

**THE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS AND PARENTS  
AFTER PARENTS' DIVORCE FINALISATION  
(POST-DIVORCE)  
AND THE EFFECTS ON  
ADOLESCENT PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

A full thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Master's in Social Work,

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## **ABSTRACT**

Divorce is a world-wide phenomenon. Divorce means the ending of a marriage after a period of unity and bonding; and thus it can take a long time to recover emotionally, particularly for children. Concerningly, half of marriages ends in divorce. Studies found that divorce has an effect on the well-being, behaviour and actions of both adults and children. Children's lives change irrevocably and it can be contributed to the parents' separation or divorce. The manner in which children respond emotionally and psychologically to divorce is dependent on their age, and this event could be both confusing and traumatising. The adolescent stage is viewed as the most vulnerable stage of development, where identity is the primary focus; and thus these children are most severely impacted by their parents' divorce. There was a dearth of studies on the effects of divorce on adolescents after the divorce finalisation, known as post-divorce phase, and thus no clear interventions.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe participants' experiences of divorce and the effects on adolescents during the post-divorce phase. The qualitative research approach was selected as it focused on the personal experiences from the viewpoint of those who were directly affected by the phenomenon. An exploratory design was appropriate for a relatively unexplored topic as few studies consider the post-divorce phase. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to choose participants using specific inclusion criteria, together with snowball sampling. The researcher secured 12 participants (six adult and six adolescent participants) and could produce rich data, until data saturation was reached.

The data collection method was face-to-face interviews with semi-structured interview schedules. The eight steps of Renata Tesch were used with thematic data analysis to reduce the data and present the findings. There were five main themes and 12 subthemes. The main themes that emerged were: the effects of divorce on family, parenting in the post-divorce phase, the

psychosocial effects of divorce on adolescents, role confusion, and the post-divorce coping mechanisms of adolescents.

Data verification methods were member checking, rich, thick descriptions, triangulation, and researcher reflexivity. Pertinent recommendations are made for social work services, for example, in the pre- and post-divorce phases, such as, mediation, residential and non-residential parenting, preparing children, pre- and post- divorce counselling, and parenting plans. For social work education and training, the key learning areas are pre- and post- divorce assessing and intervening with adolescents during this phase. CPD training also involved specialist mediation knowledge and training. In terms of policy, urgent amendments and updates to the Divorce Act of 1979 were needed.

Ethics considerations included the following: institutional permission was obtained before commencement of the study and consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality and privacy through anonymity and securing of information and protection from harm through debriefing opportunities. The researcher took care to ensure adolescent participants understood the study requirements. Parents gave permission on behalf of the children and they also signed their consent. Researcher bias was addressed through self-reflexivity.

**KEYWORDS:**

Adolescent

Adolescence

Divorce

Post-divorce

Psychosocial development

## **ACRONYMS**

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child
FST	Family System Theory
FtF	Face to Face
NPO	Non Profitable Organization
SW	Social worker
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council of Social Services Professionals

## **DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS**

### **Adolescent**

According to Louw and Louw (2007), the adolescent is a child in transition as he or she undergoes a developmental process in becoming an adult, usually between ages 11 and 21 years. The authors highlight that in South Africa the adolescence stage ends at the age of 18.

### **Adolescence**

For the purpose of this study the age of the adolescent is between 12 and 18 years. The adolescent phase is a change of physical, cognitive and social factors, and for many adolescents, role confusion (Kroger, 2004; Sokol, 2009).

### **Divorce**

Divorce is a legal process where a marriage is dissolved based on legal premises, but the parental relationship is, however, ongoing (Pickhardt, 2013).

### **Post-divorce**

Post-divorce is described as the phase after the person's divorce has been finalised. Fine and Harvey (2006) describe the post-divorce as the end of the romantic (couple) relationship, but the familial relations of parents and child relationships are not terminated. The couple will still have a role as co-parents to their children.

### **Psychosocial development**

Louw and Louw (2007) describe Erik Erikson' (1902–1994) psychosocial theory as focusing more on the psychological and social aspects of conflict. Freud focused more on the biological and sexual aspects. Erikson defines his theory in eight stages and focuses on the crisis or challenges during each stage as propelling the individual to the next developmental stage.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the study, *The experiences of adolescents and parents after parents' divorce finalisation (post-divorce) and the effects on adolescent psychosocial development*, is my original work; that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Date: 15 November 2019

Signature •.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful to my Saviour and heavenly Father who guided and gave me the necessary strength and patience to endure this process.

Divorce is a sensitive phenomenon and people worldwide are struggling to cope with the effects. Therefore, I want to thank the participants who trusted me in their post-divorce journey.

I trust that your experiences will inspire other people to share their journey and to know that they are not alone. To every person who supported me in kind words of encouragement and support in prayer, I am grateful.

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This journey seemed impossible, but in the end I have grown in patience, trust and now, know we are not able to control anything. We can only trust in God as His word states.

Rom. 8 v 28 says '*All things work together for good to them that love God*'. I am forever grateful.



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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

Divorce is a world-wide phenomenon. Divorce is the result of a marriage being legally dissolved. Marriage does not succeed for various reasons. Pickhardt (2013) describes divorce as an estranged, abandoned or violent marriage ending. Emery (2006) identifies three types of divorce which underscore Pickhardt's description of divorce. These three types are: (i) the cooperative divorce, where parents agree on divorcing and work together as parents to ensure the child is not involved in the conflict in the marriage; (ii) the distant divorce, where parents are hostile towards each other because of either partner's adultery, or other situations that cause pain and bitterness; in this instance the parents cooperate in all aspects of their parenting for the sake of their children; and (iii) the angry divorce, where infidelity or violence has occurred, but one parent might not want a divorce and they are unable to come to any agreements. The latter could be the most harmful divorce to all parties, especially to children and could result in the loss of the parental-child relationship (Emery, 2006).

According to Emery (2006), because divorce is ending a marriage, it can take a long time to recover emotionally, particularly for children. Pickhardt (2013) states that divorce can mean many things to children, for example, that parents do not love each other anymore, parents will not be living together any longer, there will be no more family time, and life will not be the same any longer. Divorce is painful for children, especially because of the loss of understanding, of valued connections, power and acceptance (Pickhardt, 2013). Considering the different types of divorces identified by Emery (2006), it is evident that some parents do

consider their children when filing for divorce, but other parents do not see the implications for their children.

In my five years of social work experience, I observed the effects of divorce on children. Divorce is a major upheaval, not only in the lives of couples, but also for the children born into the marriage. It is not only the couples dissolving the marriage, but children are being torn between parents. I have counselled children who have experienced divorce. Social work focuses on a person as a whole and when assessing client's circumstances, hostile marriages and divorce contemplation feature frequently in these assessments. Adding to this, divorce is also often featured in movies and reality shows, and is therefore increasingly seen as the norm. I have observed that adolescents experience identity crises, and divorce adds more confusion to their lives. Therefore, my focus was on exploring the experiences of adolescents after the divorce has been finalised, also known as post-divorce phase.

According to Lehohla (2017), marriage and divorce statistics until 2014, revealed that fewer people were getting married, but the divorce rates increased. The statistics also reflected that most divorces involved children who were under the age of 18 years old. Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA) (2009) contends that the manner in which children respond emotionally and psychologically to divorce is dependent on their age, and this event could be both confusing and traumatising. According to Potter (2010), children's lives change irrevocably and it can be contributed to the parents' separation or divorce.

The adolescent stage is viewed as the most vulnerable stage of development, where identity is the primary focus (Sokol, 2009). Mcleod (2008) emphasises Erickson's psychosocial development of adolescents (age 12 to 18 years), as the transition from childhood to adulthood as the most important. During this phase, children are becoming more independent and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, and housing. The individual

wants to belong to a society and fit in. One of the factors that has a great effect on children in a divorce is their age (Louw & Louw, 2007). Their emotions are most often cited as that of anger, fear, loneliness, anxiety, depression and guilt. Louw and Louw (2007) highlight that adolescents might feel they are forced into becoming adults as they acquire new responsibilities, like caring for siblings, additional chores, and even caring for their custodial parent. Furthermore, these authors reveal that adolescents could become involved in conflict with the law or exposure to drug and alcohol abuse.

This study has focused on the adolescent stage of development and how divorce could affect young people who are in this stage. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences and the effects of divorce on the psychosocial development of adolescents which will be of benefit for future social work practice with adolescents and their families.

## **1.2 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study focused on exploring the experiences of adolescents after the divorce has been finalised (hereafter referred to as the post-divorce phase). Therefore an important focus was the psychosocial development of adolescents, using Erickson's psychosocial development stage for adolescents, specifically identity versus role confusion. The effects of divorce on adolescents' psychosocial development were explicated. The effects and prevalence of divorce were vital aspects to contextualise this phenomenon.

### **1.2.1 Divorce and its prevalence**

O'Connell Corcoran (1997) confirmed that the United States (USA) previously had one of the highest divorce rates in the world. Doherty (2016:42) argues that in the USA, research estimates that "40%–50% of all first marriages, and 60% of second marriages, will end in divorce". Furthermore, divorce has been common in the USA since the 1970s and 1980s, and although it has decreased since then, it nonetheless remains very high. Statistics for England

and Wales reveal a decrease of 2.9% from 118,140 divorces in 2012 to 114,720 divorces in 2013 (McClaren, 2015).

On the African continent, 15% Kenyan marriages will end in divorce compared to its neighbours (for example, Cameroon, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) that could exceed 30%. Kenya has the lowest divorce rate in sub-Saharan Africa (Kubania, 2016). In a study by Clark and Otto (2015), the findings reveal that divorce rates in subnational (a region within a region) regions in West African countries are lower than those in Southern Africa.

When Statistics South Africa released their Marriages and Divorces 2014 statistics, it reflected that during the previous 10 years, marriages had decreased and divorce rates had increased (Mdaka, 2016). Lehohla (2014) *In 2014 the Department of Home Affairs shows a decrease of 4,9% from the 158 642 marriages recorded in 2013* From 2007 to 2012, the statistics also showed a higher proportion of divorces from black South Africans that reflected the widespread phenomenon. Lehohla (2014) *Couples from the white population group dominated the number of divorces from 2003 to 2007; thereafter, the black African couples had the highest number of divorces up until 2014. In 2003, 40,0% of the divorcees were from the white population group whereas 24,3% came from the black African population group* .About 19 713 children, aged less than 18 years, were affected by divorces that took place in 2012 (Mdaka, 2016).

### **1.2.2 Impact and effects of divorce on children**

According to Louw and Louw (2007), although counsellors might differ on the nature and severity of divorce on children's wellbeing, they do concur that there are significant effects. Divorce is a universal issue, but the concerns are common throughout. In her study, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) documented how children, who are now adults, gave an account of how devastating the effects of divorce had been on their lives. Some of the effects cited were that

participants were “insecure, unfulfilled and unable to sustain good relationships” (Whiteman, 2007:2). Wallerstein (1995) concluded that divorce destroyed children. Many children respond differently to divorce and their age has a huge impact, but the general conclusion is that divorce has adverse consequences when associated with children (Amato, 2000; Amato & Keith, 1991; Potter, 2010). In an extensive study by Amato (2010), the key findings were that children from divorced families were worse off than their peers from intact families. Finally, Louw and Louw (2007) argued that the effects of divorce should be investigated to increase understanding, because children of divorce are negatively affected, but that children can also cope quite well in contrast, if supported by parents.

### 1.2.3 Divorce and stages of grief and loss

Whiteman (2007:54) described the experiences of divorce and interestingly compared it to the process of death and grieving, for example, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. Renowned Swiss psychiatrist, Kübler-Ross (1926–2004), identified the five stages of grieving and loss that were viewed as being comparable to dealing with divorce (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Stages of grieving of loss in death and in divorce**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Stages of grieving and loss in death</b>	<b>Stages of grieving and loss in divorce</b>
<b>Denial</b>	The first reaction is to deny that death has taken place, you want to ignore what happened to you protect yourself. It is a survival mode.	This stage is where children are denying their parents’ divorce, thinking the separation is not permanent.
<b>Anger</b>	This phase you become angry with the deceased, yourself, hospital staff.	When children want to blame someone for their loss.
<b>Bargaining</b>	This phase is when there are now negotiations to keep your loved one. Promises are made to God. People use this as an escape from reality.	Children strive to be positive believing parents will not divorce. Children may bargain and say for example that they would behave better if parents stay together.
<b>Depression</b>	The realisation steps in, but there is no acceptance. When reality occurs there could be signs of lack of sleep and appetite, and withdrawal.	When divorce becomes reality and they realise there is nothing they can do to stop it, they tend to become sad, withdrawn, and isolated.



<b>Acceptance</b>	Although each situation varies, the person might not fully accept, but is ready to move on.	There is a realisation that nothing is going to change. Acceptance is the only way.
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**Sources:** *Chapman, 2013; Snyder, 2015; Tesler & Thompson, 2006; Whiteman, 2007*

Kübler-Ross makes a case for the strong correlations between the different grieving processes. These stages correspond with the current study. The contention is that the adolescent is experiencing the grief of the divorce which is compounded by the ongoing struggle with identity. The experience of divorce could have significant adverse effects on the adolescent.

#### **1.2.4 Adolescents stage according to Erikson’s psychosocial stage**

Adolescence occurs when children’s independence increases, emotionally distancing themselves from the family unit. They become more disconnected from the family and more attached to friends (their peer group) (Cherry, 2015; Pickhardt, 2013). The psychosocial developmental needs of adolescents are encapsulated in Erikson’s Lifespan Developmental Theory. Erikson was the first to identify eight psychosocial stages of development through experiencing developmental crisis which had to be resolved before further development could continue (Sokol, 2009).

Erikson referred to adolescence as being between ages 12-18 years (Sokol, 2009). He believed that the greatest task of adolescents was the formation of identity and therefore he called it conflict identity versus role confusion. Witt (2013) explains Erikson’s personality and role experimentation as a psychological moratorium which he means as a pause during which an adolescent experiments with different roles to see where they belong. Erikson argued that if parents allow this experimentation period, it would help the adolescent to find his/or her place. During this phase, adolescents also test and question their own beliefs, and their focus is on the search for self-acceptance. In comparing divorce and the effects to Erikson’s identity formation, it is clear that all the needs of the adolescent going through divorce will not be met.

This study therefore emphasised the psychosocial development of adolescents and the effects during the post-divorce phase, especially taking the cited literature into consideration.

### **1.2.5 Family relationships, attachment and engagement**

The psychosocial needs of adolescents are also facilitated or constrained by the relationships in the family, especially between parents and their children. In Bowlby's Theory of Attachment, the connection and relationship between parent and child, teaches the child how to build relations (Hines, 2007; Nelson, 2009). This positive attachment style provides the child with a model of how to form and regulate relationships within their individual life experiences (Hines, 2007; Nelson, 2009). Carranza, Kilmann and Vendemia (2009) and Nelson (2009) further argue that the theory contends that this kind of attachment will positively influence the child's future adult or romantic relationships. Carranza et al. (2009) and Nelson (2009) suggest that parental divorce could cause the child to have emotional difficulties in their relationships later in life.

The family structure plays an important part in helping an adolescent to adjust and understand the changes in their life and body. Previous studies show that family structure is one of the factors that influence an adolescent's success (Hines, 2007).

### **1.2.6 Policy and legislation**

There are three pieces of legislation in South Africa that are pertinent to this study. Firstly, the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 protects the rights of children and considers their best interests. A divorce will not be finalised until the children's custody has been finalised. The Act also makes provision for the children to have legal representation if there is a concern with regard to children's custody (Divorce Act 70 of 1979). Secondly, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 ensures that the best interest of the child is taken into account. If parents have concern regarding the custody, the Children's Act makes provision for a family advocate, who assists with mediation

in divorce matters, and ensures the best interest of the child is protected (Children's Act no 38 of 2005). Thirdly, the White Paper on Families (2013) makes provision for families in transition, and divorce is one of these transitions. The White Paper confirms that these families need special support, and it looks specifically at the inter-sectoral approach, which guarantees intervention by agency or departmental collaboration, guided by teams of professionals who will strengthen families and help to make the transition to a different lifestyle.

### **1.2.7 Theoretical framework and social work**

The Family Systems Theory (FST) was important for this study as it emphasises the importance of focusing on the family as a unit. This means that whatever affects the one member will have a concomitant effect on the other family members as families are intertwined (Green Paper on Families, 2010; Skyttner, 2005). FST also views the problems of the one family member as affecting the relationships and interactions of the larger family. The theory focuses on boundaries within families by defining who is and who are not family members (Moran & Dombeck, 2006). For example, when there is a conflictual divorce the child can be used to communicate the parents' acrimonious messages to each other. The child is often the messenger and the child is put into a predicament of choosing between parents, thereby straining the boundaries and placing the family in difficult situations, causing further harm. The counsellor (for example, social worker) looks for boundary limitations and constraints and focuses on facilitating the holistic wellbeing of all members. The FST theory is important to this study as it did not look at divorce affecting the parents only, but it acknowledged the strain on the family's relationships as a whole.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Previous studies reveal that divorce might affect adolescents, but it might be the consequences of it and not the divorce itself (Woosley, Dennis, Robertson & Goldstein, 2008; Kenyon,

Rankin, Koerner, & Dennison, 2007; Nelson 2009). Divorce still reflects 50% of marriages dissolving which confirms that research is needed on the effects on adolescents (Martin, Specter & Martin, 2003; Nelson, 2009). Studies also find that divorce has an effect on the well-being, behaviour and actions of both adults and children, although not necessarily long term or extensive in all cases, and therefore there might be many variations (Amato, 2000, 2010; Garriga & Härkönen, 2009, Härkönen 2013). Other studies argue that there might be negative effects before the actual divorce, and therefore it is difficult to precisely determine the effects on adolescents during the post-divorce phase (Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lindsale, Kiernan, Robins, Ruane, Morrison, & Teitler,., 1991; Harkonen, 2013; Kim, 2011; Galdeano & Vuri, 2007). In SA, Van Jaarsveld (2007) concluded in her study that parents play a pivotal role in lessening the effects of divorce if they consider the children's needs before their own.

