Singh,

2015). Apart from the apparent benefits of use of visual methods in research with youth, evidence also highlights the substantial benefits that visual methods can have in research with families (Zartler & Richter, 2014).

Hill, Laybourn, and Borland (1996) explain that the flexibility of visual methods provides researchers with the opportunity to take account of children's diversity and age within family research. Deacon (2000) and Gabb (2008) find that visual methods in family research can aid in overcoming generational competencies that can divide parents and children. Visual methods can therefore be a valuable methodological resource, especially in cases where the family members have limited language skills (Clark & Moss, 2001). Of the visual methods being applied in family research, family photography has become quite popular.

Schwartz (1989), for example, applied photography as ethnographic data in order to study sociocultural continuity and change across generations in farm families, while Musello (1980) made use of family photographs to study the so-called "home-mode". Rose (2010) points out that family photographs can give insight into family members' understanding and perception of who constitutes family. More recently, Zartler and Richter's (2014) research with photo interviews suggests that the use of photography as a visual method can encourage youth to talk about sensitive aspects of their family life that are difficult to articulate. They go on to explain that it is easier for children to talk about a visual prompt such as a photograph than it is to talk about something abstract (Zartler & Richter, 2014). Furthermore, photo interviews proved to be well-suited for research involving children since it is easier for them to participate and to stay interested in participating, while the inclusion of other family members as participants can provide an even greater understanding of family relationships and the lives of children within families (Zartler & Richter, 2014).

The emotion map is another example of a visual method used in research on families and family relationships and was pioneered by Gabb (2008). Gabb and Singh (2015) report on the

value of emotion maps in research with families and state that the technique provides insight into the character and quality of everyday experience and everyday relating practices (Gabb, 2009) and has the potential to produce a great breadth of data. They go on to explain that emotion maps do not require literacy or language skills and can therefore be completed equally by both parents and children and in this manner, allow for children's perspectives to be shared (Gabb & Singh, 2015).

The genogram or family map (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008) seems to be one of the more popular and commonly used visual methods by family therapists and in family research since this method provides an opportunity for researchers to also engage with youth in families (Gabb & Singh, 2015). The cultural genogram (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995) has also found to be effective in research and work with intercultural couples. Gabb and Singh (2015) point out that what a number of visual and action methods, including semantic polarities, enactments, positioning and sculpting (Cade, 1982; Campbell & Groenbaek, 2006; Minuchin, 1975; Papp, 1982; Satir, 1972) have in common, is that they rely on spatial metaphors. In particular, the method of sculpting has been extended and adapted by researchers such as Rober (2009), and Papp, Scheinkman, and Malpas (2013) to better suite their needs. Graphic family sculpting, which is a modified form of family sculpting, is a drawing technique that was initially developed by Venter (1993, p.12) as a projective and diagnostic technique to "refine complex, and often vague family issues in a simple, workable form" and is discussed next.

Graphic Family Sculpting

The graphic family sculpting technique requires that participants individually draw their present family on a blank sheet of A4 paper by representing each person with a circle and to then provide other relevant, written information on the sketch (Venter, 1993). The technique

is discussed in detail below. Through the use of the technique, family members are given the means to better understand their emotional experiences regarding their family matters. In the context of this research, the technique was implemented as a visual projective data collection method and was implemented as one of two qualitative data collection techniques (the other data collection technique being focus group interviews) regarding African female adolescents' experience of parent-adolescent relationships in a South African context. Taking into consideration that family sculpting and graphic family sculpting has also been used in other South African studies (Kirsten, Van Lelleyveld, & Venter, 2006; Marchetti-Mercer & Cleaver, 2000; Smith & Stevens-Smith, 1992) and the proven value of visual data collection methods with adolescents (Bolton et al., 2001; Cameron & Theron, 2011; Hanna & Jacobs, 1993; Sparrman, 2005), the researcher felt that the technique may be a valuable visual projective data collection method with African female adolescents in a South African context.

The projective nature of the technique may also be valuable in research. Murstein and Pryer (1959, p. 353) define projection as "the manifestation of behavior by an individual which indicates some emotional value or need of the individual." Projection refers to unconscious feelings, thoughts, and experiences that individuals project onto something other than the self (Jung, 1966). Available literature is indicative that more direct research methods such as interviews and questionnaires can be less useful when used to obtain an understanding of both conscious and unconscious processes (Donoghue, 2000; Boddy, 2005; Keller, Fleury, Perez, Ainsworth, & Vaughan, 2009; Roos, 2012). Roos (2012) points out that visual projective data collection methods are frequently utilized to gain insight and understanding into the factors (such as social, cultural and contextual) that underlie the behavior of people. Roos (2012) further explains that even the most private aspects of an individual's life are constructed socially and is produced within the context of culture and society. Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody (2001) support this view and hold the premise that

personal and unconscious processes have a strong impact on individuals' social and conscious processes as well as structures of collective human life. The projective nature of graphic family sculpting can therefore be useful in gaining an understanding of individuals' lives, experiences, feelings, and so forth within the context of family. It should be noted, however, that for the purpose of this research, the projective nature of the technique was not applied in a therapeutic manner, but purely as a research data collection method to collect data on different levels of consciousness.

