

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL GROWTH THROUGH A  
SUBJECTIVE APPROACH**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Karen Hannah Human declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

KHuman.  
Signed

25.10.2010  
Date

## ABSTRACT

This research is inspired by my own personal experience and views on Post Modern family life and the negative effects it can have on a growing individual. I have found Post Modern family life fractured and non-communicative. I then look at my own tactics of how I have personally dealt with the fractured state and how this can benefit children that are at the beginning fazes of their emotional, physical and mental development.

Growing up communication and consistency in my family has always been lacking, due to my parents business trips and strange working hours. This made me detached socially as a child and left me to my own devices. My coping mechanism was to illustrate. Whenever I felt disconnected or alone from my family members I illustrated. While illustrating I formed a dialogue between me and the paper and suddenly I did not feel so alone.

When reflecting on my life I realized that I do not want other children to resort to these lonely pastimes of placing their imagination on paper. I want to create a range of products where the emphasis is on how family should stick together and the products must form a natural platform for communication between child and parent.

I also feel my products must stimulate the imagination which is linked to the right side of the brain that steers social and emotional development.

Theorists that I will for my research is Maria Montessori, she was the creator and founder of Montessori Schools and teachings. She focussed on the holistic development of the child. Rudolf Steiner is the creator and founder of the Wahldorf Schule and teachings. He believed in developing children imagination. We live in the Post-Modern era and to solidify that I will look at Jean-Francois Lyotard's theories on Post Modern sociology. Vygotsky is a Child development psychologist who believed that children's social development happens by interacting with their parents. Roger Sperry is a Brain Dominance Theorist that believed that the right side of the brain is connected to social development and to stimulate the right side is by using your imagination.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CAN A SUBJECTIVE APPROACH TO DESIGN HELP DEVELOP CHILDREN'S SOCIAL GROWTH

#### 1.1 THE SETTING

This research is a reflection of my personal experience and views on post-modern family life and the negative effects it can have on a growing individual. I have found in my own experience the post-modern family to be fractured and non communicative. I then reflect on my own tactics of how I have personally dealt with the fractured state and how this could benefit children that are in the beginning phases of their emotional, physical and mental development.

In my research I will look at what part of the brain stimulates social and emotional development, in an early stage of children's development. I will then research how people have used certain techniques in developing children's social development and then apply this knowledge in creating a range of products that stimulate the child's communication and emotional development. I claim that post-modern culture has generally reflected poor family values and structure that have left the pre-school child prone to growing socially detached and unaided. Strengthening social interaction will help with strengthening self worth and build confidence and give them a sense of belonging, which is the aim of this research.

Theorists that I will be engaging with are firstly Maria Montessori, and I will investigate her method of teaching and what techniques she used to develop children socially and secondly Rudolf Steiner who is an educator that started the Waldorf School. I investigate Steiner because I believe he was very Avant Garde in his time in how he changed people's views on education and child development. I will also investigate the methods he used for early child development. He believed that children must be educated in a creative way otherwise they will struggle to learn. My interest is in understanding child psychology and how children use techniques to cope in a non-communicating and fractured family, and I will refer to the psychologist Vygotsky. He focuses on the child's emotional and social development and the psychology behind it.

The universal post-modern person is more inclined to grow detached from his or her emotions or to live in anxiety because of the unsteady environment being E.g. ecological calamities, multi-cultural diversity and economical crisis (Noble T, 2000:223). Jacques Lyotard also provides insight into Post Modern sociology.

The function of my research is to develop products with a wide appeal for the pre-school child to aid in healthy social development. A child's social growth and learning ability is very closely linked to one another and if their social development is neglected then the child will struggle to learn from their environment and other individuals.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Can a product stimulate holistic development and have universal appeal for the preschool child be developed using a personal subjective design approach, throughout thereby stimulating right brain functioning?

## **1.3 SUB QUESTIONS**

1.3.1 What is the relevance in a post-modern world of applying a subjective design process?

1.3.2 What is the benefit of products that stimulate right brain functioning in pre-school children?

1.3.3 How can a range of products for preschool children stimulate holistic development?

## CHAPTER TWO

### HOW CAN DESIGN BENEFIT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD IN ORDER TO BUILD BETTER COMMUNICATION AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

#### 2.1 MONTESSORI METHOD

Maria Montessori started the Montessori schools and education system. One of the key aspects, which the Montessori education system strongly believes in, is the "prepared paths of culture" as seen below in table 2.1. The system is called "prepared paths of culture". It is divided into sub headings and one of the sub-headings is "practical life, grace and courtesy". Lined up with that heading is another heading called "Sensorial level exercises". That implies that for understanding "Practical life, Courtesy and Grace" you need to do sensorial exercises with the child to develop their understanding of "practical life, Courtesy and Grace ". In table 2.1 at the bottom of the pink column in the last pink block the title "social development" implies that if you have done all those sensorial exercises with the child it will help with their social development.

Table 2.1 Prepared Paths of Culture

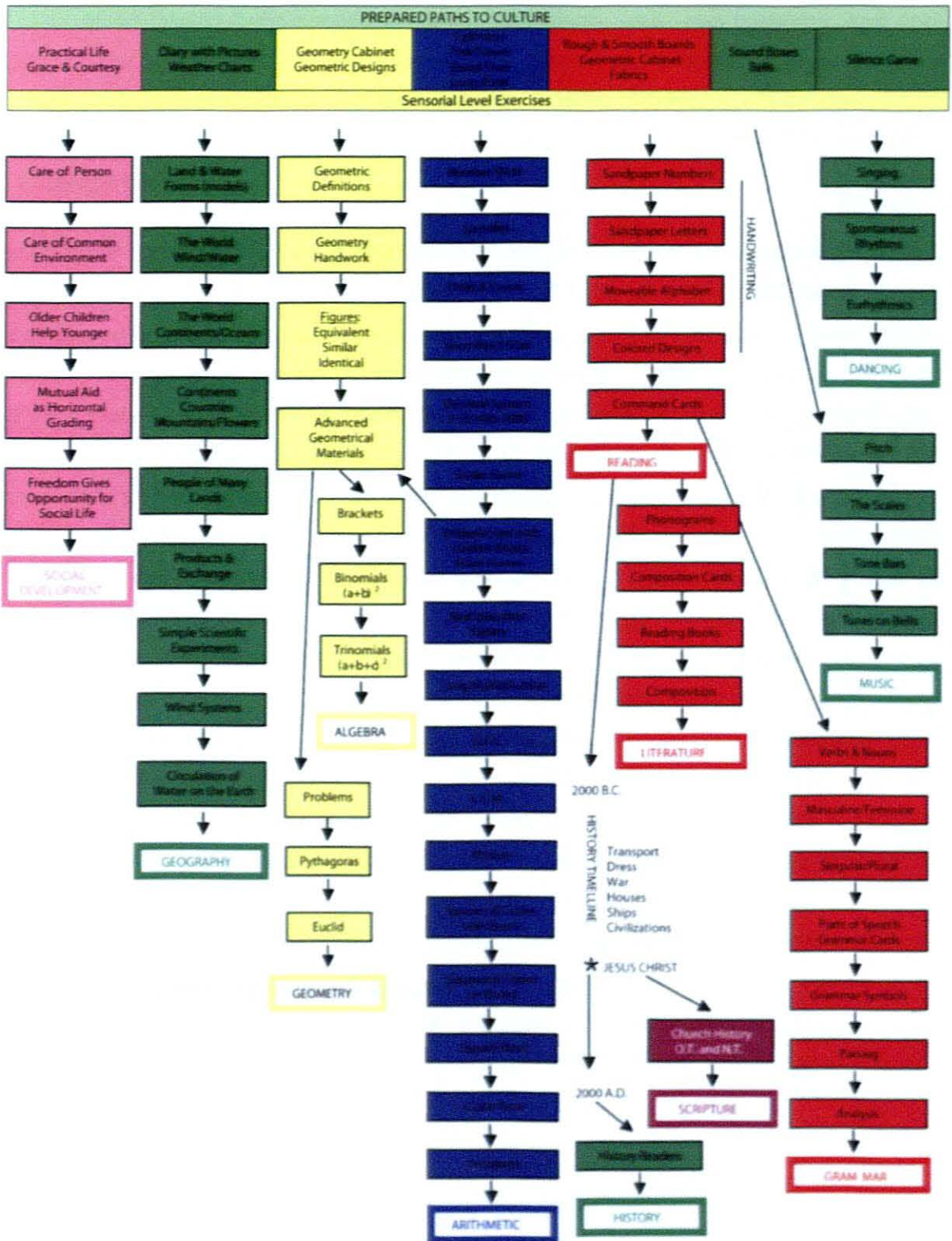


Table 2.1: Unknown, *Prepared Paths of Culture*, 4 May 2010, [online], [www.casadimir.org/montessoriphilosophy.htm](http://www.casadimir.org/montessoriphilosophy.htm). [4 May 2010]