The above cited studies conclude that divorce has an adverse effect on adolescents. The concern is for adolescents who, as described by Erickson, will either be able to claim their identity or be confused, depending on the nature of their family life, vis-à-vis their divorce or post-divorce experiences. This concern highlights the need to focus on the adolescent and the effects occurring during the post-divorce phase. Thus, the study focused on the adolescents' experiences and the effects on their psychosocial development during the post-divorce phase.

#### **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents and their parents in the post-divorce phase, focusing on the effects on the psychosocial development of adolescents.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) state that research questions are vital and viewed as steering the entire study. With regard to the study, the main research question was: *What are the experiences of adolescents and their parents of the post-divorce phase and the effects on the adolescents' psychosocial development?*

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES**

The following study objectives emerged from the main research question.

1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on their psychosocial development.
2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.

## **1.7 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The following sections focused on the methodology for gathering data to meet the study objectives.

### **1.7.1 Research approach**

The study was based on the qualitative approach as the researcher wanted to explore the opinions and personal experiences of participants to obtain their views. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative approach is used to explore the perceptions and viewpoints of how people experience life and life's challenges. He describes this research endeavour as a process where the researcher has specific research questions, a method of collecting data in the environment of the participant, and finding common themes and interpreting the data. Hancock

et al. (2009) declare that the qualitative approach focuses on social concerns and the aim is to answer the questions about people's behaviour, opinions and attitudes, culture, and social events; as well as its effects. The qualitative approach is therefore an appropriate means to gain in-depth information about adolescents' and parents' experiences of the post-divorce phase and allowed the researcher to obtain personalised knowledge and understanding of the topic.

### **1.7.2 Study design**

An exploratory study does not only focus on new topics, but looks at existing phenomena (Babbie, 2013; Ginsberg, 2001; Pierson & Thomas, 2010; Strydom, 2013). Engel and Schutt (2010, 2013) explain that exploratory research views how people relate and interact with each other in their surroundings, how they explain their activities and what concerns they have (also see Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Royse, 2011; Struwig & Stead, 2001; Strydom, 2013). This design affords parents and adolescents the opportunity to explore their experiences of divorce and the effects during a crucial phase of a child's development. Brown (2006) contends that the primary method of gathering data in exploratory research is the interview. In the interview, researchers have to be original, open minded and flexible in exploring all information gathered (Strydom, 2013). This design was appropriate, because the study topic is under researched, especially in view of the extent of divorces world-wide and the perceived effects upon a vulnerable group such as adolescents.

### **1.7.3 Research population and sampling**

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) define the research population as including all the possible participants that can be involved in the study within definite boundaries pertaining to the study and topic. The population of interest from which the research sample was drawn was parents who have divorced and whose children are adolescents.

### 1.7.3.1 Sample choice and size

Purposive sampling is a strategic type of sampling as the researcher chooses with whom, where and when to work (Palys, 2008). Purposive sampling is described as selecting a sample based on the researcher's judgement as being appropriate for the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011; Rubin & Babbie 2005;). This was relevant as the researcher would then be able to select a sample that best fits the study. The sample for both adolescents and parents included both genders as gender sensitive richness and differentiated findings could emerge in this study. An additional inclusion criterion was that the parents of the minor participants were willing to participate in the study, that they resided in the mentioned areas, and that all participants had the appropriate experiences upon which to reflect. Younger children who were not adolescents and parents who did not have adolescent children were excluded. An initial sample size for an exploratory study design consisted of 10 adolescents and 10 parents who were in the post-divorce phase. This amounted to 10 families and approximately 20 participants.

The researcher had initially targeted three areas in Cape Town, namely: Observatory, Wynberg and Kuilsriver. These areas coincided with social welfare organisations that rendered services focusing on this study topic. However, these targeted areas could not be used as there were considerable obstacles in recruitment and sampling (see Chapter 3). The researcher then targeted the community on the Cape Flats to participate in the study.

The researcher had to amend the sampling to snowballing sampling as the identified centres were unable to assist in recruiting participants. The sample was secured through snowballing sampling in the Cape Flats community. Kumar (2014) says that snowballing is most applicable when the researcher is unable to obtain suitable participants, although it can seem biased as it is dependent on a contact person. Eitkan, Ailkassim and Abubakar (2016) agree that snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling, but the sample of interest. This sample method

assisted the researcher to secure six adults and six adolescent participants, totalling 12 participants.

#### 1.7.3.2 Sample procedure

The researcher had approached three non-profit organisations (NPOs) that focus strongly on mediation or counselling in divorce matters. NPO 1 specialises in relationship counselling within the family context. NPO 2 focuses on parenting and family counselling and training, and NPO 3 focuses on counselling particularly in divorce matters. The researcher contacted each NPO for a personal interview to explain the study. The NPOs were unable to assist with appropriate participants.

The voluntary sampling procedure involved word-of-mouth recruitment in the community. Participants were identified through different community contacts and the researcher then approached potential participants and arranged interview dates. The researcher provided each family with a copy of the information letter with regards to the study so they could familiarise themselves with the study before the interviews.

#### **1.7.4 Data collection method, instrument and procedures**

The researcher used face-to-face (FtF) interviews with adolescents and their parents. FtF interviews are done in person in the context of synchronised interaction where question and answer is immediate (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2013). The researcher used appropriate language with adolescents to facilitate understanding and ease. The researcher observed body language, which is vital for this specific topic. Vosloo (2014) contends that FtF interviews allowed open-ended questioning with the use of probing for in-depth detail to emerge. Self-designed semi-structured interview schedules guided the interview process with each participant so that the interview contained both elements of orderliness and spontaneity. There were two schedules, one for adolescent participants and one for parents. The researcher



engaged with each participant to clarify the study and to obtain consent for their participation and for the use of an audio-recording of the interview to capture the data. The interviews took place at a time and place that had been convenient for each participant.

### **1.7.5 Trustworthiness of study**

Vosloo (2014) defined trustworthiness of the research as engendering confidence and validity in the qualitative findings. The researcher applied the following four criteria: **Credibility:** The researcher determined if the data appropriately reflected the topic researched through member checking. The researcher confirmed with participants if the findings accurately represented what they had discussed (member checking). **Dependability:** The researcher used an audit trail to determine that the findings related to the specific research methods used. **Transferability:** The researcher had to determine to what extent the findings could be transferred to other populations and contexts. This was done by comparing the findings with literature (see literature control in Chapter 4) and through thick descriptions. **Confirmability:** The researcher had to determine if the study had been value-free and unbiased. This was done through self-reflexivity (see Appendix I) where the researcher clarified any personal beliefs and experiences relating to the topic that could be viewed as prejudicial.

### **1.7.6 Data analysis**

The researcher used the eight steps pioneered by Renata Tesch (Schurink, Fouche & De Vos, 2012) which are: (i) Assessing all the data and getting a sense of the whole; (ii) Analysing of the data and writing down for example, the effects of post-divorce on the adolescents and to analyse and see what the effects are; (iii) Identifying the similar topics; (iv) Condensing themes into codes; (v) Reducing the categories by grouping together those that relate to each other; (vi) Finalising the abbreviation of each category and alphabetise the codes to ensure that no

duplication occurs; (vii) Putting the data belonging to each category together and do a preliminary analysis, looking at all the data in one category at a time; (viii) Recoding (if necessary) the existing data and then present the data.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The assumption is that the psychosocial development of adolescents is affected by divorce and that the post-divorce phase will be helpful in exploring these effects. Although the study was conducted on the Cape Flats, these areas do not reflect the kinds of living environments of all communities and therefore transferability can only be made to similar contexts.

## **1.9 ETHICS STATEMENT**

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Higher Degrees Committee of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences and the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the university. Research ethics guided the process researchers follow to ensure that the rights of humans are protected (Louw & Louw, 2007; Strydom, 2011). The following guidelines were considered for this study:

**Informed consent and autonomy:** Care was taken to ensure participants understand what their participation will consist of before giving their consent through the participant information sheet that was provided. Permission was requested for audio-recordings of the interviews. Autonomy was ensured by stressing that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time during the interview for whatever reason.

**Confidentiality:** Participants were assured that their identity will be kept anonymous by using pseudonyms instead of their personal identities so that their information divulged would not be linked to them personally. The researcher explained that if concerning information was

divulged, the researcher had an ethical and professional obligation to break confidentiality and advise that the family seek help.

**Parental consent:** Parental consent in writing was needed for the research as there were minors participating. Parents had the right to know the extent of the interview content and the types of questions that will be asked of their child. The adolescent participants also signed assent forms to establish that they too understand what will be required.

**Minimising emotional harm:** The researcher incorporated debriefing opportunities after each interview as the nature of the topic may uncover traumatic and difficult experiences. The researcher advised of prearranged counselling for those participants that may need it.

**Storage of information:** The researcher ensured that all information was correctly stored (by using secure passwords and storage protocols), so that no unauthorised access or divulgence of confidential information occurs.

## 1.10 CHAPTERS OUTLINE

This research report comprised five chapters, as follows:

<p><b>Chapter 1:</b> <b>INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY</b></p>	<p>The researcher provides a general overview of the current study.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b></p>	<p>A detailed literature review on divorce, post-divorce phase and experiences and the developmental phase of adolescence to contextualise the study in a body of research and academic work on the topic. The theoretical framework underpinning the study is also explicated.</p>

<b>Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	The researcher provides an outline of the research methodology and procedures followed for data collection and data analysis.
<b>Chapter 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS</b>	The research findings are discussed, in terms of main themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the data. These findings emerged from the perceptions and experiences of parents and adolescents regarding the post-divorce phase.
<b>Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	The researcher concludes this research report and provides recommendations, based on the findings of this study, relevant to social work practice, education, policy and future research.

### **1.11 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study would guide social workers to intervene appropriately with parents and children during and after divorce proceedings to ensure the future well-being of both the parents and their children. The findings reflected the necessity for the inclusion of children, considering age and maturity, during the discussion of the parenting plan. The children will feel less torn between parents and part of the decisions and living arrangements pertaining to their well-being. The literature that the researcher cited in this study is authors, (like Wallerstein) who have conducted in-depth studies, which might seem classic but it added to the current study adding rich insight into the topic as current studies have not focused on this topic specifically.

In the next chapter an expanded literature review and theoretical framework for this current study are provided and discussed within the frame of the topic, adolescent experiences in the post-divorce phase.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The White Paper of Families in South Africa (2013) makes reference to the large numbers of divorces in SA which affect children younger than 18 years old. Louw (2015) reiterates that divorces often involve children younger than 18 years, and that in 2010 the percentage was 54.4%. In view of these statistics, Louw (2015) defines the most common or traditional family being a nuclear family consisting of a parent or parents with biological or adoptive children. An estimated 40% of children in SA are being raised by single mothers (Prince, 2009), and therefore the traditional family settings are transforming as a result of the high divorce rate.

In their study, Clark and Otto (2015) provide divorce statistics for 33 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. They estimate that more than 20% of people marrying for the first time end up in divorce within 20 years. These authors further explain that it is not because of widowhood, but divorce being the primary cause of single motherhood. Therefore, they argue that divorce is the reason for family instability and that divorce is common in sub-Saharan Africa.

Divorce affects many people by this single event: the parents, the children, the extended family, friends and others connected to the individuals. The types of losses are commonly found in financial security, future dreams, trust, stable relationships; and affected relationships between parents and children that occur before, during, and after the divorce (Czapiewski, 2014). According to Czapiewski (2014), adolescents can be affected in their behaviour because of divorce, as their growth and maturation are dependent on feelings of security and stable

circumstances. Adolescence is the stage of teens finding their own identity, and the instability wrought by divorce could make them anxious about their own relationships and future connections with others. Divorce often causes depression, anger and emotional withdrawal from others (Hartman, Magalhaes & Mandich, 2011). According to Fagan and Churchill (2012), the effects of divorce on children differ, from minimal to severe, as the level of acrimony in the divorce process differs. These authors further explain that the effects of divorce cannot be predicted, but it has an adverse effect on children and society, because of the prevalence and severity, and therefore should be taken seriously by organs of government.

Therefore, this study focused on exploring the kinds of experiences endured after parents' divorce, what the family undergoes after divorce finalisation (post-divorce phase), and the effects on the adolescent's psychosocial development. Participants included parents and adolescents where the attention was on the post-divorce phase. The study used Erikson's psychosocial development adolescent stage as a guide to the physical and emotional experiences of adolescents. This study therefore particularly explored the effects on children and parents during the post-divorce phase and further described the consequences for adolescent development.

This chapter focuses on the literature which explains specific factors of importance to the study. The literature provides depth to the topic and also the gaps and reasons to why the study had to be explored and described. In the study it was important to understand what divorce is, the legal implications, the factors taken into account when considering the best interest of the child, how the custody of the child also affects both parents, and in particular pertaining to the adolescent. The literature gives insight into the journey of a dissolving marriage and how it affects the family. The pertinent question that the study asked is how adolescents are affected

after the divorce and explored the factors involved. The study thus also provided a theoretical framework that underpinned the study and which provided the theoretical rationale and understanding for the study. The researcher selected the Family Systems Theory (FST) for this purpose.

## **2.2 THE MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE CONTRACTS**

Brake (2016:1) defines marriage as a “legal contract and civil status, a religious rite, and a social practice, all of which vary by legal jurisdiction, religious doctrine, and culture”. According to Aiahoma (2013), when you marry, it was traditionally (and romantically) seen by many as being forever, a voluntary act between two people who love each other and where both are hopeful of having a family; and where both feel that only death can separate them. Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) describe SA as a diverse society, describing the different types of relationships, such as civil marriages, customary marriages, same-sex marriages and couples living together. Furthermore, Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) explain how the legal rights of civil marriages are protected. According to Bregman (2017), the Customary Law Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998, acknowledges customary marriages where it upholds customs and traditions of the indigenous people of SA, and the Civil Unions Act 17 of 2006, maintains the solemnisation of civil unions, either by way of a marriage or a civil partnership. That is:

- The same-sex couples have the same status and benefits, and responsibilities, that heterosexual marriages enjoy.
- A person can only be in one marriage or civil union at a time.

Marriage ensures that parents have responsibilities toward each other and their children. Anderson (2013) argues that government acknowledges the reproductive relationship of males and females. These relationships give birth to new human beings, and it is the mother and father



that play a significant role in children's moral, cultural and physical maturity. If there is a dissolution of marriage, it affects society, as marriage is recognised by government because of the benefits to society.

In defining marriage, the cited literature concludes that it is between two people who want to be together and to start a family. The extended family can act as a supportive network in times of divorce, assist with the stress of the parents, and can strengthen the parents with their ongoing relationship (Gürmen, Anderson & Brown, 2018). Extended family members can also provide support for ongoing relationships between former spouses, encouraging the parents to maintain their relationships (Gürmen et al., 2015). Olyinyin (2015) avers that in Africa, the high divorce rates can occur because of westernisation, where communities are becoming more globalised and industrialised. The consequences are that the traditional extended family structure is being eroded and extended families are less involved in resolving marital conflicts.

The contractual terms and obligations for marriage are set by the couple and are provided by the prevailing social and legal procedures; but leaves the choice to the couple to negotiate these marital obligations (Brake, 2016). Khan (2017), and Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) describe the three different types of marriages in SA as being in community of property, or out of community of property, or with or without the accrual system.

### **2.2.1 Marriage in community of property**

Khan (2017) explains that marriages in community of property are marriages where the couple share everything equally, in other words, they have a joint estate. Both spouses enjoy their cumulative wealth, but in the same way both spouses are responsible for their mutual debt, even if one spouse accumulated the wealth or caused the debt. If one spouse is declared insolvent the other partner will also be sequestrated. If there is no antenuptial contract, the

couple is considered to be married in community of property. In cases of divorce, everything is divided equally. Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) also add that community of property is the most common marriage, and if a couple does not define it, it is the automatic choice unless there is a contract.

### **2.2.2 Marriage out of community of property or “without accrual”**

Khan (2017) explains this kind of marriage contract as couples not sharing liabilities, debts, and where individual spouses maintain their independence, own property, and own credit. In this marriage contract, either partner cannot be held responsible for the other’s liabilities, or when one spouse becomes insolvent. When the marriage is dissolved through death or divorce, there is no accrual (accumulation) of assets. Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) also emphasise that in this kind of marriage, an antenuptial contract defines their estate on entering the marriage and after marriage their assets are still separate.