The potential also exists for 'defamiliarization' when utilizing visual methods such as graphic family sculpting. The term defamiliarization was first coined by Shklovsky, a Russian formalist who theorized that as time passes, people's perceptions of familiar and everyday situations become stale and that art has the potential to address this automatization as it forces people to slow down their perceptions and to truly notice (Gurevitch, 1998; Mannay, 2010). Kaomea (2003) applied defamiliarization analytical tools in research with children in order to identify previously unknown accounts regarding the educational program in postcolonial Hawaii. The use of drawings as a visual method allowed Kaomea to move beyond the habitual responses regarding the program and to make the familiar setting more perceptible. This example illustrates how the utilization of a visual approach to data collection has the potential to identify different ways of knowing and understanding, opening up experiences, overcoming the confines of language and making the familiar strange (Gauntlett, 2007; Mannay, 2010).

Limitations of Visual Methods

It is important to note that discussions of creative approaches, including visual methods have moved to a post-popular juncture where both researchers and practitioners are considering the limitations of these methods. Packard (2008) points out that while it is important to

empirically determine the effectiveness of visual methods, it is just as important to explore the limitations thereof so that expectations regarding research are realistic and to identify the areas that require attention. Some researchers point specifically to limitations regarding the participatory assumptions that are made regarding visual methods and that these assumptions are increasingly subject to scrutiny (Buckingham, 2009; Lomax, Fink, Singh, & High, 2011). Drawing on his experience in the use of a visual approach with chronic homeless participants, Packard (2008), reports that there is much theoretical and empirical work to be done regarding the use of visual methods for research purposes. He goes on to explain that visual methods do not inherently create co-collaborators and that his data suggests that social researchers should rethink their approach when conducting research with marginalized populations since the participants in his study did not possess the power or knowledge to fulfill their role as co-collaborators (Packard, 2008). Rose (2014) suggests that the utilization of visual research methods do not create ‘social’ articulated through culturally mediated images or the competence of research participants in using such images.

Based on a convention of 13 scholars from a variety of disciplines (education, medicine, public health and human rights) who have applied visual methods in their research with the purpose to reflect on accumulated knowledge and experience, Luttrell and Chalfen (2010) identify various concerns regarding the use of visual methods in research. Some of these concerns include uncertainty and complexity with regard to the analyses or interpretation of images, ethical concerns (for example, ownership and control of images and the contexts in which these images are exhibited) and the role that researchers, others and imagined audiences might have on what is shared and how these influences should be made visible, analyzed and theorized.

It is also important to note that not all visual research methods suit all participants (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Johnson, Pfister, & Vindrola-Padros, 2012). Johnson et al.

(2012) report that in their use of visual methods, they found that the suitability of these methods were dependent on the research setting and the unique characteristics of their participants. Based on research conducted with children in Argentina, Vindrola-Padros (2012), reports that drawing was not a suitable research method for children of all ages and that the children's participation were also influenced by what people in their immediate environment would think of this. Based on her research in Kenya, Johnson (2011) found that drawing was not a suitable research method because of the participants' association of drawing with schoolwork.

Research Question and Aim

Based on the discussion above, the following research question is posed: Is graphic family sculpting effective as a visual projective data-collection technique? The aim of this article is therefore to describe graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data collection technique by illustrating its use in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships in a South African context.

Method

The following section provides a discussion of the research design, participants and sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research design

For the purpose of this research, graphic family sculpting was applied in a qualitative, explorative-descriptive research design (Botma, Greeff, Maluadzi, & Wright, 2010). The researcher held the ontological assumption that there are many realities/truths and subscribed to the epistemological assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore the participants and researcher collaborated in providing an in-depth description of the

experiences of the participants. Botma et al. (2010) explain that an exploratory study serves to collect new data if there is little or no previous research available on the topic of inquiry. Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) refer to a descriptive approach as precisely describing phenomena and being aware of the varieties that a phenomenon can materialize in, as well as the aspects thereof. The research design was therefore appropriate for this research.

Participants and setting

The sample included thirty ($n = 30$) African adolescent female learners of a secondary school in Randfontein, Gauteng who were sampled through the use of a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 2013). The setting for graphic family sculpting and focus group interviews was a classroom at the school that participants attended at the time. Participants had to: be grade 8 to 12 learners; be between the ages of 13 to 18 years; be African females; live with either one or both parents; be willing to participate in the study; and be proficiently literate in English.

Data collection

Data collection took place through the use of graphic family sculpting and focus group interviews. For the purpose of this article, the focus is on the graphic family sculpting and detail regarding the technique is provided below.

The technique required that the African female adolescent participants draw their present family on a blank sheet of A4 paper by representing each person with a circle and to then provide other relevant information on the sketch (Venter, 1993). It is important to note that although the technique is strongly visually focused, verbal and/or written methods play an integral role in the technique, which is in line with auteur theory and the view of various

authors who maintain that visual and verbal/written methods complement each other (Frith et al., 2005; Guillemin, 2004; Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, & Campbell, 2011; Rose, 2001).