She also believed that you should constantly change a child's environment. Meaning every day new objects has to be presented in their environments , e.g. wall hangings, toys and furniture pieces. This constant change makes them curious and aware of change and they would want to ask more questions and learn more. (Montessori, 2010)

## **2.2 STEINER METHOD**

Rudolf Steiner founded the Waldorf Schools and education method. He stated that children should play, draw and tell stories and study nature until the age of 7 (Anibaldi, 9 August 2009). Steiner believed in three stages of child development. The first stage is from birth to age seven. He calls the first stage "Child Development through Imitation" (Anibaldi, 9 August 2009). He explains it as the stage where the child is still physically developing rapidly and getting use to their bodies. At this stage the child only develops skills by imitating their parents, peers and teachers. He explains that in the first stage you should not try and teach the child intellectually but play is the child's work and making them aware and use to daily rhythms and ending the day with a story that ends off the day. These are the early keys of education. The second stage is called "child development through feeling". This stage of the child's development is between the ages of seven and fourteen. Here the educator must focus on developing the child's awareness of their emotional inner life through using aesthetic education such as the arts and crafts. At this stage performing arts is also included in the curriculum like singing, telling stories and expanding the imagination through role play (Anibaldi, 9 August 2009). At this second stage Steiner encourages his educators to connect with the child by creating a strong social bond and making sure that the child being taught is excited about the learning material. He also encouraged the thought of giving children moral guidance but he said it is not good to teach a child a set of beliefs. One of Steiner's methods of educating was home schooling. He believed a child had to have one teacher that he could grow close to, almost like a mentor. Other principles of Steiner were that he was anti materialism; he believed that you had to teach a pupil through different experiences and you learn by socially connecting with others (James and Nahl, 1979).

## **2.3 POSTMODERNISM AND THE EFFECTS ON SOCIOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY**

Jean-Francois Lyotard is a philosopher and theorist who analysed Post-modernism and the Post-modern society (Philosophy Archive, 1979). He has formulated some characteristics of Post-modern society throughout his research:

- Facts and reality are changing unpredictably
- Makes living unstable
- There is no truth, only perception
- Old values formed by modernist culture are put aside and the value system falls away, the individual is in control of own values and principles
- There are no geographical boundaries; the world is one global community where knowledge and perceptions are exchanged. Nationalism is something from the past
- Rights are given to people once suppressed in a Modernist environment that encourages liberalism, for example gay rights (All AboutPhilosophy.org, 2010).
- *The normal nuclear family no longer exists and family becomes your own perception of family. (Squire, 2003: 57)*
- Post-modernists have eco awareness

When we look at a definition of post-modern art we see that it was eclectic, elaborate, full of ornamentation and inclusive. Art was escapist and did not mirror reality. The Post-modern family characteristics have various similarities to the definition of the arts. The Post-modern family tend to have all kinds of formations making it elaborate. Sociologists have found that there is so much variation in the family structure today that it definitely has to have an impact on personal and family relationships. Some examples of Post-modern family's are: first example: *black father and white mother raising two children. One is their biological child and the other one has been adopted.* Second example: Grandmother and grandfather raising their daughter's children because their daughter passed away and the father is not around anymore. In today's society there are endless different formations of family's and this has an effect on the individual.

Post-modern society in contrary to Modernism is formed by democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, easy access to travelling locally and abroad and endless access to various forms of entertainment and news. As there are endless options and accessibility to a vast

array of information leaves the Post-modern individual overwhelmed thus questioning what is reality and what is fiction. This leaves most Post-modern people to be faithless and they tend to follow their own philosophies and beliefs based on their own experience of life.

Since the 1970's sociologists have seen the emergence of the post-modern family. They noted three characteristics of the post-modern family:

1. There is no longer pride attached to being part of a certain family group. Family identity becomes unstable.
2. Couples are no longer stable and do not work through their problems. They opt for quick solutions but do not consider the long-term effects. They resort quickly to divorce, because religious views on the marriage union have fallen away.
3. The structure of the nuclear family's falls away because now women are liberated and no longer bound to strict domestic duties.

Society becomes separated because most family bonds are not strong or stable and other factors just make the separation even worse. Social barriers, physical barriers and distance barriers between people are on the increase as working abroad is easy accessible and communication becomes more distant and impersonal because it is electronically. It becomes less intimate and removed from emotion and human warmth.

People can work from home because of electronic communications and have no need to step out of their homes. There is no boundary between workplace and home. Work invades the family space and affects everyone in the home.

Children from a post-modern family are exposed to many different values, personalities, opinions, and lifestyles and have multiple relationships. These factors lead to fragmentation, irregularity and chaos. Generally children grow up to be confused about their identities and disconnected from their surrounding community or they turn out to be the complete opposite where they flourish in dual socialization and have multiple relationships. The Post-modern child has to make flexible changes constantly because of an unstable environment thus giving the child of today the responsibility to make decisions from a young age.

Children who go to day care get told one thing at the day care centre and then at home it may be the opposite and this also leads to confusion. The communication link between day care and home could be vague and parents end up not teaching their children the things that they suppose to teach their developing child because they think it is taught at school for

example; exercising control, basic social skills like table manners, greeting customs, speaking about daily events, collective orientation and personal exploration.

The Post-modern parent's focus has shifted to where they deal with very specific aspects of the development of their child. It is of utmost importance for the post-modern parent to develop a positive self-esteem and good communication skills within their child (Babatunde, Colletta, Garman, Kramer, Megawangi Zeitlin, 1995).

## **2.4 THE VIRTUAL AGE AND ITS NEGATIVE AFFECTS**

There is a tendency for the new generation to grow socially detached from their environment and people because of advancing technology. Children can stay entertained for hours by watching television, playing games on the personal computer or television or cell phone texting and e-mailing. This creates a virtual environment for interaction. These children have become so use to their virtual world that when they have to actually interact face-to-face they find it difficult and frustrating. (The Real Truth, 2010)

There is a tendency towards family degradation and social structures falling away in the post-modern society. My research will hopefully help to redirect the focus towards family communication and the unity factor of the family and how the child can benefit from this and have a healthy social life in the future. (Unupress, 2010)

## **2.5 ROGER SPERRY AND RIGHT BRAIN STIMULATION**

Roger Sperry is a brain dominance theorist that has done various studies on the brain. His studies have shown that your brain is divided into two main sections the right-lobe and the left-lobe. The brain dominance theory states that each lobe of the brain has its own characteristics and each side of the brain controls certain functions and thoughts. My focus is on the right brain, for Sperry shows in his research that the right part of the brain controls the development of social interaction. In an article by Dr. John Robert Dew states that social workers tend to be right brain dominant because of their skills to relate to emotions and understanding of people's situations (Dew, 2010). The characteristics of the right brain are as follows:



- The right brain resolves situations by understanding interaction
- Problem solving happens by using tools like creativity and brainstorming
- Works better and feels more comfortable working in groups
- Analyses situations and experiences holistically
- The right brain is random and has no specific pattern of thinking
- Imagination is nurtured in the right brain
- Intuitive decisions not based on facts or statistics (Dew, 2010)

## **2.6 VYGOTSKY AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY**

Child psychologist Vygotsky have shown in his studies that children develop their cognitive thinking by solving problems within their own life experiences and by socially interacting with others. Vygotsky states in his studies that culture teaches children what to think and how to think (Funderstanding, 2008). Language is seen as one of the first tools for the child to use to interact with parents whereby a great deal of knowledge is passed down to the child. Language is also used as a device for the child to adapt to different experiences or situations. Vygotsky also states in his research that you cannot analyse the child's intellectual development as a single entity by itself, you have to include his surroundings and what he interacts with everyday. He states that the child's surroundings contribute a great deal to the child's intellectual development. With Vygotsky's findings he applied it to his curriculum where the main focus is and he highlights the fact that learning happens through interaction. A child's development is measured by what he can do by himself without the help of adults and what he can do with the help of his teacher or parents is the potential he has to develop to that point (Funderstanding, 2008).

## CHAPTER THREE

### HOW CAN A RANGE OF PRODUCTS CATER TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THAT STIMULATE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT?

In this chapter I will mention people that have already created products that stimulate holistic development and how people have used illustrations to convey certain messages and how they stimulate the imagination of the child.

#### 3.1 EXISTING COMPANY'S THAT HAVE USED METHODS IN ADVANCING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPEMENT

##### 3.1.1 "THE SANDBOX LEARNING COMPANY"

A company called *Sandbox Learning* produces children's books that are based on social learning theories. The children's book range is called *Success Stories*. It is a range that focuses on developing the child's character by dealing with their emotions, social abilities, safety precautions and communication skills (Sandbox Learning Company, 2006).