### **2.2.3 Marriage out of community of property or “with accrual”**

According to Khan (2017), the couple has to register this antenuptial contract, but it has the same benefits as the “without accrual” contract. When the couple divorces, they have to calculate the amount of assets of each spouse, and they have to show the antenuptial contract which reflects their assets as from the date they got married. This marriage must be registered as a civil marriage with the Department of Home Affairs. The type of contract also greatly influences the divorce settlement, as it impacts on the finances of the couple and the future of the dissolved family. Ndashe and Johnstone (2007) simplify the accrual system by explaining that spouses keep what assets they brought into the marriage, but share what was accumulated during the marriage.

Marriage is a binding contract between a man and woman or a couple of the same sex. This institution of marriage is often seen as a ‘forever’ relationship and expands when children are born out of the marriage. The different marriage contracts have different implications for couples and for the state of marriage. When marriages dissolve, each contract takes effect, together with its differentiated rules. Although it is the couples who choose their own contracts, but invariably most only realise the effects of the contract when the marriage dissolves.

## **2.2 REASONS FOR DIVORCE**

Van Zyl (2017) describes divorce as a minefield and states that no matter the reason for dissolving the marriage, the divorce process is never easy, and certain aspects should be considered. For example:

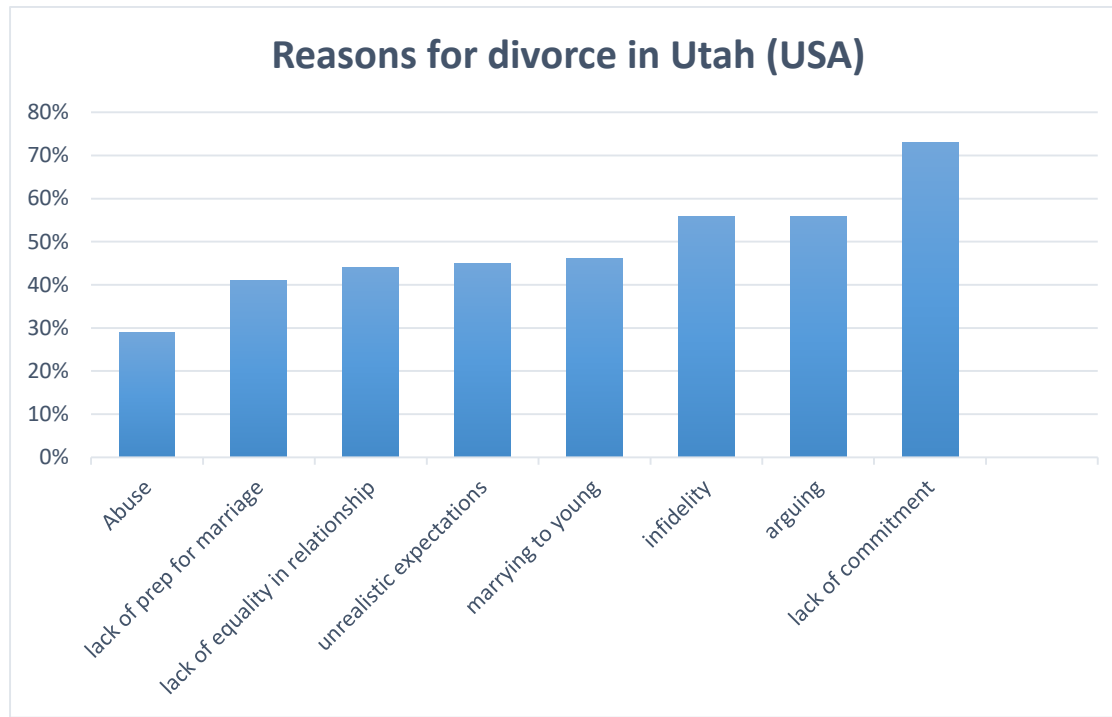
- That one of the reasons is not to intimidate your partner;
- That you want to live independently and it is important to remain emotionally uninvolved and to avoid a contested divorce, because with this kind of divorce there is a trial;
- That you consider how it will affect the well-being of the children and think about ways to address or circumvent these issues.

Ultimately, the reason for divorce is highly personal, but there are also common reasons across contexts. Included in the following section is a discussion of the international, African, and South African contexts and realities. It provides an indication of the impact that divorce has on different countries and also the most common reasons for divorce in these countries.

### **2.2.1 International context and realities**

Many of the common international reasons for divorce are reflected in a study in Utah (USA) (Hawkins, Higginbotham & Hatch, 2016) (see Figure 2.1). Hawkens et al. (2016) and Cordano

(2018) contend that in Utah the following were identified as the major reasons for divorce (Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: Common reasons for Utah (USA)**

*Source: Hawkens et al., 2016*

The figure above explains the most common reasons for divorce, using Utah in the USA as an example. The data on the reasons for divorce starts from abuse at 28%, which is the lowest, to lack of commitment accounting for over 70% of the reasons for divorce. According to Glantz and Glantz (2018), about 40 to 50% of marriages get into trouble and the partners opt for divorce, and cites common reasons as being issues regarding sex, fighting dirty, trying to "fix" each other, lack of commitment, infidelity, lack of appreciation and not paying attention. Comparing Hawkens et al. (2016) and Glantz (2018), it is evident that Utah and the rest of America have common reasons for divorce.

In Britain, the most common reasons for divorce and co-habitation ending are as follows: couples growing apart, unfaithfulness, independence, some reported domestic violence, and difficulties in intimacy (Gravningen, Mitchell, Wellings, Johnson, Geary & Jones, 2017). In Canada, Feldstein (2012) provides the following reasons:

- Relationship “runs out of steam”/fall out of love;
- Communication breakdown;
- Unreasonable behaviour;
- Infidelity;
- Midlife crisis;
- Financial issues;
- Physical, psychological, or emotional abuse.

In South East Asian countries, Dommaraju and Jones (2011) contend that in South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, divorce laws make it relatively easy to dissolve marriages. Additionally, the young generation is becoming increasingly more independent, specifically women. The women no longer tolerate infidelity and dissolve their marriages much quicker than before.

The above international studies show that the common reasons for divorce in western and eastern countries can be encapsulated as being due to relationship difficulties and expectations, physical and emotional abuse, and the increasing independence of women. Globally, divorce affects families similarly and the reasons for dissolving marriages are common.

### **2.2.2 The African context and realities**

Omo-okie (2006, as cited in Ahiaoma, 2013:164) states that the reasons for divorce in traditional marriages in Lagos, Nigeria, as an example, are the following:

- a) Transforming family roles: The family is no longer involved in education, but external organisations takes it over;
- b) Hasty marriages: Where people enter into a marriage without knowing each other and it then ends in divorce;
- c) Independent women: Women are now increasingly independent, and when there is conflict, they feel confident to leave the marriage;
- d) Changing religious values: The Roman Catholic church is still opposed to divorce, but other churches have more open views on the topic;
- e) The search for happiness and well-being: Couples search for ultimate happiness and if it does not happen in their current marriage, they search elsewhere;
- f) Modern divorce laws: Divorce has become easier than before, and in many instances, has negated the need for couples to work to make their marriages succeed.

These reasons describe many of the salient reasons why marriages in Nigeria are dissolving. These reasons also resonate with Tanzania, specifically the reasons proffered by Mauki (2014:7), as being “the lack of commitment, influences of others and financial strain”. According to Makeni (2010), the divorce rate in Kenya is accelerating. The reasons for divorces in Kenya include infidelity, being abandoned, and being malicious. In this context, malice is the cause for different types of abuse. Additional reasons include mental health, rape and sodomy. Reasons for staying, might be for the sake of children, family expectations, and religious beliefs (Makeni, 2010).

In Ghana, Olaniyi (2015) states that dissolved relationships is looked upon negatively, but what contributes is the coming together of diverse cultures. Even though the ethnic communities dislike the break-up of relationships, mostly women, children and the greater society are affected in terms of cultural practices.

Reflecting on the African context, using countries like Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana as examples, interestingly the reasons for divorce centred on relationships and abuse. It is clear that these reasons in the main are very similar to the international studies previously discussed.

### **2.2.3 South African context and realities**

Louw (2015) contends that when the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 introduced the “no fault divorce” in SA, it seemed more congruent with the realities of peoples’ experiences at the time. Although divorce rates escalated, the SA Law Commission pronounced that if a marital issue could not be resolved, it would be acceptable for a divorce; and if the spouse no longer could be blamed there would be less conflict and emotional struggles. However, the “no fault” measure did not remove the anger, stress and humiliation still experienced by the majority of people filing for divorce.

In a study of 1000 divorce cases in SA, Preller (2013) cites the top three reasons for divorce as being the lack of communication, abuse and infidelity. Infidelity appears to be a common reason. Oosthuizen (2014) argues that part of the reasons for divorce is women being independent and not being fearful to leave the relationship. If abused, women are able to exercise their rights. Lippman and Lewis (2008) aver that alcohol can also contribute to divorce as it impacts on the quality of the relationship and results in intimate partner violence (IPV), child abuse, loss of income, and lack of respect and trust. The SA reasons for divorce vary. Preller (2013) concludes that infidelity is a key reason, whereas Oosthuizen (2014) argues that women being independent, is a significant reason.

In summarising the reasons from international, African and SA perspectives, a common factor is infidelity, lack of commitment (even lack of communication), all attesting to poor marital relationships. It is also evident that worldwide, women are more independent and do not stay

in marriages if there is abuse. By contrast, it is the women and children who appear to experience significantly more negative repercussions when marriages are dissolved.

## **2.3 DIVORCE AND DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS**

Aiahoma (2013) contends that divorce can be seen as a solution when marital problems become too severe to endure, despite the consequences of divorce and it being a most stressful event even if you are prepared. According to Preller (2013), if you divorce, the entire procedure might be manageable; but financially and emotionally it is a difficult process as the divorce application must be lodged in both the High and Magistrate courts. Van Zyl (2017) explains that before proceedings, the person must ensure that she or he will be able to live with her- or himself during and after the divorce. Usually a family depends on two incomes, and if you separate there will be additional accommodation expenses. Other aspects and expenses to consider is continued membership of a medical aid scheme, payment of outstanding debts, especially if one stops paying you might still be liable, as it might be in community of property until court proceedings are finalised. The following two policies are important with divorce proceedings.

### **2.3.1 The SA Divorce Act 70 of 1979**

Legal grounds for divorce are contained in the SA Divorce Act 70 of 1979, which stipulates that divorce occurs when couples dissolve their marriage when the two quintessential grounds, namely, “the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, or the mental illness or continuous unconsciousness of one partner” are primarily considered (Soeker, 2014:2). Preller (2013) explains that irretrievable breakdown is when a marriage has collapsed and cannot be restored. Prerequisites are that the couple has been separated for more than a year when the summons is issued, the defendant was guilty of adultery and the plaintiff does not want to reconcile, or the



defendant has been found guilty in court and given a prison sentence. The Divorce Act has the following stipulations regarding the role of children in a divorce matter:

- Divorce will not be approved until the court is satisfied that the children's interests have been considered and best decisions made on their behalf;
- A legal representative might be considered for the children to ensure that their interests are taken into account.

The emphasis on 'the best interest of the child' in the Divorce Act is underpinned when choosing a professional to assist with the divorce. It is important to know their professional experience, their views on divorce, and their knowledge on parenting plans (Robinson, 2010).

### **2.3.2 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996**

Levy (2004:1) states that in Section 28 (2) of the SA Constitution, it stipulates that "a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child". Furthermore, the legal profession focuses on the following five components: finances, maintenance, parenting rights and responsibilities, contact and care, and medical arrangements of the dissolving family (Robinson, 2010). The 'best interest' principle or standard in Section 33 of the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005:33) "states that a parenting plan may determine any matter in connection with parental rights and responsibilities, including:

- a) where and with whom the child is to live;
- b) the maintenance of the child;
- c) contact between the child;
  - (i) any of the parties;
  - (ii) any other person; and
  - (iii) the schooling and religious upbringing of the child".

Levy (2004) explains that the Constitution protects children's interests by allowing children to have some independence to defend their rights even against their parents, and that judges can solicit the opinions and perspectives of the child (taking age and maturity into account). However, says Levy (2004), some judges have not been applying it in all cases. Sometimes they appoint curators for children's rights and some judges do not adhere to these rights, believing children cannot make decisions. This is in contrast and defiance of section 28(1)(h) of the Children's Act as the legal rights of children are not safeguarded. If judges should adhere to it, it will improve the conditions for children when parents are going through a divorce.

When parents get divorced it is important, as per the Children's Act, that the child's interests are taken into account. It does not mean that the child will be allowed to choose with which parent he or she wants to live, but the child's testimony will be taken into account. The reason that a child's decision about who with whom to live, is not wholly considered, is that it could be influenced by either parent. However, Marumoagae (2012) contends that children may be highly vulnerable and suggestible during the divorce period. Therefore courts should carefully consider the testimony of children and not believe that when a child testifies about his care that it is his voice, as they could be reflecting their parents' needs and their loyalties to either parent. Therefore, SA courts will in most instances award joint custody, but the child will live with one parent for day-to-day care (Oosthuizen, 2014).

In an example of due diligence, Marumoagae (2012) cites the case of *McCall v McCall* in 1994 where the judge had asked the parents' consent to interview the minor. The child asked to live with his father. The judge argued that the child was sensible, convincing, and intelligent. Although the child could have been influenced, the child was objective and gave a good account of his feelings about his parents. Thus, the interview could be considered as a good basis for determining the custodial parent.

From the literature, it thus appears that children's maturity and intelligence should be taken into account and that they should be interviewed by the presiding judge. It seems, however, that this does not happen in many divorce proceedings as it also depends on the perceptions and beliefs of the presiding judges who may not believe that children can give input with regard to their custody. This belief could tie in with underlying patriarchal beliefs. This study wanted to explore the experiences of participants with regard to this factor.

## **2.4 CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE ON PARENTS AND FAMILY**

People often have unrealistic expectations of divorce and what life would be after divorce (Van Zyl, 2017). The couple faces many challenges, varying from insecurity to depression, as well as emotional and psychological trauma (Aiahoma, 2013).

### **2.4.1 Effects on parents and the couple**

One of the stressors that people face in the post-divorce phase, is the decline in their quality of life, where one household is now two as the parents move into different homes. Amato (2012:10) therefore avers that divorce means the loss of benefits that is connected to marriage, such as "emotional support, companionship, a regular sexual partner and economic security". Amato (2012) also says that mothers mostly retain custody of minor children and experience strain as they take on all the primary child-care responsibilities. Holbrook (2017) provides the following effects of divorce as described by women:

- Anger towards their ex-partners for leaving them or not understanding them;
- Guilt as women feel they could have done more, even if they were not the one who initiated the divorce;
- Fear because of financial insecurity, of being the only parent, fear of how others may judge them;
- Anxiety and stress is a mixture of all the effects including fear, guilt and anger;

- Grief as they feel sad that their marriage ended and understand that it can be a very painful time; the stages of grief reflecting “denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance” (see Chapter 1).

Olaniyi (2015) asserts that when the women are divorced it is a dramatic change for them, as many women are housewives, and in most cases the women retain custody of children, and thus their standard of living can be severely compromised. Olaniyi (2015) further describes how men do not pay child support, and how women in countries like Ghana, Nigeria and other African countries are compelled to marry older men to ensure their survival.

The effects of divorce on the parents are overwhelming and when the decision is made, the impact of the divorce is not anticipated. It affects the family emotionally, socially, economically and psychologically. Graham, Christian and Kiecolt-Glaser (2006) state that these stressors have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of the parents. Couples experiencing divorce have questions such as: how are they going to cope and will they be able to manage single parenthood (Magamba, 2016) Magamba (2016) also describes the financial implications where assets have to be shared, which is emotionally draining. Graham et al. (2006) and Magamba (2016) proffer the effects and impact on fathers. Often fathers are the least prepared. Fathers who are not living with the child or children experience tension as they have minimal contact with their children, and therefore feel estranged and isolated.

#### **2.4.2 Effects on family life**

In terms of family life, Aiahoma (2013:165) provides two key consequences of separation and divorce on the family as follows:

1. Changes in the life style and traditions of the family;
2. Changes in the economic and financial status of the family.

It is thus clear that the effects on the family are severe. In their study, Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke (2014) conclude that single parenting was especially difficult where one parent had to shoulder all the responsibilities. These authors argued that single parenting might have some positives, but that often the negative cancels out the positive. Maes (2011) confirms that divorce changes the family unit, especially regarding changes to living arrangements, family structure and rules, discipline, tasks and responsibilities, as well as ways of communication.

It seems certain that the greatest impact is the financial and emotional strains on the family. The pressure then falls on the resident parent to ensure the family functions as a unit, but if both parents are attentive to maintaining levels of stability, it does serve to minimise anxieties and insecurities.

## **2.5 EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ADOLESCENTS**

The focus on adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development are key components to this study. Van Zyl (2017) advises that it is important that the child's routine does not change dramatically and that parents attempt to maintain the children's routine as much as possible. Louw (2015) recognises that the best interest of the child is important and stresses the importance of both parents being involved with the children after divorce. A post-divorce family is defined as a "binuclear family", a term coined by Professor Robert Oliphant in the USA which means the ex-wife with her home, and the ex-husband with his home, with the child in both households (Louw, 2015). This term seems appropriate to the family after the divorce as it includes all members of the family and takes into consideration the different households.