The following instructions were given (Venter, 1993):

- Draw your family on one side of the paper by presenting each member with a circle. Draw the circles as big as you like and use as much space on the paper as you wish. Now write (in the circle or next to it) the name and age of the family member.
- Number each circle according to the order in which you drew them.
- On the back of the paper, next to number 1, write down if you have discovered or learned anything new about your family and what it is that you have learned/discovered.
- Write next to each circle if the person is sitting, lying down or standing. You can describe the positions in more detail if you like, for example sitting comfortably.
- On the back of the paper, next to number 2, write down if you have learned or discovered anything new about your family and what it is that you have learned/discovered.
- Indicate the direction in which the person is looking by drawing an arrow pointing in the direction that the family member is looking. Each member can only look in one direction. If it is too difficult to let a member only look in one direction you can use dotted lines to indicate if that member is looking in more than one direction.
- On the back of the paper, next to number 3, write down if you have learned or discovered anything new about your family and what it is that you have learned/discovered.
- Give each member a name. Choose a name that you think represents the way in which the family has labeled that person, for example the quiet one, the smart one, the pretty

one. Write down the name that you gave each member next to each circle and indicate it with an (N).

- On the back of the paper, next to number 4, write down if you have learned or discovered anything new about your family and what it is that you have learned/discovered.
- Allocate a particular emotion to each member of the family and write down the emotion next to each circle by indicating it with an (E).
- On the back of the paper, next to number 5, write down if you have learned or discovered anything new about your family and what it is that you learned/discovered.
- Finally, answer these questions on the back of the paper:
- Next to number 6, write down whether you found the instructions easy to follow. Yes or no?
- Next to number 7, write down whether you have learned anything in the process. Yes or no? If you have indicated yes, indicate what it is you have learned.
- Next to number 8, write down whether you became emotional during the process. Yes or no?

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data collected through focus group interviews and graphic family sculptings. Six steps as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed to conduct the analyses, namely familiarization, coding, theme exploration, theme review, theme naming, and writing. The code-recoder procedure was followed to ensure trustworthiness with regard to data analysis and the analysis of the graphic family sculptings was conducted independently by the author and an experienced co-coder who is also the developer of the graphic family sculpting technique. The co-coder was

provided with a work protocol for data analysis, which explained the steps (indicated above) to be followed in the analysis. Apart from thematic analysis, the sculptings were also analyzed according to the guidelines proposed by the developer of the technique (Venter, 1993). This was also explained and provided in the work protocol for analysis. After the completion of their independent analyses, the researcher and co-coder had a consensus discussion to discuss the identified themes and to ensure consensus in this regard. The guidelines proposed by Venter (1993) are as follows:

- The “Gestalt” or wholeness of the sculptings. Why were circles arranged in a certain way (for example – a circle or horizontal line);
- The placement of each family member in the “Gestalt” and the distance between them;
- The direction in which each member is looking as it can provide important information about the members’ relationships;
- The horizontal/vertical position of each family member as it might suggest a person’s power or assertiveness;
- The label allocated to each family member;
- The emotion allocated to each family member, for example: are the emotions ascribed predominantly positive or negative?
- The order in which the circles were drawn and the relative size of the circles. Why, for example, was a certain person either drawn first or last and why was a certain circle drawn larger than the others?
- The line quality of the circles and the extent of erasures during the course of the sculpting. Is the line quality of circles similar? Did the person often erase and redraw certain circles?
- The amount of space taken up by the sculpture;

- The location of the sculpture on the paper;
- The answers to the questions asked during and after the sculpture had been completed.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the term used in qualitative studies to refer to what quantitative researchers call validity and reliability of a study (Botma et al., 2010). The criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (De Vos, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured through the application of reflexivity and being honest and critical in reflection on the entire research process; peer examination and structural coherence through literature integration. Transferability was ensured through the use of dense and detailed description of the entire research process and the different procedures when reporting or publishing the research. Dependability was ensured by describing the research in such a way that it can be repeated in other contexts and the use of a co-coder as described in the data analysis. In order to ensure confirmability, the researcher applied reflexivity, was aware of and guarded against researcher bias, motivation or interest and utilized different data-collection techniques (graphic family sculpting and focus groups) which allowed the researcher to look at the topic of inquiry from different perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Considering the initial purpose of graphic family sculpting and the projective and therapeutic nature of the technique, the ethical considerations are of great import. The author/researcher received training in the technique from the initial developer thereof in order to implement it correctly and effectively. For the purpose of the study, institutional permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant institution's ethics committee. Permission was also obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and the secondary school where the

research was conducted. Participation was voluntary and participants and their parents/guardians had to give written, informed consent/assent. Although none of the participants experienced emotional distress or discomfort while partaking in the technique, provision was made for counselling services by a qualified professional to the participants who may have experienced emotional discomfort or distress as a result of their participation. The researcher would therefore not be personally involved in the counselling. In instances where concerns arose during data collection but were not a direct result of participating in the research, the names of participants were communicated confidentially to the school's appointed and qualified counselor for follow-up.