The *Sandbox Learning Company* also states on their website why they use illustration books in teaching children social skills instead of newer technologies for example DVD's, PC games or television games. The benefits of an illustration book format are as follows

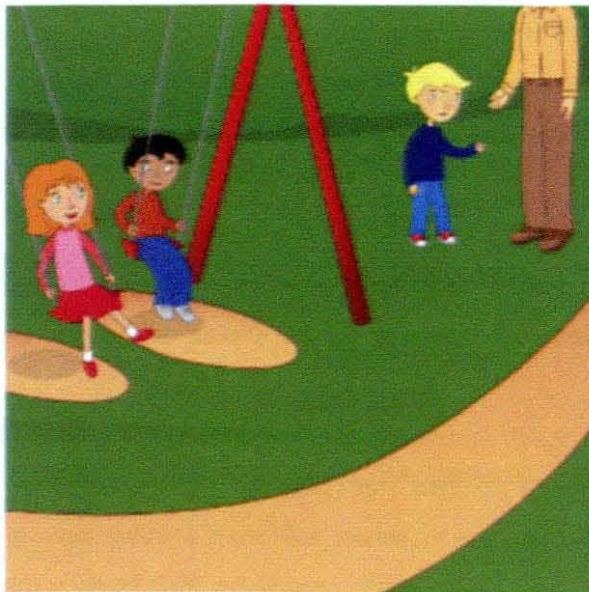
- The child or parent can personalize it because the "Sandbox Learning Company" designs their books in a way that you can fill in your own words at certain sections.
- The book makes space for social interaction by discussions on the story between the parent and the child
- You can read a book at your own tempo, reading is a critical tool in language and communication
- If the book is fun and engages the child he or she will develop a lasting interest in literature (Sandbox Learning Company, 2006).

Here are some examples from the company and what they have done in their illustrated books when designing it. See Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 on the following pages.



**Figure 3.1: Getting Along with People Sample Page**

Before I speak, I think about what I am going to say. I say things I want other people to say to me. I say, "You are a good friend."



**Figure 3.2: Getting along with people sample page**

If I have trouble getting along with someone, I take a break and then talk to him or her when I am calm.

The Sandbox Learning Company has a whole range of books with different themes. Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 is samples from the book "Getting along with people". Another theme that caught my attention was the book "Working together". This book focuses on skills like listening, sharing ideas, working together with other people and helping out at school and

home. The book also offers activities for the child where he or she can work alongside with others to work on group working skills and strategies on how to cope working in a team. With every book you order you have two format options in which you want the book to be printed. You have a full colour printed illustration book or a line drawing book for colouring in (Sandbox Learning Company, 2006).

Other themes of books that are social inclined are "meeting people", "having conversation", "please thank you excuse me", "other people's point of view" etc. Each of these books have short stories about each theme, activities for the child to practice the new skills he have learnt in the story and how he or she can apply it to their daily lives at home and school. There are other themes that are about making children aware of their emotions and how to deal with it personally for example "feeling sad", "feeling angry", "feeling happy", 'feeling scared". Other themes are again about taking care of yourself and health like for example "Going to the doctor", "using the bathroom", "Getting ready for school" and 'Getting ready for bed" (Sandbox Learning Company, 2006).

The Sandbox Learning Company has a wide range of educational books that educate your child on holistic living and I truly think it is a very vital tool to have these life skills in a book format. It makes the child excited for his daily encounters and he has a positive outlook on life and situations plus he builds a good relationship and understanding with his or her parent.

The following is testimonials of people who have used the "Sandbox Learning Company" books and how they have found the books to be working for them (Sandbox Learning Company, 2006).

"I stumbled upon the Sandbox Learning Company as I was on the Internet. I went to their website and thought, 'Aha! Just what I need for some of my elementary students' I also thought, 'Damn it! I just spent a small fortune buying other books and here it was all done for me.' This is a valuable website for those professionals who need/use social skills stories in counselling. There are a variety of topics, and more topics are being added all the time. The stories can be personalized to your particular child. The prices are reasonable. The site is easy to navigate. I would recommend it strongly as one of the better professional psychology/counselling websites out there (Shea, 2006)."

Maureen F. Shea a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and Licensed Professional Counsellor with The American Board of Disability Analysts and The American Board of School Neurophysiology, New London, CT once expressed her gratitude towards the

*Sandbox Learning Company* with these words; "Just a note to let you know how pleased I am with the *Success Stories*. The latest one on waiting really helped the little guy I worked with. The children I work with are low to high functioning ASD and they all love it when they see their name along with other familiar names to personalize the stories. When we have problem behaviour or an issue that is troublesome we just take out the story and read it. I shared *Being Scared* with the Speech Pathologist and she went to the site to check out the other materials. The organization I work with has a "GET SET" group that pairs typically developing children with children on the spectrum. These stories are great for sharing. The older children read to each other. Thanks for the stories you have written on a couple of our problem areas. This is a great tool not only for children with ASD but also for children in general. Thanks again. I have College Professors, Speech Pathologists, Teachers, Inclusion Assistants, Aides, and Pre- School Directors looking at this site. They all think it's great (Conrad, 2006)."

These are the words of Linda Conrad. She is an Inclusion Assistant for SLATE (Successful Living With Autism Through Training and Education) from Shasta Lake City, California.

"I stumbled onto your web-site by mistake, and I am so happy I did! My sons and I read your book *Waiting last night*. They loved it, especially my eldest Elijah; he was excited to see himself in the story. He also incorporated his younger brother and his cousin into the story as his classmates. I downloaded a copy and made another copy for his teacher, and speech pathologist to utilize in the classroom. I have called his school P.S. 176 @ 178 (NYC) and notified the Unit Coordinator of the web site. Please add more books!! We will be ordering a new book *Strangers next week* (Bullock, 2006)."

These are the words of Irene Ervin Bullock; she is a Program Director at Amber Hall, HDPC, 1385 Fulton Avenue, Bronx, NY 10456.

"I purchased *Meeting People* and *My Day at School* and also received the free *Waiting story*. My child loves them, his speech therapist loves them and so does his teacher. His speech therapists commented that he was able to fill in words, gave the other children names in the story (put names with the other characters that best match the other children in his class) and was able to answer a multitude of questions about the story. Wonderful product and I will definitely be buying more within the next months. Thanks for your hard work (Pitts, 2006)."

These are the words of Leanne Pitts a Mother of a 5 year old from Greenville, NC.

"Having the *Sandbox Learning Company's* customized stories adds a ton because the kids can really make a connection. It makes them feel special and helps them understand the materials better."

These are the words of Kimberly Powers a Special Education Teacher from Gwinnett County, GA. "They loved it! They thought it was the neatest thing ever (Powers, 2006). "

### **3.1.2 "HURTY FEELINGS"**

This illustrated book is called "Hurty feelings" and it is written by Helen Lester and illustrated by Lynn M. This book has a more abstract and imaginative approach towards feelings unlike my previous example of the *Sandbox Learning Company*. I say this because they use animals to tell the story and how they deal with emotions. The child will enjoy and understand the story but it is not directly linked to their reality so they might miss the point and moral of the story.

The story is about a hippo called Fragility, who is very large but is very sensitive emotionally. Fragility receives a compliment from some animals and her mind takes the compliment as an insult. She goes somewhere and weeps and starts wailing. Her crying leads her to be isolated from the other animals.

Fragility's sorrowful attitude changes when some animals ask her to be the goalie for the soccer team. While playing the game of soccer with the other animals Fragility regains her confidence because everyone starts cheering her on for her great goalie performance.

Children will learn from this book in a more fun and imaginative way as for example in "sandbox learning company" is very closely linked to reality and there is no imagination acquired. "Hurty feelings" to me is a wonderful tool to teach children about emotions and making their imagination flow (Curledupkids, 2007).

## **3.2 ILLUSTRATION AS A CONNECTING POINT FOR COMMUNICATION**

### **3.2.1 HISTORY OF 1<sup>ST</sup> ILLUSTRATION BOOK**

Illustrations and children's books have been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. John Amos Comenius created the first illustrated book and the book was called "Orbis Pictus". For the first time children were attracted to books and it was because of its illustrations. The developing child is still learning how to read literature so pictures make them understand the words without being able to read. The schools in Germany were closed for 30 years with the outbreak of World War I and World War II. This is when parents turned to the "Orbis Pictus" to teach their children. The "Orbis Pictus" functioned as a visually educational book. The power of illustration brings families together as seen in the war times.

In the preface of the "Orbis Pictus" the author states a few goals that he wants to achieve through his book. Here are a few;

- He wants to entice children to want to crave learning more and gain wisdom.
- Children struggle with metaphors and he hopes with his book that they will start to explore the metaphoric things in life and apply it to their lives, so they stay away from dull and boring ignorant lives.
- Learning should be fun and he wants his visuals to give that message about knowledge.
- Visuals make knowledge stick more to your thoughts than when you just read plain literature about facts. Visuals help you remember things better (www.gutenberg.org, 2009).

I would want to instil these qualities as mentioned above with my illustration books.