This study focused on Erikson's development stage of adolescence, specifically the ages 12–18 years, because it encompasses the adolescent in either transition or conflict or identity versus conflict. The study wanted to explore the experiences of the adolescent during this post-divorce stage, and the significance of the transition or conflict stage.

### **2.5.1 Psychosocial development stage of adolescents according to Erik Erikson**

Ruffin (2009) confirms that adolescence is when teenagers are maturing and families are often also in transition; and thus both the adolescent and parents have to understand these physical, cognitive and social changes. The United Nations Children's Fund (2011) contends that internationally there is no consensus about the age for this stage; but the United Nations defines the ages of 10–19 years as adolescence and being in the second decade of their lives.

According to Sokol (2009), Erikson's psychosocial theory has eight developmental stages of a person's life. Mabuza et al. (2014) refer to the theory of Erikson as being interlinked and the focus being on personal, emotional and social development. The theory does not focus on one area, and hence the reasoning behind 'psychosocial development'. The stage focuses on the conflict, i.e. crises that must be resolved to move to the next stage (Sokol, 2009).

According to Chapman (2013:1), Erikson's 'psychosocial' term results from two phenomena, namely: "psychological (or the root 'psycho' relating to the mind, brain, personality) and social (external relationships and environment)". McLean and Syed (2015) describe Erikson's theory as the eight psychosocial tensions which have to be balanced in life. Each stage (tension) is attentive to two opposing "emotional forces". The eight stages can be seen as an arrangement that occurs at the appropriate time until it has been dealt with. According to Erikson, the eight tensions are present in everyone, but at different points. McLean and Syed (2015) use developmental tasks instead of stages to emphasise the purpose of each and the psychological issues each person must confront and deal with for healthy development.

Sokol (2009) asserts that Erikson received recognition for identifying the influence of culture on development and for describing the psychological entity of each person that cannot be viewed without their social context. Chapman (2013:2) argues that the theory is relevant to modern life for “understanding and explaining how personality and behaviour develops in people” and is “useful for teaching, parenting, self-awareness, managing and coaching, dealing with conflict, and generally for understanding self and others”.

According to Ivanova, Mills and Veenstra (2011), in the initial stages of becoming an adolescent, divorce has an effect on the development of the children through the different stages, as it is a vulnerable period. Furthermore, Ivanova et al. (2011) argue that evidence strongly suggests that divorce has the most impact on an adolescent’s transition into adulthood.

These concepts of psychological and social contexts were important to this study. Divorce is a social phenomenon which affects both adolescents and parents. The study used Erikson’s theory to frame the effects on the psychosocial aspects of the adolescent.

### **2.5.2 Adolescent stage 12–18 years: Identity versus role confusion**

McLean and Syed (2015) describe adolescence as starting a special venture, called themselves. Erikson (1968) and Sokol (2009) believe that the most important task of the adolescent is forming his or her identity. Mcleod (2017) describes teenagers in this stage as searching for identity, exploring different roles and activities, and expressing themselves. Therefore, Erikson (1968) and Sokol (2009) identify this challenging period as “identity versus role confusion”. Cherry (2016) describes the stage as the adolescent trying to be unique, but conversely still wanting acceptance and to conform. Cherry (2016) also explains that adolescents who do not form an identity because they did not explore different identities, then experience role confusion, drifting from one job or relationship to the other, being indecisive and feeling disappointed and confused about their position and place in life.

Erikson explained that when a person had a positive identity versus role confusion, hardship or challenges would help the person to develop a stable personal identity, and to be able to take on different roles and responsibilities (Ragelienè, 2016). This is also called resilience. When the identity has been achieved there are fewer psychosomatic and neurotic symptoms, and little anxiety (Crocetti, Klimstra, Keijsers, Hale & Meeus, 2009), suicidal tendencies and depression, psychological well-being, and emotional stability (Ragelienè, 2016). Pickhardt (2013) also provides the following common emotional difficulties:

- Depression: when you are sad about a loss, or disappointment;
- Loneliness: feeling misunderstood, on your own, cut off and alone;
- Self-rejection: feeling despondent about your image, who you are;
- Anxiety: worrying about challenges now and in the future;
- Stress: having too many demands and feeling overwhelmed;
- Aggression: being frustrated and trying to get control of what is happening.

These feelings reflect the myriad emotional experiences during adolescence. Even though adolescents are trying to function as adults, to their parents they are not yet adults (McBride, 2015), and thus a source of conflict. Their way of viewing the future might not be realistic and may have a sense that bad things will not happen to them, hence risk taking is prevalent, according to McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson and Hare (2009). When teenagers become independent from their parents, they tend to lean more on peers and romantic partners for assistance, and also spending time with them. The authors further mention that the adolescent is still attached to the parents, specifically attachment increases with the mother. Ragelienè (2016) also confirms that adolescents' identity development is positively related to their



relationships with peers. Belonging to a peer group and good relationships with peers based on mutual respect and acceptance, are positively related to adolescent identity development.

Consequently, Erikson (1968) reasoned that if youths successfully developed during this stage, they can contribute to society and be well adjusted. If not, Erikson contended that the adolescent could be psychosocially stuck and would be unable to grow emotionally and become mature adults. Erikson viewed the development of identity as being the important task that an individual faces when becoming 'grown up' (Gilleard & Higgs, 2015). In addition to identity development, another development task in adolescence involves the positive transfer of emotional attachment from family to peer relationships, which can only be achieved once a stable sense of identity emerged.

This developmental task was important for this study, as the adolescent's identity versus role confusion phase contextualised the intensity of their post-divorce experiences.

### **2.5.3 Impact and effects of divorce on adolescents**

Divorce can be related to a risk of psychological, academic and social difficulties later in life for the child, because it causes emotional stress during and after divorce (Maes, 2011; Onofrio, 2011). In the post-divorce phase, for example, co-parenting adds to the overall stress factors in the post-divorce phase, in addition to the (often) reduced financial circumstances, the non-resident parent's loss of contact with the children, and managing children's negative reactions (Onofrio, 2011).

Aiahoma (2013:167) asserts that the psychosocial effects of divorce on adolescents include "poor academic performance, social development, interpersonal relation and pitiable emotional stability manifestations". In a study in Albania, Mucaj (2015) highlights that post-divorced parents and children adapt to the new situation, where children then come to the conclusion

that divorce was the best solution, acknowledging that healthy families are important. Mucaj (2015) emphasises that it is not that these families are coping financially or that there are no stresses, but that adolescents are adapting to the divorce, because of the manner in which the divorce has been managed, for example through open communication.

McIntosh, Burke, Dour and Gridley (2009) argue that divorce is a significant adjustment for children: they have to deal with the separation, living between homes, or even attend a different school which might be difficult for them. Furthermore, McIntosh et al. (2009:3) state that non-residential parents may not be so visible over time, and consequently, that “interparental conflict and the quality of the parent-child relationship” are common components of the post-divorce phase. Onofrio (2011) therefore states that this ongoing conflict causes ancillary problems, such as, poor parenting, financial struggles, and absent non-resident parents, which underscore the association between divorce and children’s well-being. The primary effects of divorce on children during the post-divorce phase are distinguished as the following.

#### 2.5.3.1 Social effects

In this stage, adolescents test the limits and rules and the parents are their least favourite people (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [AACAP], 2015). Esmaili, and Yaacob (2011) assert that if adolescents experience parental divorce, there is a risk of them experiencing rebelliousness, adjustment difficulties, antisocial behaviour, and depression; affecting them negatively and even leading to social problems. Adolescents might find themselves in trouble with authorities and cause trouble in their communities.

Termini (2014) states that adolescence is the period where peer influence is strong and consequently divorce can intensify this influence. The adolescent spends more time with friends who could give them the time and space to work through their feelings; but they could also become vulnerable and be influenced to be rebellious and display harmful behaviour.

Examples of harmful behaviour could include experimenting with drugs and alcohol, unhealthy sexual behaviour, or running away from home (Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Termini, 2014). Lansford (2009) asserted that for adolescents the severity is observed in their academic results and relationships, specifically romantic relationships. In contrast, Lansford (2009) argued that if children are younger with regard to their behaviour, the outcome of the post-divorce phase may be more severe.

#### 2.5.3.2 Emotional effects

McBride (2015) asserts that adolescents might feel anxious about leaving the family home, and their turbulent emotions often include feeling blamed for the divorce, unloved by the parent who moved out, feelings of being denied or not cared for, scared, fearful and traumatised, and also feel the pressure of parents' needs and confusion. Additionally, they could feel embarrassed, ashamed and blame the parents for shattering their lives (FAMSA, 2009). FAMSA (2009) emphasises that the reactions and responses of children are age-dependent. Fagan and Churchill (2012:42) confirm that divorce brings enormous emotional upheaval for children and clarify that "children experience a wide range of emotional reactions, including sadness, anger, loneliness, depression, heightened anxiety, worry, lower life satisfaction, lower self-esteem and self-confidence, fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties, and a sense of fault for their parents' problems".

The main focus in adolescence is to find your identity, undergo physical changes, and meet the sometimes unrealistic expectations from society. When adolescents experience conflict because of the divorce, it adds confusion to this already tumultuous stage. Therefore, Esmali and Yaacob (2011) state that adolescents might go through their young adulthood with distorted views of emotional relationships.

The discussion has shown the extent of the feelings and emotions that teenagers might experience during the post-divorce phase of their parents. In addition, Termini (2014) says that adolescents might also fear future relationships, whether it can endure and be satisfying.

#### 2.5.3.3 Psychological effects

In addition to social and emotional effects, there could be negative psychological effects of divorce on children, for example, “stress, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem” (Mauki, 2014). Termini (2014) explains that adolescents may not positively show their emotions and may internalise it, which may then manifest in feeling suicidal, emotionally constricted, and depressed (See also Wolf, 2016). Fagan and Churchill (2012) state that divorce ignites thoughts of suicide as a consequence of the stress and rejection by parents.

Odenweller (2014) also highlighted that teachers had observed that adolescents from divorced families struggle to concentrate in school, seemingly thinking of problems between their parents. They do not mingle with peers, because of fear of mocking and are drawn to other adolescents with similar family backgrounds, which affect their functioning and progress in school.

The literature shows that the holistic wellness (emotional, social, emotional and intellectual wellness) of adolescents are affected when parents dissolve a marriage. This study aimed to explore some of these effects from the sample.

## **2.6 PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS AFTER DIVORCE**

The experiences in the post-divorce phase influence the parent-child relationship, whatever custodial arrangement has been decided upon (Czapiewski, 2014). Dixon (2017) states that when couples marry, they intend to stay married; but divorce is becoming more common, and therefore parents should remember their responsibility towards themselves and their children,

after the divorce. Dixon (2017) emphasises that it is imperative that parents work together after the divorce to acquire consistency with rosters, for routines, vacations and school activities. In developing these arrangements, Dixon (2017) asserts that parents should consider their children's feelings and remember that children are not skilled to handle major life changes. In terms of the role of fathers, Kruk (2010) and Lamb (2010) contend that fathers become more distant from their families and their children when they are co-caregivers and experience major difficulties maintaining relationships with their children. According to Collier and Sheldon (2008), fathers play an important part not only in the separation, but also in the post-divorce phase in that their contribution does not only encompass the economical aspect, but they also have to be visible for the mother-child relationship and for the father-child relationship.

### **2.6.1 Custodial parent**

In cases where parents have joint custody, the children live on a shared (50/50) living arrangement with both parents (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbush, 1996; McIntosh et al., 2009). The consequences are positive if they have support from both parents on different challenges that the family face. In addition, Mauki (2014) argues that joint custody (where children's living arrangements are equal to both parents) could be disruptive if these arrangements are not planned effectively. McIntosh et al. (2009) explain that parents cannot anticipate how the children will adjust to the divorce. Parents also feel a measure of stress, because there might be no longer a relationship between the parents. The parents have new roles as co-parents, and endure strained relationships with their children. Children classify the parents as being good or bad and some might take the responsibility for caring for parents (Baum, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2009).

Communication about the children might become less frequent between the custodial (residential) and non-resident parent and also between the child and the non-resident parent, especially when one parent remarries, or has a new partner, or cohabiting (Anderson & Greene,

2005; Bray, 1999; Mauki, 2014). In conflictual divorces and unhealthy co-parenting, the child is used as a “weapon” in the divorce process where the custodial parent hardly wants the child to see the non-resident parent. Some parents might even go as far as stealing the child and fleeing to a foreign country (Louw, 2015).

### **2.6.2 The non-resident parent’s role with children**

According to Mauki (2014), a non-resident parent is the one who does not live with the child; but there is a legal agreement between parents where they agreed on visitation and other matters pertaining to the child. Fagan and Churchill (2012) confirm that divorce affects the parent-child or children relationships that are characterised by a lack of closeness with the non-resident parent, who in most instances is the father. Furthermore, children often only see their father for special visits and not for routine visits. The relationship between father and children might worsen over time, but the conflict becomes less, especially for the older children. However, regular contact between children and the non-resident parent can increase general well-being (Amato, Kane & James, 2011; Wolf 2016). Similarly, Mauki (2014) indicates that financial, social and emotional support from the non-residential parent can increase the child’s chances to complete high school and tertiary qualifications.

Louw (2015) also cites relocation as one of the factors affecting dissolving families, as there is much to consider whether resident parents will move or not, sharing costs if they relocate, such as children travelling to the non-resident parent. Potter (2010) and Mehana and Reynolds (2004) also confirm that relocation or changing schools might be a consequence of divorce and can affect the learning of the children as they are already readjusting to the family dissolving. Other factors to consider are the non-resident parents failing to pay maintenance, or threaten to sue for custody, or there is a risk of continued abuse if the parents’ relationship was an abusive one (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Potter, 2010).

In conclusion, parents have an important role in a child's life whether divorced or not. Dixon (2017) emphasises that the parent relationship should be maintained after divorce, as it will assist the children with the transition. The father is the co-caregiver and he should not have a lesser role in the children's lives. The custodial parent is where the child resides. If parents had a conflictual divorce, the children are drawn into this struggle especially where the custodial parent refuses that the child sees the non-custodial parent. The children tend to feel torn and in some instances take on a caring role, especially if they perceive one parent not coping.

## **2.7 LEGISLATION FOR POST-DIVORCE PARENT CONTACT AND CARE**

It is important in a post-divorce scenario that the best interests with regard to contact and care is finalised in the divorce proceedings. The different laws with regard to international, African and South African contact and care is discussed below.

### **2.7.1 International legislation and treaties**

Robinson (2010: 31) states that the Convention on the Rights of the Child describes Article 12 “to promote the child's best interests or the child's welfare, and to allow the child to express his or her view of any matter affecting his or her interests (where these views are given a weight proportionate to the child's maturity, age, and understanding of these”. In the UK legal system, parents and children negotiate a wide range of services for families through the Adoption and Children Act 2002, (Consequential Amendment to Statutory Adoption Pay) Order 2006 which promotes contact and enforce contact orders (Mahon & Moore, 2011). It encourages parenting plans (quite common in Australia as well), ensuring that parents in the process promote and adhere to in-court resolutions and mediation. DiFonzo (2014) reiterates how the American states, with Arizona as a leading state, are redefining how parenting takes place after divorce. Parents are moving to shared custody and parenting plans are used more frequently, whereby

parents share responsibilities and have more contact with their children, and most importantly, parents work together.

In Australia, the Shared Parental Responsibility Australian Act (2006), is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and promotes ‘shared parenting’, thereby eliminating child ownership by parents. In this Act, an order can be made which provides a child to live and spend time with each parent, with the emphasis on parenting or care work. They have also introduced Family Relationship Centres for “non-adversarial dispute resolution services” (Rhodes, 2007:142). The actions of parents are monitored and argumentative parents can be asked to pay legal costs if deemed unnecessary and protracted.

Parkinson (2015) sums up how sole custody is no longer the norm, where one parent is the custodial parent. The courts still assigns a custodial parent, but it is more about how the child can spend more time with both parents, because this would be in the best interest of the child.

Coetzee (2014) states that when there is a divorce, the parents should decide together on the custody of the children under 18 years. Even if there is an unborn child, it must be in the petition and discussed in the divorce. Coetzee (2014) specifies the four types of custody that are acknowledged under state laws in the USA.

1. Sole physical custody: This is where the children will live with and be overseen by one parent and the court has to approve visiting rights for the other parent in the parenting plan.
2. Joint physical custody: This is where the parents have the children in their physical care and both have nonstop contact.
3. Sole legal custody: This is where one parent has sole legal custody, and this one parent makes decisions on behalf of the child, including “health, education and the child’s well-being; the other parent has visitation rights” (Coetzee, 2014:1).



4. Joint legal custody: This is where both parents are involved in the decision-making for the children and have a say in their “legal rights, health, education and wellbeing. The law sees this type to be in the best interest of the child, as they also have to draw up a parenting plan”. It really asks parents to work together and is in regard to the state laws in USA. (Coetzee, 2014:1).

In the international laws, the general consensus is that the children’s interest would be best served if both parents shared responsibility in the child’s life, and that it does not only mean the custodial parent should be responsible (Coetzee, 2014).