Results

For the purpose of this article, the results will focus only on the themes identified through graphic family sculpting and examples of the sculptings that have not been published up to date. For the complete results of the study please refer to Koen, Van Eeden, and Venter (2011).

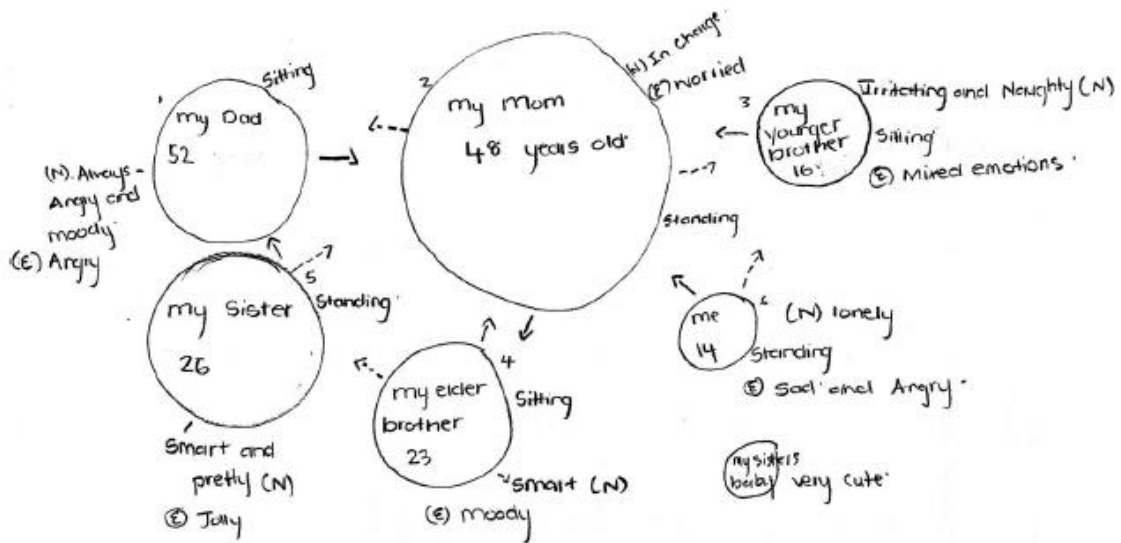
Graphic family sculpting yielded eight main themes regarding African female adolescents' experience of the parent-adolescent relationship. These themes included: mothers have a more prominent and positive role than fathers; mothers care and provide; mothers are more active and assertive than fathers; fathers are distant/detached; African adolescent females have a negative view of themselves; the adolescents' well-being correspond with that of the parents'; negative marital relationships of parents; inclusion of extended family.

Of the 30 sculptings collected, four examples of sculptings are discussed next. These examples were selected because they: are clearly drawn and easy to view, provide clear examples of the different steps of the technique and illustrate how the guidelines proposed by the developer of the technique are relevant, provide a good visual example of how the themes

identified above are illustrated in the sculptings, and they illustrate the difference between positive and healthy family sculptings and less positive or unhealthy family sculptings.

Figures 1 to 4 provide examples of graphic family sculptings that were collected during the study with the answers to the questions participants were asked also included. Please note that the placement of the sculpting on the page may have been distorted for the purpose of publication.

The first example of a graphic family sculpting (see Figure 1) clearly illustrates how some of the themes as named above are illustrated in the sculpting and how the various themes were identified from the sculptings. For example, that mothers have a more prominent role and are more active and assertive (for example the name ascribed to the mother, the large size of the mother's circle, the position of the mother – standing while the father is sitting, the mother looking at three of the six other family members whereas the father looks only at the mother); that fathers are distant/detached (smaller size of father's circle in comparison to mother's circle, position of father – sitting, apart from the mother, the father doesn't look at anyone in the family); and that adolescent females have a negative view of themselves (circle drawn second to last, small size of circle). The answers to the questions support the information provided in the sculpting and is also indicative of some of the themes that were identified, for example, that mothers are more active and assertive and that fathers are distant/detached: *“she (mother) does everything for us...he (father) should do more”* and the negative marital relationships of parents: *“...and she (mother) pays little attention to my dad...”*



- 1) yes
- 2) yes; in my family we refer to my mother as the head of the family, because she does everything for us, my father do stuff for us, but he should do more.
- 3) yes; my mother is there for us; but sometimes she talks about my elder brother and tells us how good he is; etc; and she pay little attention to my dad; because he is nagging and always moody.
- 4) yes; we are all in our own worlds.
- 5) yes; we all want something different; and is unable to get it.
- 6) yes; because we all make it difficult for each other and its so obvious I know them all very well.
- 7) yes; we should pay more attention to each other.
- 8) yes; we are not a very good family and thats sad.

Figure 1: First example of graphic family sculpting.