### **3.2.2 CHILDREN ILLUSTRATOR SARA FANELLI**

Children illustrator Sara Fanelli tells in her interview in "the fundamentals of illustration" of 2005 that the fun thing of being a children's book illustrator is that you can create stories with things that you love drawing the most. She also talks about what was fascinating to her as a child about illustration books. She liked the way that she could open an illustration book as a child and opening her mind to a whole different world in her imagination. Sara Fanelli said that colour and detail also played a very important role as a child looking at visuals, because it immediately made her feel a certain way about the story. The unusual visuals were normally the things that she was drawn to as a child. When creating an illustration book Sara wants the words to tell what you cannot see with your eyes. She does not believe in explaining the visual objectively in her text. She wants children's imaginations to go. Sara Fanelli and her intentions with her children's illustration books are that she wants to create a book that she would have liked as a child. She thinks it is better to design that way than thinking "what would a child of today like to read". She believes that there is enough childlike qualities in all of us that make children connect with what we have to offer (Pelling, Rush, Zeegan, 2005).

In my illustration books I would like to create stories with the drawings I enjoy drawing in order to stimulate the imagination of children.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONSTRUCTING PRODUCTS TO TRY AND PREVENT DYSFUNCTION IN THE POST MODERN CHILD**

#### **4.1 FIELDS**

##### **CHILD PSYCHOLOGY**

Normally child psychologists study how children learn, how certain behaviours develop and the impact of the environment on a developing child. (Smith, 2010).

##### **CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

*Children's illustration books are any type of picture or decorative work produced for books specifically intended for a youthful audience.*

##### **SURFACE AND PRODUCT DESIGN FIELD**

Surface design entails patterning, colouring and the manipulation of fabric. Surface designers tend to explore processes like embellishing, quilting, painting, felting, embroidering, dyeing etc onto surfaces. (SDA, 2010)

#### **4.2 APPROACH**

##### **QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

This approach to research is used to quantify opinions, assumptions and behaviours. This is done by questionnaires, informal interviews and observations (University of Texas at Austin, 2010). I am making use of the quantitative approach to determine how effective my research is as well as how effective the products I have produced from my research is.

#### **4.3 METHOD**

##### **GROUNDED THEORY**

I am making use of Grounded Theory for my method. Grounded theory is a research method that takes factual data and develops a theory from it. This is an inductive process that means that the research goes from very particular to the more generalised. The research method is based on hypotheses that can be broken down to three fundamentals called concepts, categories and propositions. However, concepts are the key elements of analysis since the theory is developed from the conceptualization of data, rather than the actual data (A. L. Davidson, 2002).



## **4.4 DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES**

### **PRIMARY RESOURCES**

#### **OBSERVING THE KOEN FAMILY**

Since June 2010 until August 2010 I have been observing the "Koen" family. It has been conveniently enough to have the "Koen" family living with me because I could do some observations to validate my research on the post modern family and what affects it has on a growing individual.

I created a profile of each of the three family members namely Heinrich Koen, Christina Koen and Alexander Eben Koen.

##### **Profile 1: Mother Christina Koen**

Christina Koen was born in Cape Town and raised in an Afrikaans household. She attended an Afrikaans school Jan van Riebeeck High. After completing high school she obtained her degree in graphic design at CPUT. She then worked as a personal assistant at a film company. Christina then decided to go to England to do a shoe making apprenticeship. While living in Brighton, England she conceived Alexander her son. Currently Christina is working at "Delicious Films" as a location researcher.

##### **Profile 2: Father Heinrich Koen**

Heinrich Koen was born in 1981 on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September. He grew up in Bellville. He was raised within the Afrikaans Griekwa culture and attended Bellville High School. He studied at Zevenwacht chef school. Heinrich has been working in the kitchen since the age of sixteen and after his studies he has been the head chef of "café Paridiso" in Kloof Street Cape Town, "Madame Zingara" in Loop street Cape Town and "Blues" in Camps Bay Beach Road Cape Town. He also travelled to England where he worked at "Aldo Zillies" in Brighton England as a head chef. Currently Heinrich is working at "Bombay Bicycle Cafe" in Kloof Street as the head chef.

**Profile 3: Child Alexander Eben Koen**

Alexander Eben Koen was born in 2008 in Brighton, England. He grew up in England until October 2009. He is currently attending “Sugar and Spice Educare Centre” on Kloofnek, Cape Town.

All three family members have been living with us since June 2010. Since then I have been observing their movement at home and the interaction between parents and child to support my research.

Refer to Table 4.1 for the results of the researched facts. The first column contains the post modern facts and the second column contains the effects on family life and child as observed in the “Koen Family Study” that justifies the facts in column one.

**Table 4.1: POST MODERN FACTS AS JUSTIFIED BY THE “KOEN FAMILY STUDY”**

<b>POST MODERN FACTS</b>	<b>“KOEN FAMILY STUDY”</b>
<p><b>Facts and reality are changing unpredictably</b></p>	<p>October 2009 Christina Human (not married yet to Heinrich Koen) and Alexander Eben Koen came back to South Africa. Christina had to reapply for a British Visa. The British Consulate rejected her application and she had to stay in South Africa.</p> <p>Affects on child: Alexander has one less parent. With his mother he has direct communication but with his father he communicates via “Skype” online communication software every second day. Reality has drastically changed for Alexander and could seem unpredictable. He does not know when his father will return from England because he has a job and cannot just leave instantly.</p>

<p><b>Economic climate is unstable and the job availability is low (Squire, 2003: 57)</b></p>	<p>When Christina came back to South Africa she took three months to get a job. She then only had her job for 2 months because the film company did not have the finances to afford her any longer. She then got a job at another film company a month later. Heinrich got a job a month after he arrived in June.</p>
<p><b>Old values formed by modernist culture are put aside and the value system falls away, the individual is in control of own values and principles (AllAboutPhilosophy.org, 2010)</b></p>	<p>Both Christina and Heinrich grew up in Christian households with Christian values and traditions. In July 2010 they decided to get married at a South African "Home Affairs" office without their parents consent.</p> <p>Affects on child: Alexander was attending school while they went to "Home Affairs". Alexander will grow up with none of the values his parents grew up with. The Koen Family have already formed their own values and principles apart from the Christian traditions they were used to when growing up.</p>
<p><b>There are no geographical boundaries; the world is one global community where knowledge and perceptions are exchanged. Nationalism is something from the past (AllAboutPhilosophy.org, 2010)</b></p>	<p>Christina and Heinrich both grew up in South Africa. They then both moved to England for approximately two years and learnt about the British culture. They have also travelled in Europe. Their national heritage has not kept them from travelling and exploring and that has extended their cultural capital and perceptions on life.</p> <p>Alexander has travelled quite a bit for his age and as he grows up he will realise that he was born in a complete different country from where he is situated now. He has a British passport to show that he</p>

	is not a South. African citizen even though he lives here.
<b>Rights are given to people once suppressed in a Modernist environment that encourages liberalism (AllAboutPhilosophy.org, 2010).</b>	<p>Heinrich and Christina have experienced the last years of Apartheid growing up. They both were 13 years old when Apartheid came to an end in 1994. Christina and Heinrich is a multiracial couple. In Apartheid times the legislation was Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No. 55 (about.com, 2010) Prohibited marriages between white people and people of other races.</p> <p>Alexander will grow up with this right being normal to life not even knowing that it was once illegal to marry an other than your own race.</p>
<b>The normal nuclear family no longer exists and family becomes your own perception of family. (Squire, 2003: 57)</b>	<p>Christina, Heinrich and Alexander have been living with Christina's parents and auntie in one house since June 2010.</p> <p>Alexander's perception of family has changed from two parents living with him in Brighton, England to one parent looking after him in South Africa in a flat apartment to a family of two parents, grandparents and auntie living in one house.</p>

#### 4.5 FINDINGS

##### HERMENEUTICS

I am using present day Hermeneutics to analyse my data that I have been gathering as seen in table 2. Hermeneutics is the interpreting of text, verbal and non-verbal communication presented to a human being (Answers corporation, 2010).

I come to the conclusion that the facts stated in my research on post-modern times and how it affects the family is a reality. The observation I did on the "Koen Family" is one example of over millions of variables on Post Modern Family life.

## **WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION AFTER LOOKING AT THE DATA**

Parents need a platform to communicate with their children. There is a big age gap and it is difficult for parents and children to connect socially. Then there are Post Modern factors that add on and family life becomes complex and difficult to keep the focus on communicating healthy with the child and on a regular basis. We can conclude that what is missing in the current family life situation is a product that needs to be developed to help natural interaction between child and parent.