### **2.7.2 African legislation**

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Articles 4 and 7) “also state that the child has a right to be heard, which implies that a child’s views must be taken into consideration when a parenting plan is being drafted” (The Children’s Institute, 2009:vi). There are 47 African countries that have signed and ratified this charter, for example, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa signed in 1997 and ratified in 2000 (ACRWC, 1990). The Malawi Constitution of 1994 makes provision in civil law for women to have equal rights, men and women can have custody and/or guardianship of children, and have equal rights when it comes to rearing the children (Mwambene, 2008). Children’s rights are also to be adhered to and their right to be raised by their parents. In contrast, Mwambene (2008) cautions that the civil law is contradictory to the African customary family laws concerning children. Depending on the tribe or clan, whether it is a patrilineal society, children belong to the male in the marriage, or a matrilineal society where the children belong to the female. However, their Constitution addresses these rules so that parents have equal rights whether under customary law or not. This does not mean joint custody, but each parent can contest for custody, always taking the best interest of children into consideration.

In Kenya, Odongo (2012) says that the Kenyan Children's Act 2001 ensures that parents know their responsibility towards their children, and also children's rights and basic needs. Furthermore, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) affirms that parents have equal responsibility whether married or unmarried.

African laws are meant to ensure that children rights and needs are met in their best interest, and that parents are encouraged to have equal responsibilities with regard to the children; but the possible clash might emanate from traditional customs and patriarchal beliefs.

### **2.7.3 South African legislation**

The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 states that any matter from the Divorce Act would not be dealt with in the Children's court, but in the divorce court. This ruling was applied from 1 July 2007. In Section 39 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the rights of a child born in a voidable (valid and binding) marriage are set out as follows:

1. When a marriage is annulled the child's rights born in the marriage will not be affected.
2. Before a marriage is annulled the court has to ensure that the child's rights and interests, born in the marriage, are being considered.
3. Section 7 refers to matters concerning the care, protection and well-being of children and it is important that it must be taken into consideration and adhered to.

The following laws are pertaining to the Divorce Act no. 70 of 1979 (but are also mentioned under Section 39 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005).

1. Section 6 of the Divorce Act (Act no. 70 of 1979) and section 4 of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act apply, with regard to the care of the children. There will be family advocates appointed to mediate between parents with regard to the care of the children if there are disputes with regard to the custody of the children.

2. Sections 8(1) and (2) of the Divorce Act (Act No. 70 of 1979) relate to a maintenance order, or to the care or guardianship or contact with the child.

In international, African and South African legislation, the best interest of the child's needs is highly regarded. It is apparent that children are the responsibility of the parent or caregiver and this encompasses fulfilling their emotional, physical and intellectual needs. All these aspects could be affected if parents' divorce. The best interest of the child standard includes the relationship between parents, guardians or caregivers, and what their duties are towards the child. The court also determines whether the parent is able to care and provide for the child's emotional and intellectual needs. The child must still keep contact with family and extended family, as well as the effect that the child's circumstances will have on the relationship with the family. The court will also consider the child's age, gender, background, physical and emotional security, and development, and whether the child has a chronic illness. Finally, the court also takes into account home circumstances, safety and protection from violence in family, and psychological and physical protection. The best interest of the child is paramount in the post-divorce phase, and it is important that it be considered through the divorce process so that the child interest is paramount.

When parents' divorce, the care of the child is of the utmost importance and it must always be in the child's best interest. Therefore, a parenting plan outlines the care, contact, maintenance and all the practicalities. In all legislation it is becoming imperative to include it if parents' divorce.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

It can be seen from the literature that there are a number of important aspects for parents and professional teams to consider when divorcing, going through divorce, and the aftermath of the

divorce. The literature is clear that the effects on the adolescent is profound, especially when taking into account the adolescent stage they are in or entering and the kinds of emotional upheaval that Erikson explained was attributable to identity versus confusion. Divorce can have an effect on, and intensify, their post-divorce experience. In order to ensure the well-being of the children, the importance of the parents' contact and care is stressed as vital in the post-divorce phase, and to facilitate the renewal of the family as a unit.

## **2.9 FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) provide the importance of a theoretical framework as it supports the scholar to present the theory guiding the research, and where it primarily considers the research problem. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014:12), the theoretical framework can be seen as the basis of how “knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally); because for a research study it serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions”.

The Family Systems Theory was developed in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the idea of ecology, borrowed from biology and applied to the study of human problems (Moran & Dombeck, 2006). The ecological aspect highlights how animals are dependent on their network of relationships for survival, for example, the relationship between flowers and bees show the interconnectedness, because if either one is damaged it affects the survival of the other.

Moran and Dombeck (2006:1) state that this interconnectedness is also pertinent for human relationships, where we live in families, and are part of other groups. As Maslow explained “within the mutual provision of needs for food, clothing and shelter, but also safety, and the sense of belonging and support”. Therefore, every family member has a part or role to play in

the family as an entity. If one part is affected or not entirely fulfilled, then the entire family is affected.

FST was created by Murray Bowen (1913–1990), who was a psychiatrist and involved in research. The key concept in the theory revolves around the differentiation of self, and though it focuses on maturity in relationships, this in itself cannot be seen apart from a person's well-being, being happy, handling stress and anxiety in society, and making decisions (Bowen, 1978). Wiens (2014) states that Bowen emphasised that families learn behaviour that had evolved from generations before them, and this is how they also behave (in other words through modelling and social learning). Importantly, the theory discusses anxiety affecting one's reaction to difficulties and when responding to other people. Titelman (2014) sums up Bowen's theory as involving eight concepts, the differentiation of self and the family as a unit.

- **Triangles:** Bowen's triangles are viewed as a small stable relationship which is important in this theory. A relationship can exist with two people but then it should always be in a state of calm (which is unattainable). As soon as stress and anxiety are experienced then a third party will be involved to alleviate these emotions and feelings. Triangulation can also be employment of a therapist (Rabstejnek, 2012). The party takes sides or provides a detour for anxiety. After divorce the parents need counselling and this concept is applicable to the study as a therapist or counsellor will assist them and become part of the triangle.
- **Differentiation of self:** Bowen's differentiation of self is described as an individual who is able to differentiate between emotions and feelings, and where behaviour or actions are not predominantly directed by emotions (Rabstejnek, 2012). In divorce, differentiation of self is important, because you are capable of rationally appraising the details and process of the divorce and able to apply your mind to the aspects that require

your attention without becoming too emotional and emotive when negotiating and compromising.

- **Nuclear family emotional system:** Kerr (2000) says that the nuclear family emotional system has four basic relationship patterns, from where problems generate in the family. Attitudes and beliefs are taken into account, but emotions are a key part. The four basic relationship patterns are given below.

<b>Marital conflict</b>	Where the spouses have emotional tension whereby one is outspoken about feelings and is very anxious in the relationship. The spouses blame each other and both want to control each other, always focusing on the negative.
<b>Dysfunction in one spouse</b>	The one spouse is assertive towards the other spouse, to make them act and think as they want and the other abides. They try to live in peace, but one is sacrificing more. Because the one spouse is so dominant, it can cause strain, and the passive spouse's stress can increase significantly. The spouse could acquire a psychiatric, medical, or social dysfunction.
<b>Impairment of one or more children</b>	The spouses stress over one or more of their children and have a view which is negative of the child or children, this is the factor where the child and parents focus on each other. The child's expectations, and needs are based more on the parents and how they see him or her. The child does not get the opportunity for differentiation from the family and has anxiety affecting his relationships, grades in school and health.
<b>Emotional distance</b>	Everyone is related to others in this pattern. People keep distance from each other to minimise connected relationships. This pattern is related to others, people want to avoid intense relationships, but may become lonely.

- **Family projection:** Kerr (2000) says this is whereby parents transfer their problems to their children, which can affect the children clinically. When parents project their problems onto children, it affects their relationships, the need to be accepted, blaming oneself or others, and attempting to relieve anxiety. The children might even have more vulnerabilities to relationships. The projection process follows three steps:

- (1) The parent believes there is something wrong with the child
- (2) Parents believe that the behaviour is confirmed
- (3) Parent now handles the child as if there is a problem

- **Multigenerational transmission process:** Haefner (2014) describes this concept as where family behaviours are passed down to next generations. Matters that we think we decide on as individuals, for example, whom to marry, and signs of depression, are behaviours learned from our predecessors.
- **Emotional cut-off:** This occurs when a family member feels he or she wants to, for example, move far from his or her family, to be an individual and to have an own identity. But Bowen sees this as the individual still being controlled by the family as reacting to the family instead behaving differently. For example, when the adolescent wants his or her independence, because he or she feels the parents do not love them after the divorce, but the situation is controlling the child's actions, so there in fact no emotional cut-off (Haefner, 2014).
- **Sibling position:** When you have more than one child in the family, children have their own positions and responsibilities; and parents' ways of discipline, attitude and expectations are different for each child. After a divorce, the resident parent relies on the children to assist with certain roles in the home and the parent will rely on the children, in order of their birth even when disciplining them (Bowen, 1978).
- **Societal emotional process:** Kerr (2000) describes emotions of society, how behaviour progresses and regresses in society. An important factor here is the role of culture in emotions and behaviour. For example, divorce is a significant phenomenon in society, and it can affect how society treats families who are divorced, either negatively or positively.

In conclusion, Bowen's theory is concise and discusses the family connections and how emotions and anxiety affect the family as a unit. It focuses on the self, but also emphasises how important the relationships are to ensure the growth in the family. This study focused on divorce and how it affected the family as a whole, and therefore the concepts of Bowen FST assisted in contextualising the family's functioning after divorce.

## **2.10 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK**

The mandate of social work in SA is that the profession is part of the team in divorce matters. Before a divorce, social workers also have a role to play in that they would render mandatory counselling services within their respective organisations and agencies. However, depending on the levels of success of pre-divorce counselling, it might very well be that the couple decides to divorce eventually. It depends on when the couple decides on counselling, the severity of the marital conflict, and the desire to save the marriage.

In post-divorce matters, social workers play the role of mediator in the lives of families during and post-divorce processes. Social workers' roles in divorce are mainly statutory as they are often requested to render a service to courts regarding custody and mediation matters. According to Collet (2018), the Children's Act specifies how to handle disputes in resolving cases with regard to children. The Act suggests strongly that mediation should be used to resolve disputes in matters like parental responsibilities and rights (section 21), matters with regard to unmarried parents, paternity disputes, and divorce (section 33). The judge can also decide which matters need mediation (section 49), all in the best interest of the child. Furthermore, social workers have to undertake services to ensure the best interest of the child, according to legislation and policy frameworks (Collet, 2018:31). Robinson (2010) underscores that social workers adhere to the stipulations in the Children's Act (38 of 2005),



for example in terms of the following aspects: “where and with whom the child is to live; the maintenance of the child; contact between the child and any of the parties; and any other person; and the schooling and religious upbringing of the child”.

Social workers are also responsible for helping to draft parenting plans. Duchen (2009) and Robinson (2010) indicate how parenting plans ensure the principle of the best interest of the child stipulated in section 7 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005. The plan emphasises that the most important elements are: care and contact of children when parents’ divorce or with single parents. This ensures a parent-child relationship, different roles of parents and rights, and that the child’s developmental needs are being met (Duchen, 2009). However, there is a need for training, specifically in conflict management, mediation and how to set appropriate boundaries when mediating the sessions between parents. Social workers are daily faced with families in conflict, including family violence, child abuse, and offender investigations. Thus, divorce mediation and dispute resolution is another important field of practice for social work.

## **2.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In this chapter of the study the researcher discussed what a legal marriage is stipulated by law and how it is legally dissolved through the phenomenon of divorce. The study focused on the reasons for divorce, not only in South Africa or Africa, but internationally. The literature explicated how marriages are dissolved, the legal implications, and the consequences for the family, the parents and the children. For the purposes of the study the focus was on the adolescent in the identity forming versus role confusion stage which is one of Erikson’s developmental stages.

The focus of the study was the experiences of the adolescent and the parents, to explore the psychosocial effects of the post-divorce phase on the adolescent. The psychosocial effects in literature include emotional, psychological and social aspects. The study included parents and how divorce affects the family as an entity. The focus was also on the roles and responsibilities of the resident and non-resident parent and how the custody of the children affects the family regarding these new parenting roles in the post-divorce phase.

The literature concludes that the study was important to understand the impact on the adolescent after divorce. It was important to understand the role of social workers during the pre- and post-divorce processes and to ensure that the children's best interest is upheld. This would ensure that psychosocial effects after divorce are timeously addressed and curbed.

The next chapter sets out the methodology of the study, that explains the research methods that the researcher employed in order to explore and describe the experiences of both parents and adolescents in the post-divorce phase.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology encompasses a scientific method for undertaking a research investigation or inquiry (Babbie, 2011). There is a variety of definitions from the literature as to what research methodology is. For example, Leedy and Ormrod (2010:12) state that research methodology is the way the researcher manages the research process. Vosloo (2014) also contends that it is simply steps to analyse and gather data. Babbie (2011) and Vosloo (2014) confirm that methodology is an investigative function with the main purpose of exploring or examining data. Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2012:158) further discern the main objectives of methodology as being “the approach, the design, the model, the procedures and data-gathering methods”. It is clear that the methodology is the essence of research and drives the research process. Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) stress the role of the researcher as being pivotal in the methodology, especially in a qualitative research approach.

This research has been conducted in accordance with the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is better suited to the study as it explores participants’ experiences and produces rich data. Qualitative research is known as exploratory and descriptive, especially when something is unknown, or you do not understand the deeper concerns, or you are unable to understand the why and how of a specific topic. It is based on empirical studies, by exploring researchable topics first-hand, situations or experiences of individuals and groups, through the use of qualitative research designs instead of numerical data (Brief, 2012). Furthermore, Creswell (2013) defines this research approach as the process of developing questions and procedures, collecting data steeped in the participants’ stories, typically located in their environment, building data analysis from particulars to general themes, and then interpreting the meaning of

the data. The qualitative approach will provide an in-depth perspective into the phenomenon of divorce and how it affects adolescents and their families in the post-divorce phase.

Bearing the above in mind, this chapter explains how the researcher conducted the research by using the qualitative approach to underpin all the methodological considerations. It sets out the aims and objectives of the research, explaining the research design, population and sampling, type of data collection methods and how data was analysed. The purpose of qualitative research is to explain a phenomenon through peoples' experiences and realities. This chapter therefore provides the information that shows how the researcher went about exploring the phenomenon of a post-divorce phase and the effects on adolescents.

### **3.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Brief (2012) contends that objectives in qualitative research include exploring the phenomena, gaining an in depth understanding of the problem and detailed information, then lastly obtaining viewpoints and perspectives of affected individuals and groups of people. The research objectives should be obtainable, specific and clear.

The aim of the study was to:

Explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents and their parents in the post-divorce phase, focusing on the adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development in order to arrive at meaningful recommendations for social work practice.

The objectives of the study were:

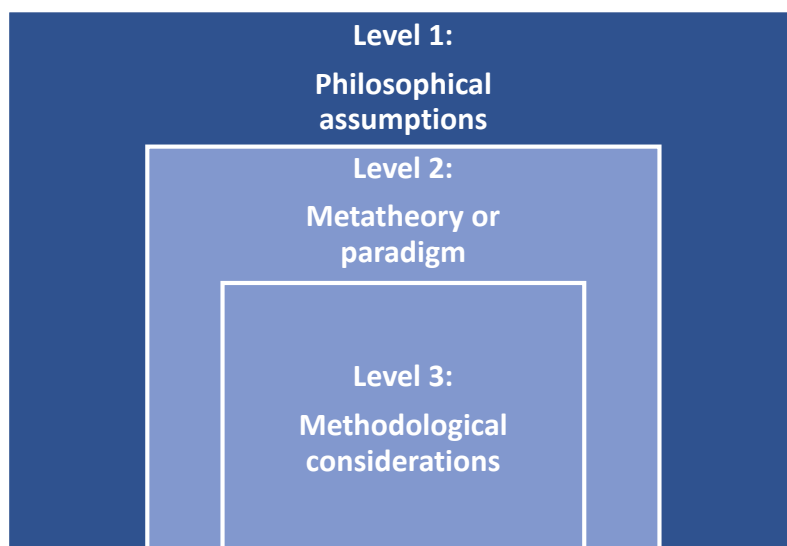
1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on their psychosocial development.

2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.

The aims and objectives guide the research process and desired outcomes in order to establish vital information for social workers to be able to assist families in a post-divorce phase. From the aim and objectives of the study, it is clear that the study orientation is already pointing to a qualitative approach. This is further supported by the research philosophy and paradigmatic considerations discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND PARADIGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS**

Antwi and Hamza (2015) argue that the term paradigm emanates from the Greek word *paradeigma*, meaning a pattern. McGregor and Murnane (2010) argue that researchers should strive to understand the paradigm(s), because it will assist the researcher to explore and understand the underlying research philosophy. It also assists with the validity of research and whether appropriate methods were used in the research process. Creswell (2013) refers to three levels of paradigmatic considerations, namely, the philosophical assumptions of the study (i.e. epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology), the metatheoretical worldview of the study (positivism and interpretivism), and the methodological aspects (inductive or deductive methods) (see Figure 4.1).