In the second example of a graphic family sculpting (see Figure 2), the participant drew faces instead of just circles to represent each family member, which in itself is indicative of the family dynamics. Again, the prominent role of the mother comes to light as she is drawn first and also larger than the other family members. This second example also provides a clear illustration of hierarchy within the family, which seems to be based on authority within the family and age, for example: The mother (46 years of age) is drawn first and larger than the other members and her name is indicated to be “Provider”, the brother (age 21) is drawn second and is also second largest, both the mother and brother are standing (indicated in written answer to question 2), in her answer to question 3, the participant states that: “...my

mother and brother care a lot for us... ”, the participant (age 16) is drawn third and third largest. The sculpting is also an example of a more positive graphic family sculpting.

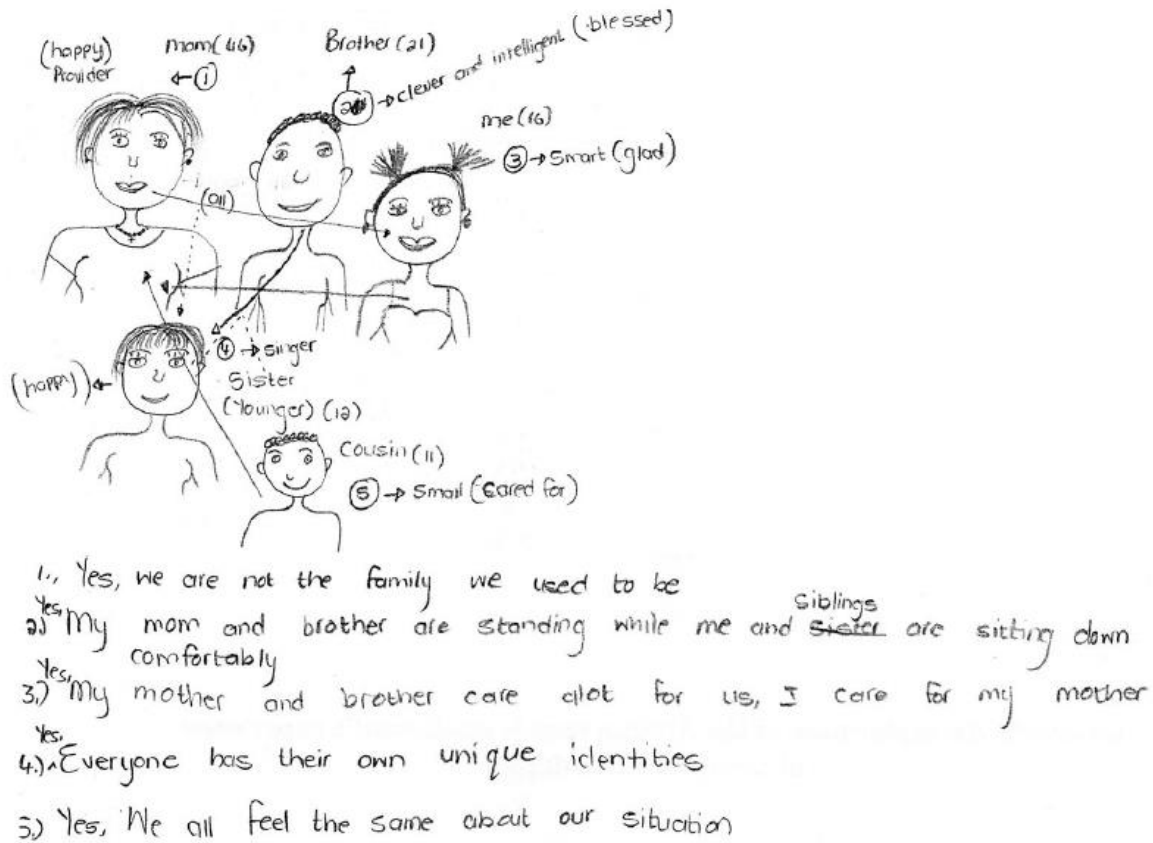
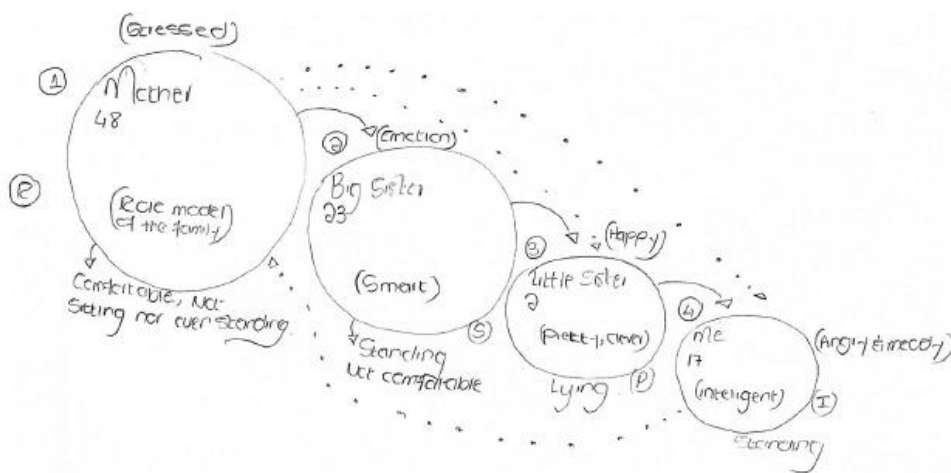


Figure 2: Second example of graphic family sculpting.