## **4.6 PRODUCT TYPE**

- **ILLUSTRATION STORY BOOKS**
- **INTERACTIVE TABLE CLOTHS**
- **TEA SET**
- **FAMILY CUSHIONS**
- **SEASONS ARE CHANGING STICKER SET**
- **BOOK BAG**
- **MESSAGE CARDS**

## **4.7 RELEVANCE**

### **HOW DOES YOUR PRODUCT BENEFIT PEOPLE**

Generally children's paraphernalia has no deeper concept than purely entertain children or add colour to their lives. This range of products is based on getting the family connected and creating a platform for child and parent or caretaker to connect on a social level with the child. Parents need to connect more with their children and because of the vast age gap it is difficult to connect with your child. These products put a platform open for parents to connect easier with their children through using the products. Some products do not set out the platform for social interaction but then they make a subtle statement about family and being together.

## 4.8 MY PRODUCTS

### 4.8.1 ILLUSTRATIONS STORY BOOKS

The illustrator who inspired me for my illustration work was Pepa Prieto and Anita Jeram. She inspired me because she has a similar style as I and I was drawn to her colour and line usage. Figure 4.1 is an example of her work.

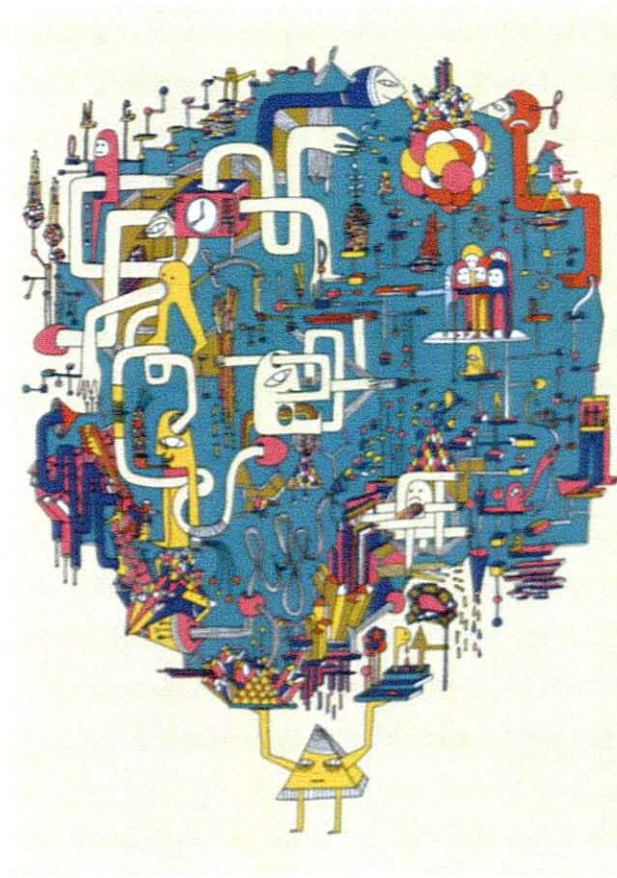


Figure 4.1: Illustration by Pepa Prieto

From my inspiration I designed two illustration books. My first book is called "The story about the hollow tree stump" and my second book is called "Making tea". Both stories have a message about family life. The stories symbolises post-modern living and it reflects good family values like communication, caring, providing, working as a team and living life together. In both stories there is a strong matriarch figure that takes care of the younger individuals. I emphasize the matriarch figure in both of my books because I have been influenced and cared for the most by the matriarch figures in my life.

My first book called "The story about the hollow tree stump" starts off with a hollow stump that is not inhabited by animals. It is the perfect place for shelter but still no animal seems to

notice this tree stump. The empty hollow tree stump symbolises for me that there is this perfect place for a home but when it is empty it has no meaning. An object can only be a home when it has life inside living in it every day. Then next in the story the stump lays there for all the seasons and still no animal is interested. Then spring arrives, the symbol for me that mean new beginnings or new life is on its way. In this season in my story the animals start noticing the potential of the hollow stump. First the birds flock down and they start building a nest. Thereafter the bees come and they build their hive. After they built their hive a hare comes along. She does not have an existing family yet but she is expecting and she sees that the hollow tree stump is the ideal protected place to give birth and to raise her babies. This hare symbolises a single parent trying to do their best for her young that is about to arrive. She is alone but she has taken responsibility to take care of her babies and she will search for the best place to do just that.

In the next few pages three families' comes along and they ask the same question to the hare, "Can we live in the stump because we have a family to look after and you do not?" The hare just sends them away because this is her new home and she is making provision for the future.

Then one night all the animal families' wait outside the stump and they protest against the hare and how selfish she is to live by herself and she does not even have the responsibility of looking after her young. The families' fighting to raise their young is a quality I have not experienced in my post-modern family of today. I feel that people have lost pride in family life and do not know how to fight for the raising of their children. After the animals have waited for a certain period of time the hare gives birth to her young and one by one they start popping out of the stump. When this happens the animals start cheering because they realise for the first time why the hare has been there all along.

On the last page of the book there is an illustration of mommy hare standing outside the stump. She is clapping her paws and has a great smile on her face. Above the opening of the tree stump is a sign that says home. The stump only became a home after the hare gave birth because now there is other life in the stump and it is not just the lonely hare. The hollow tree stump has meaning again, where it once grew as a tree and then was lifeless for a few years it now has life living in it and becomes a home.

My second book is called "Making tea". This story is more abstract than the first story. This story is about a tea set that works together with little potato men to make tea.

The first page is about the mother teapot boiling on the stove. The boiling teapot symbolises the matriarch figure of the family sacrificing her life to get food for her young. The teapot boils and as she boils and boils the little teacups, that symbolises her young, starts getting excited. It also symbolises that they are hungry and they need to be filled with food. As the story continues the teacups are filled with milk and then sugar and then eventually the teapot comes along. All the teacups get very excited and happy. After that the grumpy teaspoon comes to stir the tea. All the teacups get upset because the stirring is going to make them dizzy. The grumpy teaspoon scenario symbolises for me that in family life you have good times and bad times but in the end it is how you work together that makes a change. That brings you closer as a family unit.

The last page is a visual where everyone is together and happy. Together as a team they finished making tea. Together they achieved something and this ritual has brought them together and made them stronger as a family unit. See Figure 4.2 for examples of both of my illustration books.



**Figure 4.2: My Illustration books, “Making tea” and “The story about the hollow tree stump”**

My third Illustration book is called “Sometimes”. This illustration book is about emotions. I have used two opposing emotions to follow each other from page to page. My book starts with the sentence “Sometimes I feel lonely” and then if you page over my next sentence is



“sometimes I feel loved”. These emotions are in contrast to each other. The first one is emotion is “lonely” and it is a negative emotion followed by “loved” that is a positive emotion. As seen in figure 4.2.1 and 4.2.2