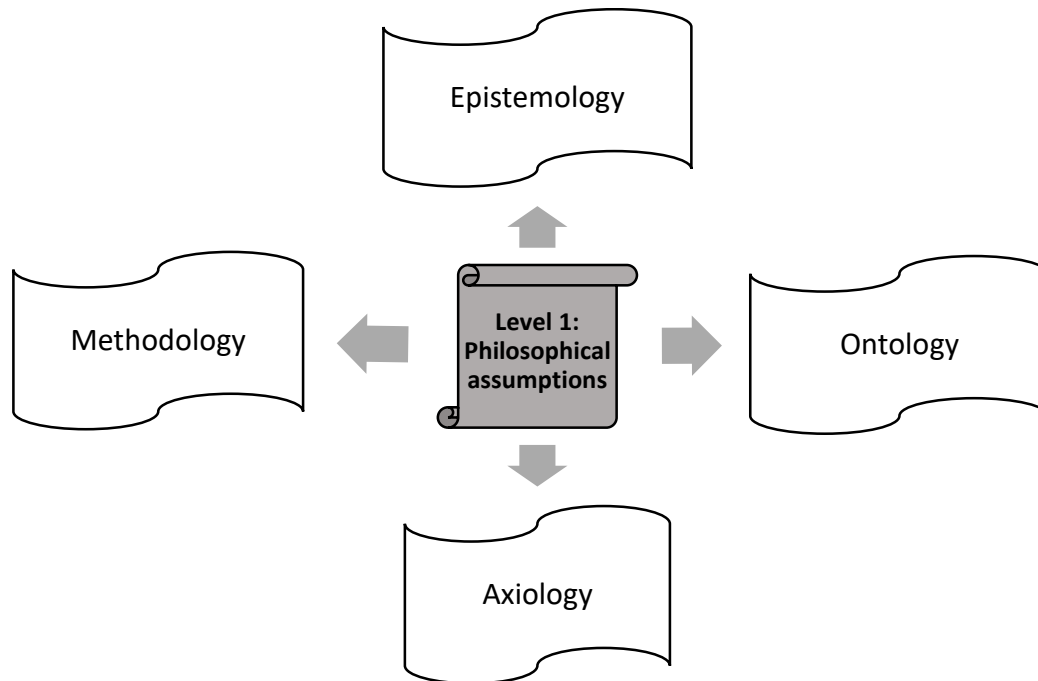
**Figure 3.1: Research philosophy and paradigmatic considerations**  
*Sources: Bajpai (2011); Dudovskiy (2018)*

According to Bajpai (2011), research philosophy is about origin, nature and new knowledge. Dudovskiy (2018) describes research philosophy as a belief in how information about a phenomenon must be gathered, studied and used. Figure 3.1 reflects the different aspects of a research paradigm, i.e., philosophical assumptions, metatheory or paradigm and methodological considerations which will be discussed below.

### **3.3.1 Level 1: Philosophical assumptions of the study**

Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) argue that the assumptions underlying the research paradigm show ideas and beliefs about the research work to be done, understanding the assumptions that support the research methods and techniques used, and therefore enabling you to explain it to others. Antwi and Hamza (2015), and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) define assumptions as part of the research process, which are threefold: ontology, epistemology and methodology; and that the research paradigm includes all interrelated practices that explain the natural enquiry along these three assumptions. However, authors such as Creswell (2012) and

McMgregor and Murnane (2010) have contended that there are four assumptions and included axiology. Guba and Lincoln (1998) also confirm that the research paradigm is linked to these assumptions. Thus the four assumptions are as follows:



**Figure 3.2: Level 1: Philosophical assumptions**

*Sources: Chilisa and Kawulich (2015); Creswell (2012); Patton (2002)*

Figure 3.2 shows the relationship between the central idea, which in this case is philosophical assumptions in research, to how the information in the outer ring informs the central philosophy. These four assumptions are explained below.

- **Ontology:** Livesey (2011:1-3) says that ontology (what we believe in) encompasses our beliefs about the nature of reality. McMgregor and Murnane (2010) also state that ontology is focused on what is important is nature, reality, feeling, existence or existing.
- **Epistemology:** Epistemology is referred to as “the science of knowing”, that is, how do we know what we know? (Livesey, 2011:1–3). McMgregor and Murnane (2010)

provide additional insight and state that what is important is, knowledge in science and what people's perceptions are about the world around them.

- **Axiology:** McMgregor and Murnane (2010) contend that what is important are the researcher's values and what you believe as right and ethical (for example, moral choices, ethics, and normative judgements), which are attentive to the researcher's role and views of research and the participants in the research.
- **Methodology:** Livesey (2011:1-3) says that methodology focuses on "the science of finding out", that is, how should we study the world? McMgregor and Murnane (2010) also say that what is important is the methods that we use are authentic, what can be interpreted as precise, and offer conclusions in the development of arguments and judgement (logic). This logic is achieved through two methods, namely inductive reasoning where understanding emerges from the specific (a sample) to the general (conclusions about the population), and is linked to interpretivism, whereas deduction advances from the general (the theory) to the specific (particular conclusion) and is related to positivism.

For this study the research used the inductive method as it had to do with the participants' environment, analysing data and then interpreting the data.

Lively (2011) furthermore asserts that researchers who view their world in a truthful and authentic manner, view the truth of the natural and social sciences as similar. Using Creswell's (2012) description of the four philosophical assumptions, the researcher applied these to her study as follows in Table 3.1.



**Table 3.1: The philosophical assumptions of the study**

<b>Philosophical assumptions</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Application</b>
Epistemology (How researchers know what they know):	The researcher gets close to the participants, and where evidence is gathered with regard to individual opinions on research completed in the field.	Divorce is a phenomenon in society and the researcher as a social worker regularly has clients who are dealing with divorce and post-divorce issues.
Ontological (The nature of reality):	The nature of reality and the experience of the reality. The researchers explore the realities of the different participants through their experiences with the evidence at hand.	The interviews exposed the researcher to the reality of the participants' perceptions and experiences.
Axiological (The role of values in research):	The researcher gives an account of any bias about the information gathered in the field.	The researcher made notes on her values or beliefs during the research (See Appendix I)
Methodology (The methods used in research process):	The methods used can either be inductive (forming themes) or deductive (numerical data) in gathering and analysing the data.	The researcher used inductive method to generate themes in keeping with a qualitative study.

*Source: Creswell (2012)*

Without the philosophical assumptions the research study had little direction and foundation, therefore it was important for the study as it guided the researcher so that the researcher could understand what the participants were experiencing and their realities as opposed to the researcher's realities and values.

### **3.3.2 Level 2: Metatheoretical worldview or paradigm**

Creswell (2013) views paradigms as worldviews, for example, akin to a philosophical perspective of the world and how research is conducted by researchers within this worldview. Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlop (1992, cited in Antwi & Hamza, 2015) assert that a paradigm is a pattern, shape and framework, as well as educational ideas, values and assumptions. Thus,

paradigms appear to be an all-encompassing construct that reflects the researchers' viewpoints about the world. In terms of research, Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) contend that certain paradigms are identified with either quantitative or qualitative methodologies, i.e., the positivistic paradigm typically assumes a quantitative methodology, whilst a constructivist or interpretative paradigm is used with qualitative approaches.

### 3.3.2.1 Positivism

The positivist paradigm examines the social reality, according to August Comte (1798–1857), a French philosopher, who argued that observing and reasoning was the best way to get to know human behaviour. He further states that acquiring knowledge is through experience, observing and exploring (Antwi & Hamza, 2012), which represents the exclusive means of acquiring knowledge. Crotty (1998, cited in Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012) also argues that positivism is a science and the foundation for true knowledge and believed it is the best way to acquire or investigate the social world. Thus, positivistic thinkers believe knowledge is unbiased and quantifiable. Rubin and Rubin (2012) assert that in the positivist paradigm, researchers perceive themselves as being neutral and record keepers. They believe that research is deemed a success when many researchers using the same instruments have similar results, which is also how the research is measured. The researchers have a need to develop standardised instruments which would be able to measure a single reality, be it physical or biological. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) argue that positivism was viewed as more probable where knowledge is constructed and passively noting the laws of nature. However, Crotty (1998:40) also argues that positivist research is not just “objective, nor unquestionably certain”.

### 3.3.2.2 Interpretivism

According to Creswell (2013), the interpretivist view is also a worldview. Constructivism is often used interchangeably, but should not be confused with interpretivism and the research design of a similar name. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) assert that interpretivism as a perspective is appropriate when the researcher is wanting to understand the phenomenon through the participants' experiences.

Interpretivism was formally introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by German sociologists, Max Weber (1864–1920) and Georg Simmel (1858–1918), where it was known as *verstehende* (interpretive) anti-positivism. *Verstehen* denotes the understanding of the daily and routine realities of ordinary people in their local and social contexts in a specific time or period (De Vos, Schults & Patel, 2007). Max Weber, in particular, notes that humankind wants to understand and make sense of their worlds. And by doing this, researchers continuously interpret, give meaning to and justify their decisions (Babbie & Mouton, 2008).

Clavier (2012) says the interpretivist paradigm is both objective and subjective. It is objective, as it obtains an understanding of the real world of the participants through social construction as in language, observations, beliefs, (hence the confusion with constructivism). However, Clavier (2012) asserts that its epistemology is also subjective, as the researcher cannot be separated from the phenomenon or the one influencing the other. Creswell (2013) clarifies the characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm as the following: the researcher asks open-ended questions, focuses on the process of the interaction, pays attention to the background and cultural context of participants, and recognises their interpretation of the world. Crotty (1998, cited in Mcgregor & Murnane, 2010), identifies three key elements underlying the interpretivist paradigm.

1. People construct understanding when they engage the world they are interpreting, and where qualitative researchers make use of open-ended questions so that the participants can freely give their opinions.
2. Humans interact with their world by viewing it through their culture as based on historical and social perspectives.
3. The researchers want to understand the participants in their environment and personally gather information. The researchers then interpret their findings.

The four philosophical assumptions reiterate the importance of the in-depth understanding of participants' experiences that can be achieved by using the interpretivism paradigm. It underscores that people's perceptions of their world are important, as well as the researcher's role in it. Flowers (2009) also contends that individuals and groups view situations through their own experiences, thoughts and expectations. Flowers (2009) appropriately defines it as a person constructing and re-constructing through their personal and social encounters, producing a variety of understandings and perspectives (also see Rubin & Babbie, 2010; Collis & Hussey, 2009). The understanding of people's feelings and how they think and talk (whether verbally or non-verbally), are important aspects to consider in research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008; Flowers, 2009). Interpretivism focuses closely on how the researcher interprets the data, therefore there must be prerequisites to avoid biases and many opportunities for self-reflection (reflexivity) by the researcher.

It is known that the interpretivist paradigm is not understood broadly and is generally contested whether it is a legitimate inquiry and affording true knowledge (Clavier, 2012; Pozzebon, 2004). According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:20), interpretivist methods are

developed and used, for example, in unstructured observation, open interviewing, idiographic descriptions, and qualitative data analysis as ways to capture insider knowledge.

### **3.3.2.3 Interpretivism as selected paradigm**

For this research the interpretivism paradigm was used. Interpretivism is a naturalist paradigm and it aims to understand how people view the world, their perceptions and what value and meaning they ascribe to different situations and things (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interpretivist paradigm strongly underpins this research study, which aimed to explore the experiences of participants and understand their reality of their lives through the interpretation of the researcher. The researcher in turn engaged in self-reflexivity to reduce bias and to increase trustworthiness of the findings.

### **3.3.3 Level 3: Methodological considerations**

Creswell (2013:295) contends that a research approach is a philosophical plan and process including “assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis, involving the intersection of philosophical assumptions, designers, and specific methods”. The researcher focused on two of the main approaches that can be used in any research process, namely, quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative approach resorts under the positivist paradigm. According to Antwi and Hamza (2015), the quantitative research approach is a scientific method and concentrates on hypothesis and theory testing. The researcher has to choose the hypothesis, test it with the empirical data and produce results in numerical formats. Vosloo (2014) defines the method used for quantitative research as including highly structured questionnaires (closed-ended questions) with scales for a numerical analysis which is always used. Creswell (2013) concurs that quantitative research (hypotheses, close-ended questions) uses numbers to understand cause and effect, and focuses on experimenting and applying

instruments to collect data. By contrast, the qualitative approach uses open-ended questions and engages with participants to obtain their personal narratives with rich, thick quotes as data (See 3.4).

### **3.3.4 Section conclusion**

The paradigm used in this study is interpretive, which explores experiences through the participants' multiple realities. The researcher had an active role in engaging with the participants, asking open-ended questions, analysing the data, so that it reflected the participants' perceptions (Henning, et al. 2004).

## **3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

The interpretivist paradigm underscores the use of the qualitative approach. Creswell (2013) says that when a phenomenon has to be studied and understood, especially when there is minimum research on the topic, then qualitative research is the best approach, because the researcher must still get to know the important factors of the phenomenon. Key advantages of the qualitative approach are the following.

(i) **Flexibility:** Participants share their experiences and understandings and what it can do, and how it is done, therefore there is less distance between the researcher and the participant. The researcher obtains rich data, fascinating facts and it is dependable (Brown, 2010).

(ii) **In-depth understandings:** Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) confirm that qualitative research enables researchers to obtain a deeper and wider understanding of the social world and how social experiences and events come into being. Qualitative research studies a social phenomenon in the environment, which includes people's experiences, how individuals or groups conduct themselves, and how interaction forms relationships.

(iii) **The researcher as instrument:** The researcher is the key person collecting data, as they explore and describe events or incidents as these occur, what happens to people, the effects and what it means to the participant (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015).

From the above advantages, the researcher chose the qualitative approach as it encompasses people's experiences and perceptions and is appropriate to understand the phenomenon of the post-divorce phase.

The characteristics of qualitative research are as follows (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Ivankova, Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007; Jones & Kottler, 2006; Kumar, 2011, 2005; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Vosloo, 2014):

- It is usually conducted in natural settings. Natural settings (such as classrooms, schools and sports fields) are the overwhelming preference for qualitative studies.
- The extensive use of descriptive data. Qualitative researchers are likely to describe a phenomenon with words, rather than with numbers.
- The emphasis is on process rather than on product.
- It is often based on inductive logic: going from the specific to the general.
- The search for meaning is often evident. The search for meaning focuses on how people try to make sense of their lives. *How it is* may be nearly as important in a qualitative study as how the participants *think it is*.

These characteristics have established the means for the researcher to decide whether the qualitative approach is the most appropriate philosophy to frame the study.

### **3.4.1 Rationale for qualitative approach**

According to Antwi and Hamza (2015), qualitative research does offer new theories and insights, as it discovers new things about a phenomenon that has to be explored and understood through people's experiences and perspectives. The phenomenon of this qualitative study is to understand the post-divorce experiences of adolescents and parents, especially how they are coping, and exploring the psychosocial effects on the development of adolescents. This topic has not been substantively explored and the study wanted to discover the experiences of participants in order to further discover the factors that we need to understand during this post-divorce phase. Because qualitative research focuses on experiences, this approach assisted in obtaining rich data that provided an understanding of the what and how of the research topic.

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this study, the focus is on the post-divorce phase and what parents and adolescents experience. Ziehl (2010) describes the research design as a plan for how participants are recruited, how we gather information and analyse the data. It also describes how the participants would be engaged to obtain information about the research problem. Furthermore, the design is the 'plan or blueprint', and the focus is always on the end product, and how it will be accomplished adequately (Ziehl, 2010:4). Babbie (2009:628) defines the research design as the coming together of "logical arrangements" allowing "casual inferences", and the planning of the research.

Although Creswell (2013) proffers the following five research designs, i.e., phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography and case study in qualitative studies, the researcher will be following the designs forwarded by Babbie (2011). Babbie (2011) argues that



exploratory studies are conducted for three reasons: to give the researcher a better understanding, to see if there is reason for further studies of the topic, and to identify methods for future studies. Strydom (2013) and Engel and Schutt (2013, 2010) explain that exploratory research explores the community and their situation, the relationships in different situations, and how they express their feelings. Furthermore, these authors assert that exploratory designs gather unstructured information in exploring new topics, looking at new areas of situations that could be a concern. Although Babbie (2013) states that exploratory studies are not only for new studies, but looks at phenomena that is recurring and can explore to see if more extensive study should be applied, delving deeper into the phenomena and generating focused research questions. For the purpose of this study, the exploratory design will therefore be used. The applicability of the design is illustrated as follows (Table 3.2):

**Table 3.2: The applicability of the exploratory research design**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Illustrative question</b>	<b>Illustrative outcome</b>
<p>Van Wyk (2012) says the main aim of exploratory research is to find the different situations the main problem can occur in and to find similar factors which might be important to the research. Karimov (2015) also says that this design explores the participants' deep issues that they have not been able to verbalise until then.</p>	<p>The following is the main research question of the study: <i>What are the perceptions and experiences of adolescents and their parents in the post-divorce phase, focusing on the adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development.</i></p>	<p>The possible outcome is: <i>To obtain a broader understanding of the topic of the post-divorce phase and the effects on adolescents and what their experiences have been and those of their parents.</i></p>

**Sources:** Karimov (2015); Van Wyk (2012)

Table 3.2 summarises the purpose of the exploratory design. Ziehl (2010) underscores that the purpose of this design is to engaging participants to obtain their opinions and experiences with regard to the research problem. The research problem of this study is the psychosocial effects on an adolescent during the post-divorce phase.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

Babbie (2009) describes the population as the group of people or incidents that a researcher is interested in studying. Moriarty (2011) adds that the population is where the sample is derived from. Vosloo (2014) further describes the study of a population as the sum total of the components that the samples were chosen from that is strongly related to the inclusion criteria in purposive sampling.