The third family sculpting (see Figure 3) illustrates a hierarchy within the family even more clearly than the sculpting in Figure 2. The biggest circle, which represents the mother, is drawn first, slightly above the other circles, and is also bigger than the other circles. The second circle, which represents the “Big Sister” is drawn second and is somewhat smaller than the first circle and also slightly below it. The third circle, which represents the “Little Sister” is drawn third, slightly below the second circle and is also smaller than the third circle. The last and smallest circle represents the adolescent participant. The family members are also indicated as looking at each other in this order (the mother looks at the big sister, the big sister looks at the little sister and the little sister looks at the adolescent participant). All

three daughters are indicated to look (secondly) at the mother, which is indicated by the dotted lines. This sculpting also illustrates some of the themes: the more prominent role of the mother (circle drawn first and biggest; name indicated as “Role model of the family”); adolescents have a negative view of themselves (circle drawn last and smallest; emotion indicated as angry and moody). The participant’s answers to the questions also support what is illustrated in the sculpting. She writes, for example: “...my mother comes first...” and “...my mother is not looking at one person in the family but the whole family...”



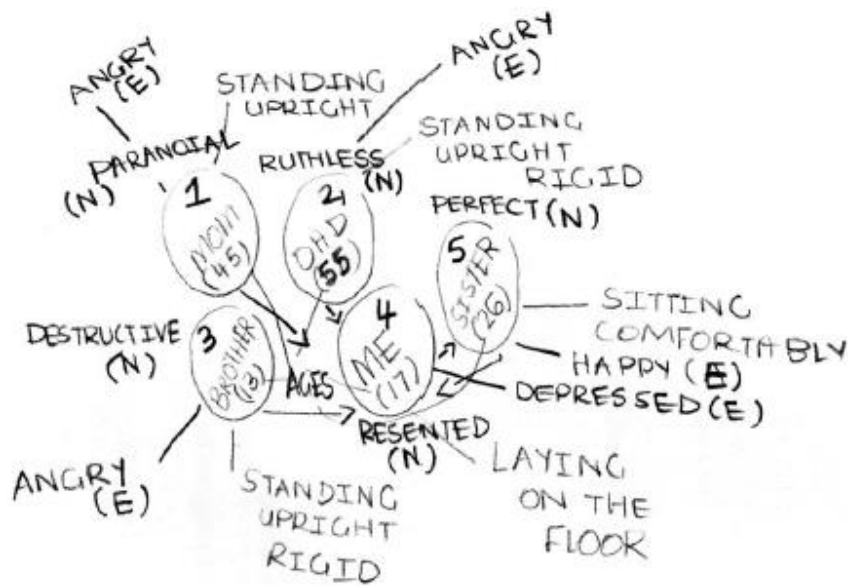
- ① -yes.
- ② yes, that my mother comes first in what ever I do or say because she is the first one to come in the family.
- ③ -yes, my mother is not looking at one person in the family but the whole family as a whole.
- ④ yes, my family has a role on being the intelligent family and inspiring me.
- ⑤ -yes, they have different emotional backgrounds.
- ⑥ -yes.
- ⑦ yes, family comes first in life and to learn more about them and myself.
- ⑧ no.

Figure 3: Third example of graphic family sculpting.

The fourth example of a graphic family sculpting (see Figure 4) is a prominent example of a negative family sculpting. Especially indicative of the family dynamics are the names and

emotions given to family members (names such as: ruthless, destructive, resented; and emotions: angry, depressed) as well as the positions given to family members (such as standing upright rigid, laying on the floor). The written answers that the participant provides strongly support the information illustrated in her sculpting and in one answer she states:

“...it’s a war...”



1. NO
2. Yes, that the men (dad & bro) are alike but it's because of how we were raised, I'm the last level and I envy my sister for not being with a destructive family. My mom is also the bad guy.
3. Yes, they all looking at me, my sister cares for me and the rest are out to get me in terms of breaking me down.
4. Yes, that everyone is playing a role in how our lives are. They SELFISH.
5. Yes, it's a WAR! - I can't live with them $\frac{1}{2}$
6. YES
7. YES, to take a look at my position & them to see the truth & not shovered under.

Figure 4: Fourth example of graphic family sculpting.

Discussion

Graphic family sculpting provided rich and insightful data as a visual research method and qualitative data collection technique with African adolescent females regarding their experience of the parent-adolescent relationship. In particular, the technique provided

valuable insight into participants' family dynamics. The findings regarding the use of the technique in this context provides evidence that graphic family sculpting has the potential to provide rich and detailed data as a visual data collection technique in other family-related contexts. It should be noted, however, that while family sculpting and graphic family sculpting has also been used in and found to be effective as a research method in other South African studies and contexts (Kirsten et al., 2006; Marchetti-Mercer & Cleaver, 2000; Smith & Stevens-Smith, 1992), the technique might not be suitable for all participants or in all contexts and that levels of engagement and the suitability of the technique (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012) in the intended context should be carefully considered.