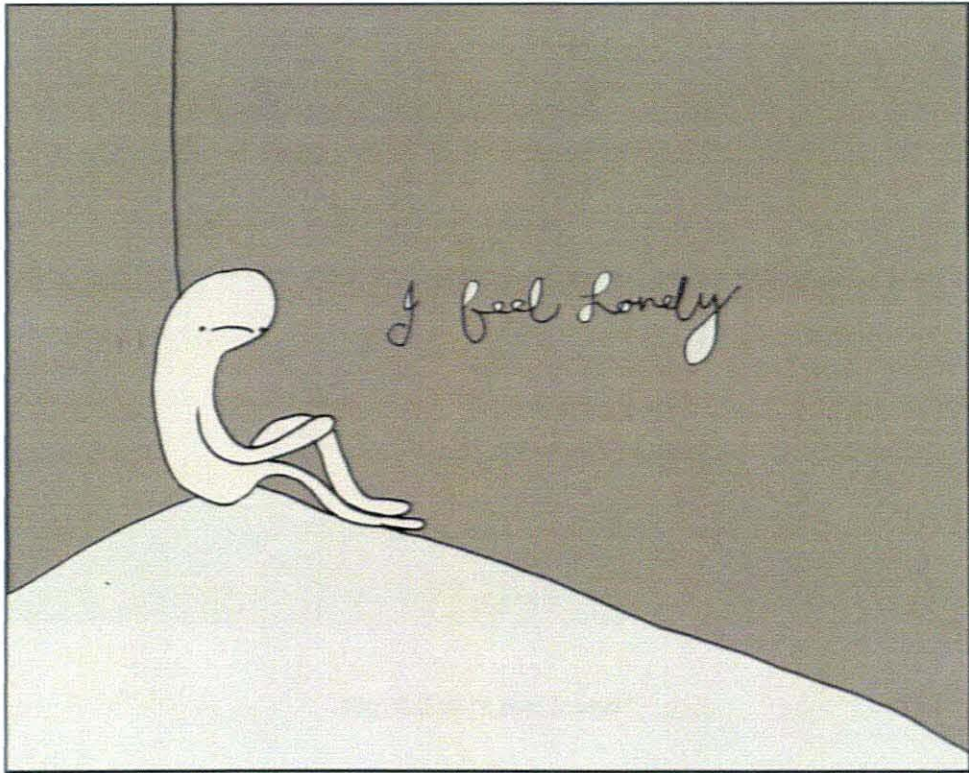
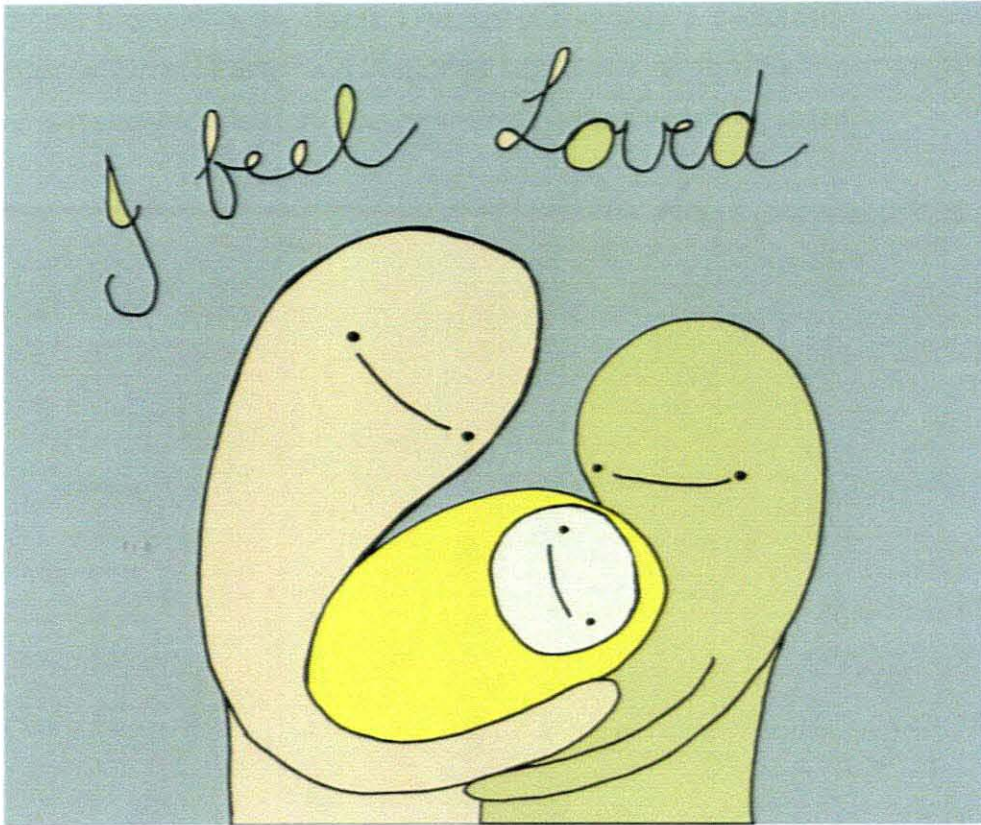


Fig. 4.2.1: “I feel lonely”



**Fig. 4.2.2: "I feel loved"**

My intention with this book is to make children and parents aware of their emotions. Also want to make this a talking point between parents and children to discuss their emotions and come to a mutual understanding about day to day life. The word "Sometimes" links to my research on Post- Modern family life that situations are forever changing on the exterior and interior like your emotions (AllAboutPhilosophy.org, 2010).

#### **4.8.2 INTERACTIVE TABLECLOTH**

I have designed a tablecloth range that is themed by four events in the year that a child would celebrate together with his family and friends. The four themes are Birthday, Easter, Halloween and Christmas. These tablecloths are designed so that the visuals on the cloth is just outlines of the designs that matches the theme. The child gets fabric paint with the cloth and paints the visuals with friends and family. At the bottom of the tablecloth there is a space for his or her name and the date so that the cloth can become a memorable piece of the occasion where the child got together with other people to do something.

In each theme I assemble the designs so that it becomes a celebration of family life and coming together. On my Easter and Christmas tablecloths' designs there are couples holding each other and showing affection. This symbolises unity and coming together.

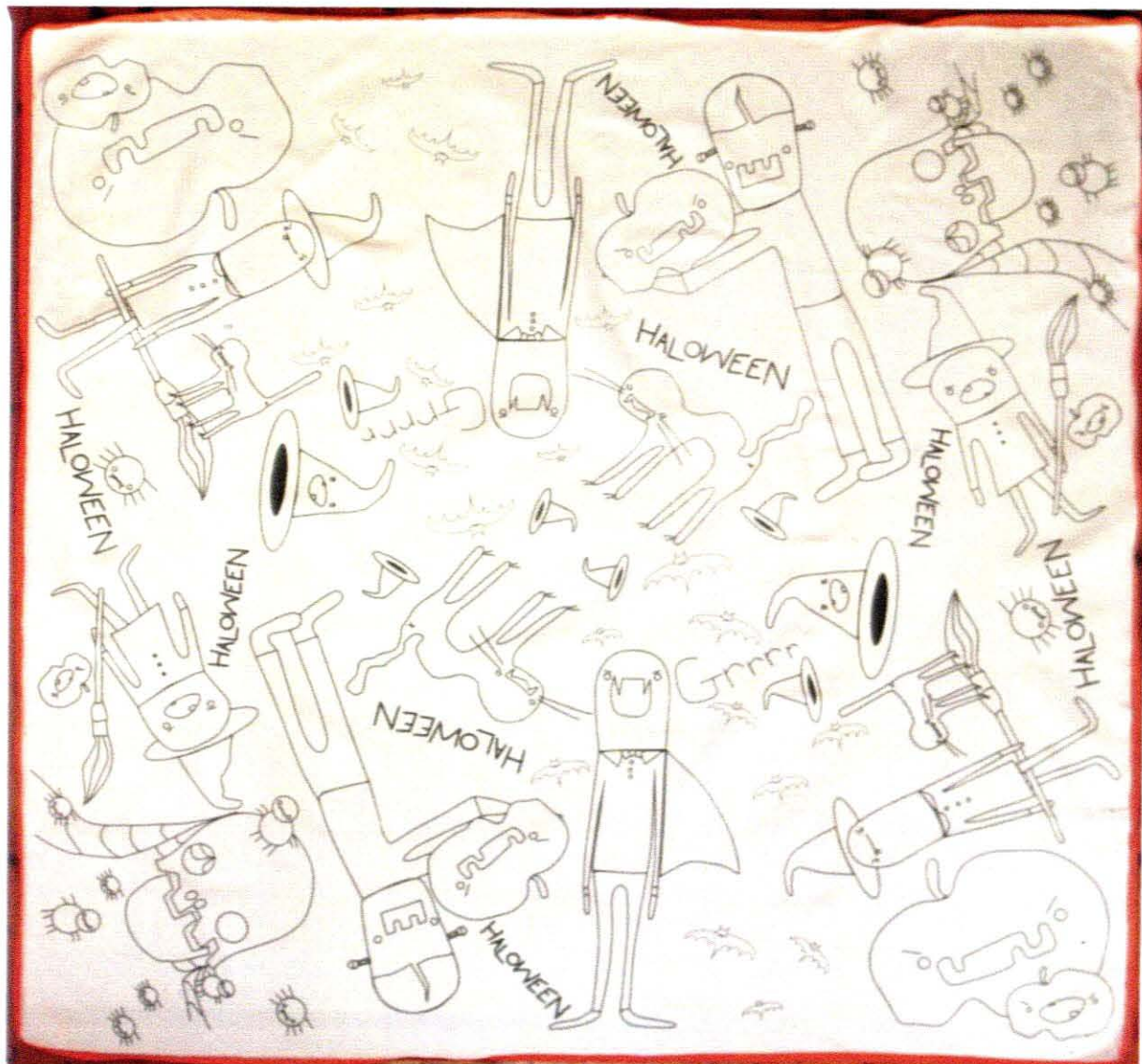


Figure 4.3.1: Special Occasion Tablecloth with Fabric paint, this one is themed "Halloween"