#### **3.6.1 The research population**

The research study focused on parents and adolescents in the post-divorce phase, setting the frame for the population. The research population is therefore persons in the Cape Flats area who are parents and adolescents in post-divorce circumstances and the sampling ensured that the target group was reached.

#### **3.6.2 The study sample**

Vosloo (2014) contends that sampling occurs when you choose a subset of people from a larger population, where the aim is that this subset represents the research population. According to Alvi (2016), a sample is taken from a population, as researchers are not able to explore the entire population and therefore a small number is chosen for the research. The data is drawn from this sample and is thus seen as the representation of the research population. Perumal (2014) confirms that sampling chooses constituents from a population, who then become the source of data for the research, which will produce previously unexplored information. Sampling approaches should be specifically defined within the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Moriarty, 2011). Thus, the quantitative approach is dependent on probability sampling where each respondent has an equal chance of being sampled, whereas

qualitative studies use non-probability sampling, as participants are selected on the basis of specific characteristics (Moriarty, 2011; Strydom & Delpont, 2011).

### 3.6.2.1 Sampling methods

There are two key types of sampling methods associated with quantitative and qualitative methods, namely: probability and non-probability sampling (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). Kumar (2014) defines probability sampling as a method that uses random identification within the population where each one has an equal opportunity of being selected, as these are not predictable. In non-probability sampling, there is no random selection and methods are based on a specific rationale. Etikan and Bala (2017) further elaborate that probability sampling methods are generally used for quantitative studies where large numbers are needed from a population, while the non-probability sampling is selected as it has a specific reason and purpose, which means the researcher is selecting participants with a specific reason and the sampling size is small by comparison (also see Strydom & Delpont, 2011).

The researcher used non-probability sampling as it was suited for qualitative research, as the sample must be specific and emphatically linked to the study topic and objectives. Howie (2017) confirms that in non-probability sampling, the researcher decides the criteria to be included.

### 3.6.2.2 Sampling techniques

The choice of non-probability sampling was relatively straightforward as the choice was related to the qualitative approach that the researcher had already established as being the ideal philosophical orientation. The researcher thereafter selected purposive and snowballing

sampling techniques, because these two techniques would work in tandem with one another to obtain appropriate participants.

(i) **Purposive sampling:** Kumar (2014) describes purposive sampling as the researcher choosing the sample that is applicable to the study, and where the participants have the knowledge of the topic being researched. The advantages are that it is based on the participant's experience and knowledge and the researcher's judgement. The disadvantage is that it cannot be measured in terms of representation of the population. Purposive sampling is described by Etikan and Bala (2017) as being based on the researcher's specialised knowledge about the topic and also advice from the experts, i.e., the participant, who has experienced divorce and the researcher who, on a regular basis, works with families who have experienced divorce and the post-divorce phase. This sampling method is important for the study as the phenomenon is divorce and finding participants who have experienced divorce and their perceptions, will provide the researcher with rich data to analyse in order for appropriate findings to emerge relating to the identified research problem.

The inclusion criteria were the following:

- Participants were to include both adolescents and their parents who have experienced divorce.
- Both parents and adolescents could be from both genders to provide information from the vantage points from both genders.
- Only adolescents from ages 12–18 years would be included.
- The participants could reside in the areas of the Cape Flats in Cape Town so as to be as expansive as possible.

(ii) **Snowball sampling:** Snowball sampling is described by Babbie (2011) as situations where the researcher asks the participant to suggest participants who might be suitable for the study. This is a very useful technique when participants are difficult to locate. In this way, Babbie (2011) contends that in snowball sampling the participants are the sampling recruiters where the researcher has to recruit an initial sample and where these participants provide possible additional participants in accordance with their experiences and knowledge. Babbie (2011) and Strydom and Delport (2011) explain that snowball sampling is where one person suggests other people, and is used for exploratory purposes. Noy (2008) argues that snowballing also emphasises social networks in society, so therefore participants know others like themselves. According to Kumar (2014), snowball sampling can be useful when a population is not easy to reach, and thus, when the researcher initially talks to people the researcher then is able to make contact with other people who may be suitable for the study. The disadvantage can be that it limits the population reached, and depending on the initial contact person, it can be viewed as biased.

In practice, the researcher approached many participants, but experienced considerable unwillingness to participate, due to the sensitivity of the subject of divorce as experienced either by parents or adolescents. Eitkan, Ailkassim and Abubakar (2016) confirm that snowball sampling is one of the most well-known forms of non-probability sampling when it is difficult to find the sample you are interested in researching. By using this method, the researcher was able to find participants that were willing to participate.

### 3.6.2.3 Sampling procedures and implementation difficulties

The researcher first attempted to find participants in known counselling agencies focused on child and family services, by using purposive sampling. Known counselling centres in the Cape Town area of the Western Cape included FAMSA (Family and Marriage society of South

Africa), Hope House (Counselling centre for families and individuals), and Parent centres (Counselling centre for parents). Ultimately, these centres were unable to assist. Therefore, the researcher had to consider the use of snowball sampling. The researcher contacted social workers, shelters for abused women and children, and community members to assist with snowball sampling. Even in these attempts there were few that suited the criteria. The researcher was compelled to approach community members to spread the study invitation so that people could then suggest participants. The following were important aspects in the sampling:

- The researcher made the research known and a member from a faith-based organisation in the community assisted in identifying at least two families who were willing to participate.
- The researcher also enquired from community members on the Cape Flats through word-of-mouth discussions about the research.
- Community members could then identify suitable participants or they even volunteered to participate if they met the criteria.
- Applying the inclusion criteria was stringent as the following example could attest. There was one community member who was willing to participate, but the adolescent was from a previous relationship, not a previous marriage. Even though this family was excluded, this community member could then indicate another family who fitted the criteria.
- The researcher works with families in her professional environment and could identify a family, but the adolescent was not able to participate in the research, due to the parent's work obligations. Although the parent's interview was rich and in-depth, it could not be used in the study. It did, though, emphasise that data had been saturated.

- Although purposive sampling was the initial sampling method, snowball sampling assisted in securing 12 participants which produced rich data.

#### 3.6.2.3 Sampling size

Eitikan and Bala (2016) assert that for a sample to be selected for probability sampling, it is generally done at the start of data collection. However, non-probability sampling is completed when the resources and timing allows the researcher to continue until no new information is obtainable (i.e. data saturation), focusing on a thorough and wide search. Although sampling is also done before data collection, it often occurs continuously throughout data collection, especially when snowball sampling is used.

Creswell (2013) asserts that a qualitative sample size is based on the qualitative design (i.e. exploratory) and recommends the following sample sizes from research: typically, the narrative would be one or two participants, phenomenology typically would have three to 10 participants, grounded theory would have 20 to 30 participants. Creswell (2013) further states that qualitative sample sizes will always be smaller than quantitative sample sizes. The reason is that for qualitative studies, it is in-depth information from a smaller sample, and quantitative requires meaningful statistics from a large representative sample. Brief (2012) substantiates the reasons why the qualitative sample should be small; stating the bigger the sample, the more difficult and time consuming the data collection is, making the integration and the interpreting also more difficult (also see Mahmood, 2012). The sample size for this study was 12 participants which included six adolescents and six parents upon reaching data saturation.

#### 3.6.2.4 Data saturation

According to Creswell (2013), the idea of saturation emerged from the grounded theory research design where Charmaz (2000) argued that data collection is suspended when there is

no new data forthcoming as there are no new themes revealed. Fusch and Ness (2015) also state that data saturation is reached when enough data has been collected and no new codes are found in new data collected. Fusch and Ness (2015) say that interviewing allows you to foresee and reach data saturation. Most importantly, Bernard (2012) argues that in qualitative studies you cannot state the number of interviews needed, but with the data collected it gives an indication when coding is no longer needed because the same questions are asked of participants and the researcher then is able to discern data saturation in terms of participant responses. In this vein, Mason (2010) argues that in qualitative studies participants share different ideas and therefore the samples need not be vast to ensure that all perceptions are presented, but too much data can be recurrent and then redundant. In qualitative studies, authors are hesitant to mention the sample size needed for a study in contrast to quantitative studies for example (Mason, 2010). Mahmood (2012) provides the following guidelines when participant selection is sufficient:

- When people that are chosen define the potential participants in the setting;
- When the participants become less and data saturation is reached.

The principle of saturation was a vital principle in sampling and data collection. This study design was exploratory, and as Karimov (2015) states, exploratory design is flexible, unstructured and the sample is small. Because the researcher used snowballing, and due to the sensitivity of the study and people not being open to participating in the study, the sample remained small. Saturation was reached when the researcher had interviewed 12 participants consisting of six adolescents and six parents.

The initial sampling size for the study proposed 10 adolescents and 10 parents. It was also imperative that the adolescents and parents were related in order to compare and contrast their



opinions and experiences. Ten participants for each data source were deemed sufficient in qualitative research to obtain rich data and their in-depth experiences. However, the following sampling resources were consulted with concomitant difficulties:

- The researcher approached a social worker at a primary school who works with children and parents. She reported that the children are younger than the required age for the study.
- A counsellor working in in the northern suburbs also attempted to assist in recruiting, but most parents were single, living with their children.
- A counsellor working with divorced families also reported that because of sensitivity, people were not willing to participate in the research.
- A shelter for women and children was approached, but the supervisor reported that she had no participants that fit the criteria.
- It was also evident that many couples were not married, but have children and they were in the post-relationship period, but not a post-divorce phase.
- Some persons recommended a participant, but these people were unwilling to participate as the divorce had been finalised years before, and the relationship between parents was still strained or they were unwilling to endure the recurring memories of their experiences.

The researcher thus collected the data from six adults and six adolescents. After consultation with the study supervisor, it was confirmed that data saturation was reached and that the sample met the requirements for an exploratory study, which is small compared to the cited literature.

### 3.7 DATA COLLECTION

In qualitative research, Creswell (2013) states that the researcher is the most important instrument in collecting the data. The researcher identifies the values, effects, and partiality (bias) at the beginning of the research. Antwi and Hamza (2015) describe how the researcher asks the questions, gathers the data and interprets and makes recordings, whilst observing. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) also describes how the researcher wants to understand the participants, and to be empathetic. Brief (2012) provides the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative data collection:

*Table 3.3: Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative data collection*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descriptive detail regarding the sample</li><li>• The view of the specified social and cultural view (the voice)</li><li>• The way participants' experience the many aspects of themselves</li><li>• How they experience the impact of the immediate situation</li><li>• Data collection can be minimal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The data must be categorised and it is intense, it may not be objective</li><li>• Not all interviewers are sufficiently skilled to carry out the data collection</li></ul>

*Source: Brief (2012)*

Cited literature verifies the importance of the researcher being the key instrument in the research. The interviews must be thorough to obtain rich data as the sample size is limited and become saturated. Babbie (2011) furthermore explains that the methods used to gather data also mould your investigation.

### 3.7.1 Data collection method

The researcher used the individual interviewing method to obtain information from the participants. In qualitative research, Moriarty (2011) says that the interview is the method used most frequently and it is easy to ask participants about their experiences and perceptions, so much so that you can gather much data from an interview, as it could last up to two hours. It is, however, not easy for the interviewer who has to ask questions, record and ensure that the interview remains interesting for the participants (Vosloo, 2014). There are three types of interviews.

(i) **A structured interview:** According to Alshenqeeti (2014), a structured interview is a list of questions compiled which encompasses standardised questions and does not give leeway for the interviewer to explore. It is similar to a quantitative questionnaire.

(ii) **The unstructured interview:** The unstructured (or non-directive) interview is when questions are not pre-set and is done face to face with the interviewee, in a telephone interview or having a focus group of six to eight participants; it does take planning to construct the interview questions (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

(iii) **Semi-structured interviews:** Brief (2012) describes semi-structured interviews as being a means for providing vital information on individual perspectives and experiences and obtaining these directly in the interview. Babbie (2009) contends that semi-structured interviews are done in an organised manner where questions are written down before interviews occur and it is asked directly so it does not vary from the topic. Moriarty (2011) further defines the interview as incorporating open-ended questions about issues that is important to the topic being researched.

The researcher used the semi-structured interview as it was a set of questions that could be expanded to include open-ended questions, and for this study the researcher needed to explore

the experiences with the participants. The interview protocol included the following issues in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: The semi-structured interview protocol**

<b>Semi-structured interview protocol</b>	<b>Application by the researcher</b>
Setting a date, place for the interviewer to ensure everyone is present and not inconvenienced.	The researcher went to the interviewee’s home as it was convenient for them. There was enough privacy and participants felt comfortable and at ease.
Ensuring that the interview follows certain rules for conformity between interviews.	The researcher followed the interview schedule for interviews although interviews might differ slightly according to interviewee. It remained within the frame of the interview schedule.
Following with questions concerning the research and lastly completing with a concluding question.	The researcher expanded on the scheduled interview questions, so each interview was unique.
Using probes to elicit deeper information.	The researcher always probed with four to five questions and asking interviewees to explain in more detail and giving enough time for explanations.
Ending the interview appropriately.	The researcher ensured that the interview ended with a thank you to acknowledge their time given and the personal and sensitive information freely given.
Recording the information.	The researcher recorded the interviews in preparation for the transcription and analysis process, ensuring the participants knew that it is confidential and only to be used for academic purposes.

**Source:** Creswell (2013)

Communication is the most important tool in the interviewing process; and thus Moriarty (2011) asserts that meeting with the participant face-to-face gives the interviewer and participant an opportunity to understand each other, and to observe non-verbal communication. Babbie (2011) agrees that direct observation assists researchers to observe interaction which

might not be expected or that cannot be measured in any other way. In terms of how the researcher engaged with the participants, the following information and application is pertinent.

**Table 3.5: The researcher's role**

The researcher's role	Application
To ensure that participants receive benefits and do the researcher.	The researcher had to ensure that participants understand research and also have access to findings. The researcher treated all participants equally, ensuring that they did not feel as if there was a power struggle.
To avoid participants feeling they have been deceived and to give constant information of the study.	The researcher reiterated the purpose of research and questions were directly linked to topic. They never felt that another topic was being discussed or that they were being misled in any way.
To keep the powers of all parties equal, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the questions and the interpretations.	The participants never felt that they were coerced or being subjected to the researcher's power. There was mutual respect and an openness to convey experiences and ensuring that there were no misinterpretations.
The researcher must not exploit the participants.	The researcher made a special effort to thank the participants for their willingness. Also offering them a referral to an organisation which could assist them with further support for adults and children. Assuring them that they would be able to share in the findings of the study.
To make sure that the process was not harmful.	The researcher implemented the research ethics principles of confidentiality and privacy, and being respectful and courteous in the interviews.

*Sources: Creswell (2013)*

The above table summarises the engagement of the researcher with the participants, especially noting the importance of the ethical conduct during interviewing.

### **3.7.2 The interviewing schedules**

There were two interviewing schedules: one for adolescent participants and one for parents. The researcher engaged with each participant to clarify the study and to obtain consent for their

participation, and also ensuring an agreement to be audio-recorded for the interview to capture the data. The interviews took place at a time and place that was convenient for each participant.

**Table 3.6: The interview schedule and sample questions**

Adult participants	Adolescent participants
<p>The interview schedule of the adult participants had the following questions as examples, which enabled the parents to reflect on how their child has been experiencing the post-divorce phase:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is your child expressing his or her feelings post-divorce?</li> <li>2. What changes do you see in your child's behaviour (if any) post-divorce?</li> </ol>	<p>The interview schedule of the child participant had the following questions as examples, which enabled the child to express their biggest challenges and how they were coping post-divorce:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was your biggest challenge since the divorce?</li> <li>2. What do you think are your coping skills? How did you cope and manage?</li> </ol>

In this study, the data collection used semi-structured interviews with a semi-structured interview schedule; thus allowing the researcher to expand on the scheduled questions, using open-ended questions.

### 3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Creswell (2013), analysing data is continued whilst data is being collected, and then noting the emergent themes. The researcher might be analysing an interview which could be used in the final report, in the form of a memo whereas in quantitative research you first collect data and then analyse, and only then the final report is compiled. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) also relates that not all data gathered is used in qualitative studies, some data has to be deleted and some data is ignored; which is also different to quantitative studies where the researcher uses all data and tries to fill in missing pieces. The data is also placed into themes, as opposed to quantitative analysis where data is numerical, and rather wanting to understand

hidden meanings and to make up patterns of commonalities and divergence. Kumar (2014) says that in qualitative studies the type of analysis must be identified, whether for participants' narratives or events, specifically how the data is reduced and then reassembled for data presentation. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) states that planning for the analysis process is necessary and when new or unusual information arises, the researcher has to plan and keep notes about it. The most important aspect is the main themes emerging from the process. The ways of identifying themes is by using the process by Renata Tesch (Theron, 2015).

### 3.8.1 The eight steps of Renata Tesch

Theron (2015) affirms the well-known eight steps of analysing qualitative data, originally developed by Tesch (1992:142–145). The following represents the steps and the application by the researcher (see Table 3.7):

**Table 3.7: The application of Tesch's eight steps**

	<b>The eight steps of Tesch</b>	<b>Application by the researcher</b>
1.	Read through all the transcripts, and compile notes.	The researcher printed all the transcripts. Keeping the parents and adolescents interviews together and naming them Adult Participant 1 and Adolescent participant 1, for example, to ensure that interviews can be identified. It was important for the researcher to take notes while reading through the transcripts.
2.	When reading, remain aware of the topic. Identify when something was about the topic and noting it in the columns.	The researcher read through the transcripts, being always aware that there were two different categories, but remembering that the experiences of the adolescent post-divorce was important, as she wanted to establish if there was an effect on their psychosocial development. Making notes in the columns assisted in analysing the data to establish the effects on post-divorce psychosocial development.