In this instance, the technique was used only with African adolescent females since their experiences were the focus. The sculptings therefore provide a limited and possibly skewed view of the family dynamics as a whole. It is recommended that family sculptings be utilized with all or as many members of a family as possible in order to understand the family dynamics as completely as possible and from different members' points of view.

For the purpose of this research, the graphic family sculpting technique was used in conjunction with focus group interviews in order to obtain an understanding of African adolescent females' experiences of the parent-adolescent relationship from both an individual and group point of view. Since the graphic family sculptings were utilized to obtain an understanding of individual experiences and because the technique also includes a form of verbal input from participants in the form of written answers, individual interviews were not considered for data collection. The interview schedule of the focus groups focused on the adolescents' experiences of parent-adolescent relationships and not on their graphic family sculptings. Although the technique proved to work well in conjunction with focus group interviews as a qualitative data collection technique in this context, the verbal/written answers provided by participants did not, as I had hoped, provide enough of an in-depth

understanding of the respective sculptings. In light of this, I would recommend the use of individual interviews with participants after the completion of their sculpting (which is done individually) so that there is an opportunity to ask them about their sculpting and to explore the sculpting with them, thereby creating a more collaborative process/approach, which is fitting for qualitative data collection. This recommendation is in line with auteur theory, which holds forth that the most salient aspect in understanding a visual image is what the creator of the image intended to show (Mannay, 2010; Rose, 2001).

Mannay (2010), and Kearney and Hyle (2004) point to the importance of auteur theory on a practical level by explaining that how the audience interprets an image is not necessarily the same as that which the creator of the image intended to communicate. In light of this, it has become common practice in social science research to ask participants to explain the images that they create (Belin, 2005; Mannay, 2010). Through the application of auteur theory, the application of graphic family sculpting as a visual method could also become a more participatory form of data production.

The application of auteur theory and the use of individual interviews in conjunction with graphic family sculpting would also simplify the analyses or interpretation of the data and contribute to more trustworthy analyses of the data. The guidelines proposed by Venter (1993) for interpretation or analysis might be interpreted or analyzed incorrectly if participants are not given an opportunity to explain why they did or drew something a certain way. An erasure, for example, could be incorrectly interpreted as inadequacy or inaccuracy (Kaomea, 2003) while the participant might have had a completely different reason for erasing something in a sculpting.

Although the technique is strongly visually focused, verbal and/or written methods play an integral role in the technique. In line with the discussion of auteur theory above, Guillemain (2004) maintains that visual and verbal/written methods can complement each other. Frith et

al. (2005) indicate that they would not advocate a separation of the visual from the verbal. According to Mitchell et al. (2011), it is important to give participants an opportunity to convey either in verbal or written form what their drawing is intended to convey. The visual process of graphic family sculpting would not be as effective if not combined with a verbal/written method.

The setting for graphic family sculpting and focus group interviews was a classroom at the school that participants attended at the time. Although this setting was chosen for practical and logistical reasons, literature on the use of classrooms as research sites is indicative that this might not be ideal because of the pre-existing power relationships within this setting. Gallagher (2008), for example, explains that his attempts to conduct focus groups with children were thwarted by the pre-existing landscape of power within the school and that the focus groups he conducted can be seen as micro-spaces that are situated within larger networks of power relations such as the classroom and the school. Some authors argue that it is necessary to acknowledge that multiple shifting relations of power exist (for example, between researchers and children, teachers and pupils) and to recognize the complexity of the relationship between power and participation and that instead of working against power, participatory techniques might in actuality constitute forms of power (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Gallagher, 2008) while others find this view too pessimistic (Kesby, 2005). Gallagher (2008) concludes that participatory methods do not transcend power relationships and are not necessarily liberating for children, but can potentially be used in liberating ways.

In support of this, Mannay (2013) writes that the use of the visual to engender participatory research and to obtain data away from the influence of the researcher is a popular argument in existing literature. In her own research with mother/daughter dyads Mannay (2013) reports, however, that although the use of participatory visual methods in her research offered an opportunity to disrupt power relationships, they did not transcend familial

practices. Mannay (2013) further explains that when conducting research there are constant and continuing influences such as parents, friends, family and the researcher and that these influences should be expected, embraced and evaluated. Mannay (2013) suggests that the influence of the family and family involvement also have the potential to provide a richer perspective on intergenerational differences. Luttrell and Chalfen (2010) further point to the important role that imagined audiences can play in what is said or unsaid and the necessity of not only being interested in what can be seen but also in that which is hidden, or as Kaomea (2003) describes as 'erased'. Mannay (2013) explains how the role of imagined audiences in her data was especially salient in terms of the mothers' accounts of data regarding less positive or negative aspects of family life.