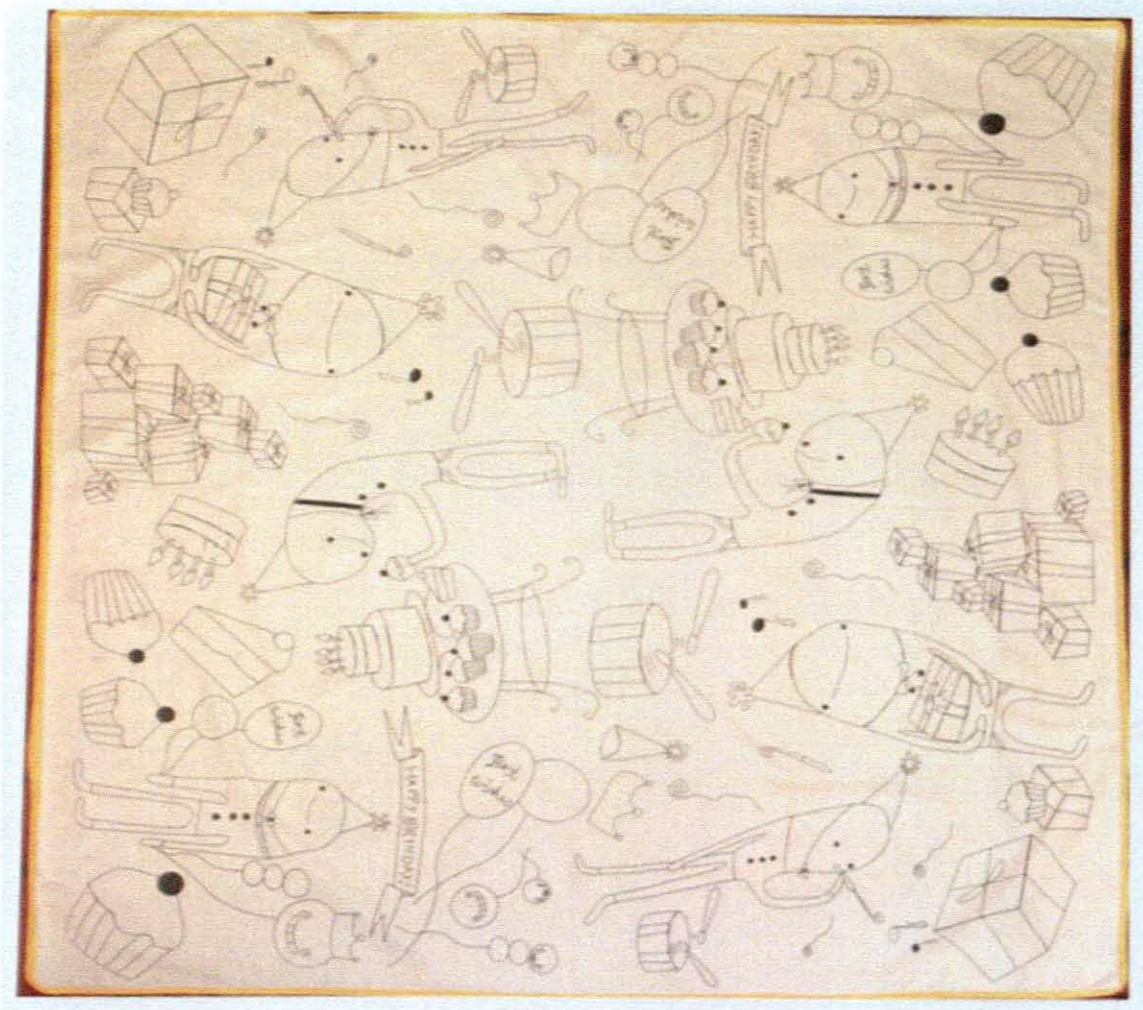


Figure 4.3.2: Special Occasion Tablecloth with Fabric paint, this one is themed "Birthday"

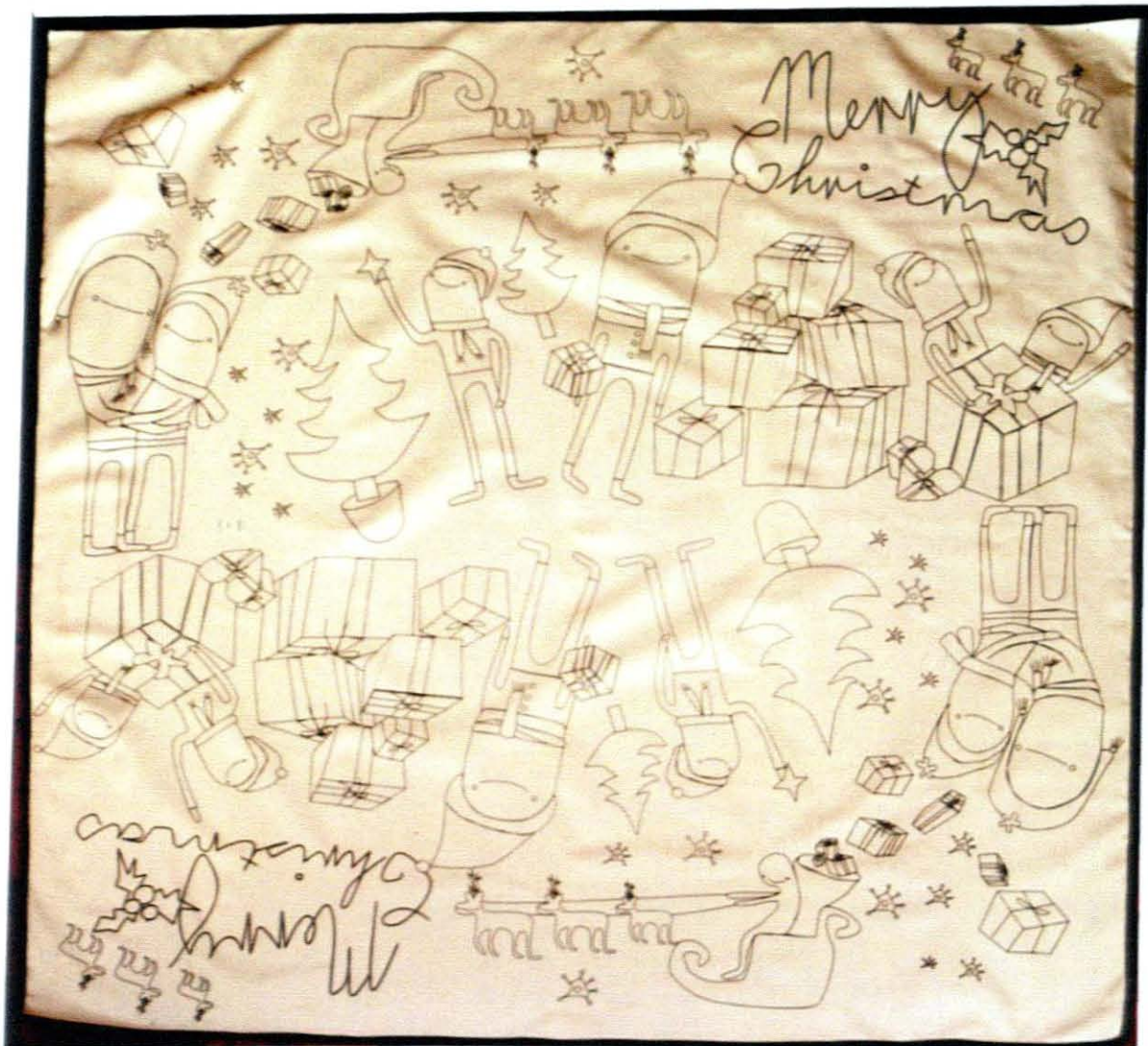


Figure 4.3.3: Special Occasion Tablecloth with Fabric paint, this one is themed "Christmas"



Figure 4.3.4: Special Occasion Tablecloth with Fabric paint, this one is themed "Easter"

### 4.8.3 ROLEPLAY WITH TEA CUPS

My Inspiration for my tea set is from Tim Burton's interpretation of Alice in Wonderland as in. Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.4: A picture from the Alice in Wonderland Movie directed by Tim Burton.

I have designed a ceramic teacup range with illustrations on. See Figure 4.5. The concept behind the teacups is that having tea is a universal coming together ritual. People across the world can relate to having a cup of tea with friends and family. I am also trying to create connection points where children have a chance to interact and socialise with their family to build their self-esteem and social skills. The tea set is the ideal connecting point because it creates a natural setting for communication. On the teacups there are a design of little potato men and the words "love", "calm" and "peace". These words create a mood of security. My own experience of the post-modern family is just the opposite. It is unstable, conflicting and love is hard to find.



Figure 4.5: "peace, love and calm" tea set.

#### 4.8.4 INTERACTIVE STICKERS AND SEASON POSTER

My Inspiration comes from one of my favourite past times from my childhood. It was a book with an open landscape for example a forest. You received a set of stickers with it that you could place in the landscape. This poster idea comes from my illustration book "The story about the hollow tree stump" There are four posters that show the different seasons. With each poster that represents a season a sheet of stickers is supplied with elements that appear in that season. This exercise of placing the stickers onto the poster is done with the help of a family member. Whatever season it is the child can pin up the poster in his or her room and then add the stickers. See figure 4.6.



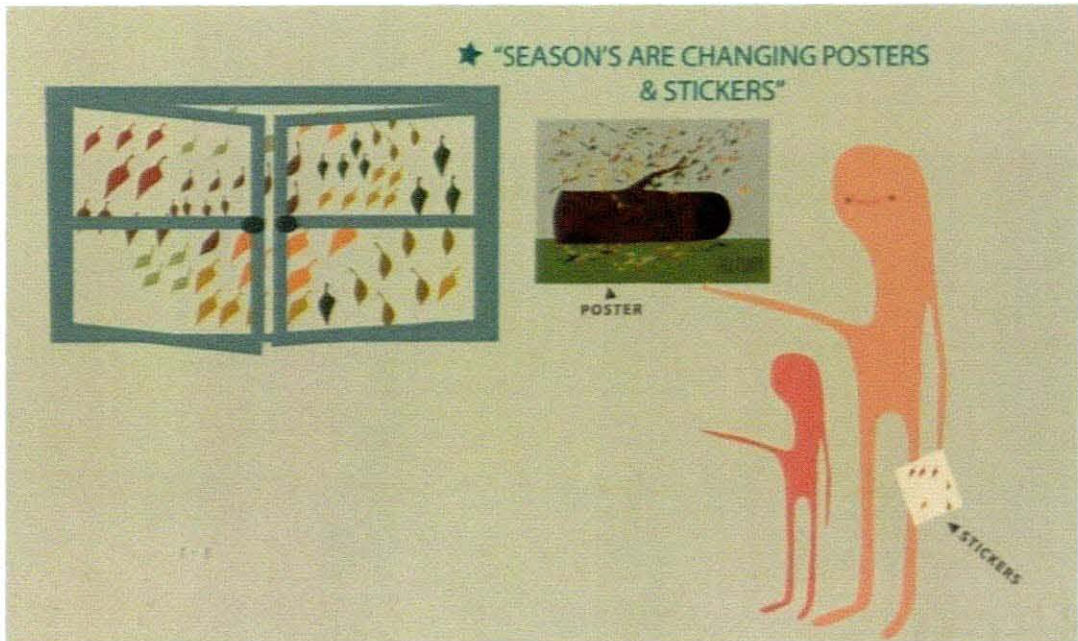


Figure 4.6: "seasons are changing' poster and stickers

#### 4.8.5 ANIMAL FAMILY CUSHIONS

The designs of my animal family cushion range come from my own illustrations. These cushions are screen-printed, sewed and filled with stuffing. These animals in figure 4.7 are representations of families.

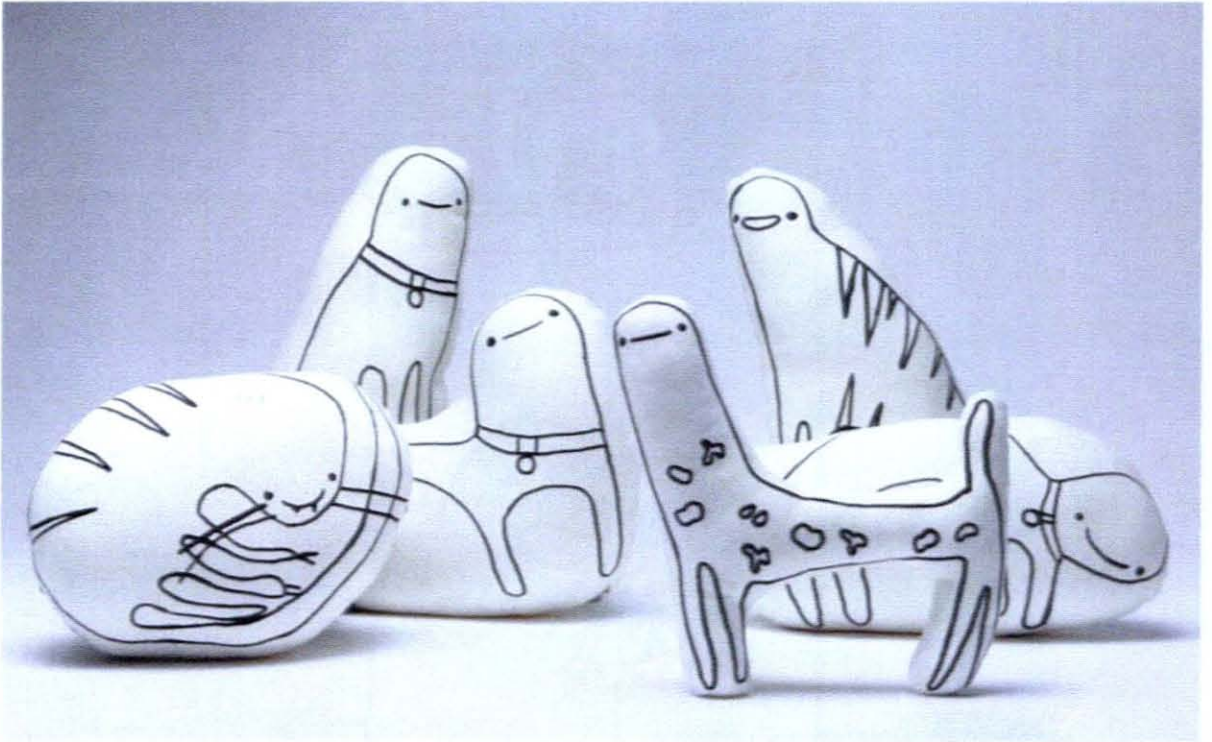


Figure 4.7: "The Animal family" cushion range

#### 4.8.8 Book Bag



Figure 4.8: Book Bag

#### 4.8.9 Message Cards

These cards which I designed, act like medium of getting information across. Every day there are messages that we forget to say to each other because we get too busy with our professional lives. That is why I have designed message cards to make children aware of the importance of communication. I have designed cards like for example; the “please” card. Where the child learns to show gratefulness is such an important manner to have before the child asks a favour from someone. Then there is the “thank you” card see figure 4.9 that also teaches children good manners when they have received something from someone, or someone did a favour for them.



**Figure 4.9: Message Cards "Thank You"**

Then have other cards that I have designed that are messages to state that you care about a person like the "I miss you" as seen in figure 4.10, "congratulations", "get well soon" and "I love you". With these message cards I believe you can teach your child a valuable skill of communicating the things we tend to forget so quickly from day to day.

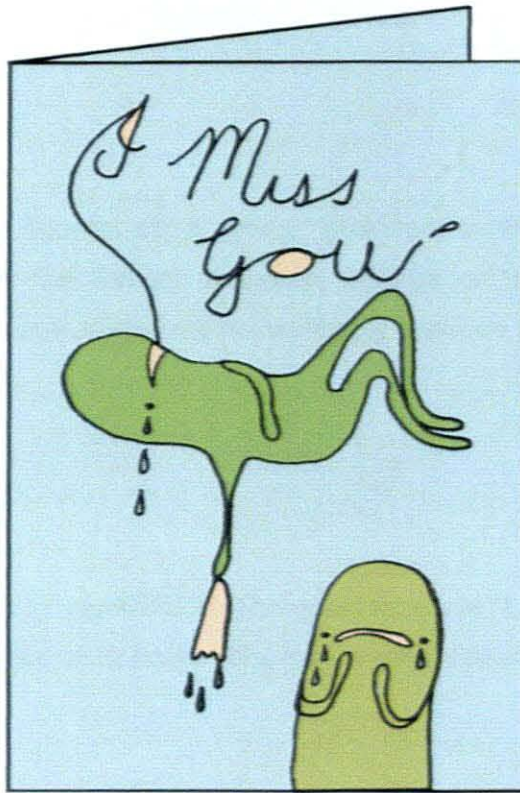


Figure 4.10: Message Cards "I miss you"

## **CHAPTER FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 TARGET MARKET**

The target market is for the Internet savvy parent, guardian, family member or sibling that shops online. It is also for the Parent, guardian, siblings or family members that are concerned about the child's spiritual and mental wellbeing between the ages of 4 and 8 years old that they are looking after.

### **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is to start a narrative series for my MTECH. The goals for my MTECH will be to publish 36 books consisting of three series of 12 books. The series can illustrate three different themes for example:

- SERIES VIRTUES AND VICES
- HOW DO I DO IT
- HOW DO I FEEL

# CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION

### Chapter 1

I introduced the topic of my research. I also introduced the research question and sub questions of my research, which was the following:

#### Research question

1. Can a product stimulate holistic development and have universal appeal for the preschool child be developed using a personal subjective design approach, throughout and thereby stimulating right brain functioning?

#### Sub Questions

- 1.4 What is the relevance in a Post Modern world of applying a subjective design process?
- 1.5 What is the benefit of products that stimulate right brain functioning in pre-school children?
- 1.6 How can a range of products cater for preschool children that stimulate holistic development?

### Chapter 2

I discussed the theorists that I will base my research on for example Maria Montessori, Jean Francois Leotard, Vygotsky and Roger Sperry.

### Chapter 3

I looked at designers and professionals in the field of design that have applied the knowledge that I have research to making products.

### Chapter 4

Here I collected data by using secondary resources e.g. magazines, Internet and books. I also made use of primary resources for example observations and informal interviews.

### Chapter 5

In Chapter five I made recommendations of what I have install for my future with my research project and product line. My goals are to start an online shop and then to do my MTECH where I produce three ranges of twelve illustration books for children.

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