Also important to note is that people's family dynamics and situations change and that their family sculptings can also change as time goes by. It would be valuable to do a longitudinal study with graphic family sculpting to determine how it works as a visual data collection technique over a longer period of time and when done on more than one occasion.

In the case of this study, participants did not experience any adverse effects as a result of their participation and there was no need for containment. Participants reported enjoying doing graphic family sculpting and indicated that they found the technique to be enlightening, beneficial and healing. Considering however that the technique is projective and therapeutic in nature, it should be noted that proper training to use the technique and provision for support services for participants is essential. For research purposes, the projective nature of the technique should not be applied in a therapeutic manner, but purely as a research data collection method to collect data on different levels of consciousness.

What becomes evident from the examples of sculptings discussed above is how graphic family sculpting as a projective visual data collection method can produce rich and insightful information with regard to families, family dynamics, and family relationships. The findings

are also indicative that the technique can be used to suggest relational family dynamics and - interactions that are more effective.

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SECTION 3
CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

This chapter provides a discussion of the literature conclusions, empirical conclusions, and contribution of the study.

Literature conclusions

The literature reviewed for the purpose of this study eludes to the prominence of the constructs of positive relationships and relational well-being within the field of positive psychology. Specific attention is given to the parent-adolescent relationship due to the changes that this relationship undergoes and also because this relationship is viewed as a foundational relationship. Recent literature is indicative that the perceived degree of conflict between parents and adolescents during this phase has mostly been exaggerated however, depending on the quality of that relationship (Louw & Louw, 2007; Louw & Louw, 2014).

The literature points to the relative newness of the field of positive psychology, specifically in South Africa and the need for empirical research, including research regarding research techniques within the field of positive psychology. A review of visual methods for research purposes was therefore conducted as the focus of this study was on a visual technique.

The review of literature suggests that social sciences in general have been slow to realise the potential of visual techniques for the purpose of qualitative data collection in research (Collier, 2002; Goodwin, 2002; Lynn & Lea, 2005; Mead, 1995; Frith, Riley, Archer, & Gleeson, 2005; Rose, 2000). Numerous studies nonetheless point to the benefits of the use of visual techniques as such, including being effective with populations that tend to be harder to reach; giving participants a different means by which to express themselves and providing a better understanding of the topic under investigation (Frith et al., 2005). The literature provides a glimpse of the wide variety of visual techniques that can be used for this purpose,

and includes drawings, photo voice, photo elicitation, collages, concept mapping and emotion mapping.

The possible limitations of visual techniques are also considered in the literature, specifically regarding the participatory assumption that may be made in this regard, further highlighting the need for theoretical and empirical research regarding the use of visual methods in research.

Literature was integrated with the findings of this study in order to make recommendations for the use of the graphic family sculpting technique in research, specifically: 1) The consideration of auteur theory (Mannay, 2010; Rose, 2001) and the recommendation that graphic family sculpting be used in conjunction with individual interviews in order to gain an in-depth and accurate understanding of participants' sculptings; 2) Careful consideration of the most fitting setting to conduct the technique. The study on which the article is written made use of classrooms for practical and logistical reasons, but it should be considered that the use of classrooms as research sites are not always the best choice, since there is a possibility of pre-existing power relationships that can influence the research (Gallagher; 2008).

Empirical conclusions

For the purpose of this study, graphic family sculpting was applied in a qualitative, explorative-descriptive research design. This design proved appropriate as the research question posed, namely "Is graphic family sculpting effective as a visual projective data collection technique?" was answered within a South African context. The focus of this study was specifically on the use of graphic family sculpting as a visual projective data-collection technique by illustrating its use in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships. The findings indicate that graphic family sculpting as a projective visual data-collection method can

produce rich and insightful information with regard to families, family dynamics, and family relationships. The findings are also indicative that the technique can be used to suggest relational family dynamics and interactions that are positive and contribute to the well-being of family members.

Apart from the recommendations indicated in the literature conclusions above, other recommendations for the use of graphic family sculpting is made, including: 1) Careful consideration beforehand regarding the appropriateness of the technique for the context under investigation; 2) Ideally conducting the technique with all or as many family members of a family as possible, in order to gain a more complete insight into the family dynamics and to consider different members' experiences; 3) Because people's family dynamics and situations are subject to change, people's family sculptings can also change with the passing of time. Sculpting should therefore not be viewed as stagnant as they reflect only the present family situation/dynamics. Longitudinal studies regarding the use of graphic family sculpting in research can provide valuable insight into how the technique works as a visual data-collection technique over a longer period of time and when done more than once; 4) Due to the technique's projective and therapeutic nature, training to use the technique and the provision of support/debriefing services for participants in the case of an adverse reaction, is of the utmost importance; 5) Applied in research for the purpose of collecting data, graphic family sculpting should not be applied as a therapeutic technique, but only as a method to collect data.

Contribution of the study

The contribution of this study lies in the fact that it contributes to empirical work, specifically within the field of positive psychology, regarding the use of visual methods in research. This study does so by illustrating the use of one such technique, graphic family

sculpting, in research conducted with a group of African female adolescents regarding their experience of parent-adolescent relationships in a South African context.

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