3.	Identify similar topics from the columns. Compare topics and group them together. Identify the important, different and other topics.	Identifying the topics gave the researcher the ability to group and also to identify which participants fell into the same topics.
4.	Coding according to important, different and other topics. This was done to see if themes are emerging.	The researcher used colours to differentiate the topics, according to the importance and to see if themes were emerging.
5.	Name the topics and put them in categories and to reduce the categories, and linking categories.	The researcher grouped the topics together by identifying the similarities in the different interviews.
6.	Alphabetise the categories to make sure that there was no duplicating.	The researcher used colours to identify which topics were grouped together, and identifying subthemes.
7.	Group together different categories for initial analysis and ensure that all data were in correct categories and remove irrelevant data.	The researcher could identify by colour the themes and subthemes and could group them, ensuring that any additional information is eliminated.
8.	Ensure that all data is coded correctly and recoding if necessary to compile the report.	The researcher did a final verification to ensure that colours were identified and ready to be used as each colour represented a different theme.

*Sources: Theron (2015)*

Table 3.7 summarises the eight steps of Tesch, whilst analysing and coding the data gathered in the interviews which then emerged into themes (see Table 3.8).






### **3.8.2 The coding process**

Smith and Davies (2010:155) argue that when you code it is not the only form of analysing the data, but it can bring forth information that might have been hidden, and the researcher will have a better picture of the data. The researcher used the open coding concept, as Babbie (2011) describes it as the starting point in qualitative coding. Theron (2015) describes the open coding method *vivo* which is used by beginner qualitative researchers. *Vivo coding* uses the verbatim



words or phrases of the participants as a code; and it is identified as the researcher places words in inverted commas that emphasise action verbs, or clever phrases (Theron, 2015). Babbie (2011) asserts that open coding explains how the researcher will identify important concepts and this is identified by reading and re-reading transcripts. By using open coding, the researcher identified a common theme in all the transcripts (for example, the reasons for divorce) and with identifying this theme, could identify the different reasons and the effects on the family as a sub-theme. Creswell (2009) also provides the type of coding which is *colour coding* which the researcher utilised in the coding and identification of the main themes. The researcher read through the transcripts and identified themes by using the open coding and used different colours to identify common themes and then subthemes in the transcripts as it provided bold contrasts and captured the researcher’s attention across transcripts.

**Table 3.8: Colour coding used**

THEME 1		Red	Effects of divorce on family
THEME 2		Blue	Parenting in post-divorce
THEME 3		Lime green	Psychosocial effects on adolescents
THEME 4		Green	Role confusion
THEME 5		Pink	Adolescents’ post-divorce coping mechanisms

This section summaries the collection of the data methods, the coding and finally identifying the emerging themes (Table 3.8) which will be presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Vosloo (2014:329), qualitative researchers use concepts such as “credibility, dependability, confirmability, trustworthiness, verification and transferability” instead of validity which is attributed to quantitative studies. These concepts are quite controversial, as

scientist argue about the appropriateness of concepts to use in qualitative research (Barusch, Gringeri & George, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Whittmore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Lincoln and Guba's 1985 trustworthiness criteria to assess validity of qualitative studies (Mjwara, 2013), were applied by the researcher.

### **3.9.1 Confirmability**

Confirmability ensures levels of objectivity and that the participants' viewpoints are upheld, and not the researcher's interpretation of what had emerged in interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams and Blackman (2016) advise that researchers must keep notes on the design, how it was implemented, methods and methodology (for example, keeping a journal for research notes and for researcher self-reflexivity). Furthermore, Guba (1981, cited by Moon et al., 2016), discussed the importance of reflexivity as the researcher assesses him- or herself in the quest to reduce partiality, making research transparent and dependable, and enabling confirmability of the study. Anney (2014) states the importance of peer review and in this research the university supervisor is that extra assessor who assists to identify details omitted by the researcher and assisted in omitting information that was not related to the study. Furthermore, Anney (2014) reiterates the importance of the journal, including what occurred in the field, reflection of the study and self-reflection about what occurred in the field, and the way you felt as researcher (see Appendix I).

When analysing data of parents and adolescents, the researcher always kept the research question in mind, to ensure that valid data is used in the research and omitting irrelevant data. Creswell (2013) mentions the audit process being important for the findings to be verified, also to apply and clarify and implement ethical principles appropriate to the interview. Bowen (2009), and Moon et al. (2016) also emphasise how important an audit trail is where the

researcher gives account of decisions, tasks, the recording and analysing processes. The researcher has been accountable to the supervisor appointed by the university. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and is also a trail for auditing, and participants signed consent forms agreeing to the research. Moon et al. (2016) report on the importance of an audit trail as it establishes confirmability and reflects sincerity.

### **3.9.2 Credibility**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research. It involves the level of confidence in the authenticity of the findings of the study and in an accurate interpretation thereof. This means that the researcher must be able to show a strong correlation between the findings of the study and the realities of the participant. There are many strategies to show credibility such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. The researcher chose triangulation. Anney (2014) explains that triangulation assists in removing prejudice and delves into the truthfulness of the participants' replies in interviews.

The researcher used triangulation as a strategy, because of having two data sources such as interviewing parents and adolescents, as well as researcher observations; which contributed to the veracity of the findings, as the researcher was able to compare and contrast (Anney, 2014). The interviews of parents and adolescents were consistent and reflected that the findings were viable, in addition to also using good interview techniques, and safe-guarding participants and their information.

### **3.9.3 Transferability**

Transferability is also viewed as external validity in quantitative studies. This means the extent to which your findings can be generalised or transferred to other contexts and other participants. However, because qualitative studies are usually interpretive and thus contextualised to a specific context, the notion of generalisability becomes difficult (Anney, 2014; Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Transferability strategies include using thick descriptions (rich, direct quotes), comprehensive description of research methodology, and triangulation (Anney, 2014).

The researcher used two strategies here: thick descriptions in the form direct quotes from the participants together with elaborate interpretations (see Chapter 4), and a comprehensive discussion on the research methodology that the researcher used, foregrounded by research theory.

### **3.9.4 Dependability**

According to Creswell (2009), dependability focuses on the researcher and her or his ability to manage differences, and how future researchers can emulate the research design, as the process is transparent in each phase. This includes the aims, research approach and design, population and sampling, and data collection and analysis. Similarly, Streubert (2007) reiterates that it is about being consistent, specifically how the research process is documented and it would be easy to audit. Anney (2014) says that member checking gives the participants the opportunity to reassess the findings and suggestions to ensure that it supports the data of the participants, also ensuring that the process can be audited and used for further studies. The researcher gave the participants the themes that emerged from the analysis of the research and they had an opportunity to confirm the authenticity of the data in the form of a checking list (see Appendix H).

### 3.10 ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

According to Creswell (2013), ethical issues pose a real threat to the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research study. Ethics considerations have to be upheld throughout the research, and are applicable to qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Vosloo (2014) describes the term ethics as originating from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning a set of beliefs and how a person or group behaves socially. The following ethical aspects were adhered to in this research.

- A detailed, prescribed application was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences at the University of Western Cape and the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the university, for approval to conduct the research. Approval was granted (cf. Annexure J).
- Informed consent was obtained from participants and respondents prior to data collection.
- The exposure of participants to stress and anxiety was managed with empathy and with debriefing and prearranged counselling.
- The researcher ensured that participants and respondents would remain anonymous by using pseudonyms throughout the process.
- The right to privacy and confidentiality of information obtained was guaranteed by a written statement in the consent form and information letter to assure participants of anonymity and preservation of their personal information.
- The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements to report the findings in a comprehensive and professional way.

Ethical issues and considerations are vital in research, because without it research cannot be conducted. It is important that the participants feel safe and respected when interviewed and

that their information will be held confidentially. The following ethical principles were further upheld.

### **3.10.1 Minimising harm**

According to Aurelius (2017), in avoidance of harm it is important that the participant knows that they will not be harmed by partaking in the research, and that they will not be violated. Fouka and Mantzourou (2011:5) say that “beneficence refers to the advantages of research and non-maleficence refers to the risks for the participants”. Non-maleficence expects the researcher to be conscious of what may cause harm to participants. Furthermore, Fouka and Mantzourou (2011), and Strydom (2011) contend that harm can be physiological, emotional, social and economic; and that talking to participants about the research topic may delve into old wounds. The researcher was aware of the participants’ possible emotional state and therefore asked questions in a manner that was not intrusive, putting them at ease, explaining the research and how the data would be managed confidentially and that they would remain anonymous. The researcher arranged with a counsellor who is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) for assistance in the interview process if any of the participants needed debriefing or further counselling. The participants were given assurance and asked if they needed counselling after the interview process because of the sensitivity of the topic.

### **3.10.2 Informed consent**

Creswell (2013) states that participants must know that participation to research is voluntary and that they should not feel obligated to participate (See Appendix A). Furthermore, their rights should be stipulated and implemented, and they must sign the consent forms before participating in the research (See Appendices B and C). Fouka and Mantzourou (2011)

emphasise that informed consent is the most important issue in research, as participants voluntarily give consent, with full knowledge of accompanying risks, big or small.

### **3.10.3 Violation of privacy / anonymity / confidentiality**

Fouka and Mantzourou (2011) state that confidentiality and anonymity are closely connected with the benefits of a study, and respect for the dignity and worth of participants. Aurelius (2017) also says that participants have the right to expect their privacy to be upheld, where no information is to be revealed in any form of communication. Although Moriarty (2011) rightly says that it is not easy to maintain anonymity and confidentiality in qualitative studies as there are few participants in the study. However, maintaining anonymity ensures the privacy of the participant to readers of the research study, which must be striven for at all times.

### **3.10.4 Actions and competence of researcher**

Creswell (2009) declares that in research researchers play a vital role in gathering data, but within this task it also positions their personal values in terms of the ways of viewing the data. Simons (2011) reiterates that the researcher is the human inquirer in qualitative research and must reflect their assumptions, biases, expectations and experiences for conducting the research. Morality (2010) also discusses the power of the researcher, as this is often linked to the position of the researcher juxtaposed with the professional or social position of the participants. Competency also encompasses the level of knowledge and experiences that the researcher has regarding his or her research topic and previous exposure to research. According to Strydom (2011), researchers must be skilled to conduct research, and remain honest throughout the investigation.

This researcher is a qualified social worker registered with the South African Council of Social Services Professionals (SACSSP) conducting interviews on a daily basis. It was difficult to conduct research interviews and not give advice or guidance on sensitive issues such as the case with social work interviews. The researcher completed formal research modules in the undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work degree. Her supervisor from the Social Work Department from the institution through which the degree will be awarded guided the researcher in this study, and therefore the researcher felt confident in conducting the study.

### **3.10.5 Release or publication of findings**

The findings of the research study must be made available to the reading public to view it as research, ensuring that it is understandable and relays the information appropriately (Strydom, 2011). The researcher presented the final research in written form and ensured that all cited sources were acknowledged and referenced. The thesis will be available for perusal at the library of the institution through which the degree will be awarded.

### **3.10.6 Storage of data**

There seems to be some contradiction regarding how long data should be stored. Creswell (2013) asserts that data has to be stored for a minimum of 5 to 10 years, while Chen (2009) says that data should be kept and it depends on the facility or institution for 3 to 10 years. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) suggests that the data (i.e. instruments used and how the procedure took place) has to be discarded so that other researchers do not use it inappropriately. Chen (2009) states that in qualitative studies, there are huge amounts of data, and that researchers should specify how the data will be managed, and the researcher should know the policies of record keeping. Chen (2009) also argues that the data has to be kept safe if the research has to be audited to confirm the data.



It is very important that the research is ethically acceptable to participants and the institution. It was the researcher's goal to assist the participants to feel comfortable to participate, ensuring that they remain anonymous and their privacy is upheld. The research remained authentic, dependable and reliable, and additionally, sources were referenced and acknowledged.

### **3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following limitations and constraints were noted for the study:

- The study contains only resident parents, who were the mothers in the study, and the non-resident parents (the fathers) were unwilling to participate, so it limited the research. The study did not have both parents participating, therefore it could be construed as a limitation.
- There was no limit with regard to the post-divorce phase, therefore the participants' periods differed, and therefore specifically the psychosocial effects was the most difficult to discern.
- The study was limited to a specific ethnic group, which can be a limitation as it was also specific to the Cape Flats which socio-historically is where coloured people were banished to in accordance with apartheid legislation.

### **3.12 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

The chapter explained the research methodology that was used by the researcher. It focused on how the research was conducted from the underlying philosophy, theoretical perspectives and the application of the design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis methods, to trustworthiness and ethical issues. The researcher clearly indicated the research methods and tools that the researcher used as part of the qualitative research approach. The chapter also addressed the difficulties and challenges that the researcher experienced and how she had

addressed and overcame these. The most challenging was the recruitment of the participants, but the researcher had motivated the small study sample and through data saturation the eventual number of participants still provided rich, thick quotes. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Creswell (2013), the ultimate part of the research is to analyse the findings and acquire understanding on the basis of the research question and objectives, to assess if findings are supported or not. This is an important chapter as it discusses the emerging themes by interpreting the themes in relation to the research aim, objectives and questions, as well as in terms of the theoretical framework used. Kumar (2014) states that after analysing the data, either with qualitative or quantitative approaches, the researcher presents findings in a manner that is easy to understand, but adheres to requirements for detail and comprehensiveness. Furthermore, Kumar (2014) provides suggestions to display findings, for example, with text or tables. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the texts of the participants, which is common for qualitative data.

In this chapter the researcher discusses the findings of the research in relation to the objectives of the study. These objectives were the following.

1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on their psychosocial development.
2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce phase, and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.

There were 12 participants who participated in the study, consisting of six adults and six adolescents. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants to ensure confidentiality. In the study there were five themes that were identified with concomitant subthemes. In the following section the demographic profiles of the participants are presented.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

The demographic profiles will provide details of the participants who were included in the research. According to Kumar (2011), the purpose of a demographic profile is twofold.

1. The reader obtains an understanding of the population's profile and background where the data was collected.
2. The reader will be able to see the variance in the data, for example, the age, gender, and specifically in this study, the years of the post-divorce phase.

The research population was parents who are divorced and their adolescent children. The demographic area was limited to the Cape Flats in Cape Town, and with the use of purposive and snowball sampling it ensured that all participants were from this stipulated area in Cape Town. The profiles provided pertinent data about the two data sources in the study, namely, divorced parents and their adolescent children. The following table provides the number of participants and their identification label for differentiation purposes (Table 4.1).

***Table 4.1: Participants***

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Identification</b>
Parents	6	[AP]
Adolescents	6	[CP]
<b>Total</b>	12	

As there were 12 participants in the study, this sample size was appropriate for a qualitative study still to have provided rich quotes for an exploratory study, according to the cited literature (see Chapter 3).

#### 4.2.1 Demographic profile of parents

This section focuses on the data that emerged from the demographic profile of the parents as participants in the study. Table 4.2 provides the following variables of the participants: age, language, race, gender and the years the parents are divorced. The parents in the study are all divorced and all interviews were conducted with them in their post-divorce phase.

*Table 4.2: Demographic profile of parents*

Gender	Participant	Age	Race	Language	Years divorced
Female	1	51	Coloured	Afrikaans	3 years
Female	2	53	Coloured	English	5 years
Female	3	43	Coloured	English	2 weeks+
Female	4	53	Coloured	English	10 years
Female	5	52	Coloured	Afrikaans	7 years
Female	6	35	Coloured	English	2 years

There is strong commonality in the profile, for example, the gender and race of participants. The specific data will be individually discussed as to their significance to the study and within global and local contexts.

##### 4.2.1.1 Gender

The participants who participated were all females. Leopold (2018) states that women do carry most of the consequences of divorce, and therefore they need more support than their ex-husbands. The researcher can also attest to the willingness of female participants to participate in the study, but when speaking to their ex-partners to participate, they all declined to participate. In the comparison between men and women about expressing their feelings about

divorce, it underscored the general perception that men are not willing to express their emotions, and thus generally would not make use of opportunities to share their perceptions and experiences about divorce as a loss (Human, 2006; Lai, Hsiao & Chen, 2010). Hence, the researcher was not able to secure any men for the study, but based on Human (2006) and Lai, Hsiao and Chen (2010), they too found that men were mostly unwilling to participate in studies of this nature, which supports a global phenomenon.

#### **4.2.1.2 Race**

According to Aihoma (2013:163), “divorce is a common phenomenon which has attracted global attention”. Divorce is a worldwide issue which does not only occur in specific cultures or belief systems, therefore, though the study sample is from one racial group, the effects would be similar. The sample consisted only of people who identify themselves as being coloured. Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012) argue that the term “coloured” makes reference to people of mixed-raced descent which is socially constructed, and have ethnic heritage made up of Dutch, Eastern and indigenous people of the Khoi-San of South Africa. Because of apartheid legislation, people lived in designated areas, due of their race and culture. Leildé (2008:110) called this ‘racial zoning’. Thus, the homogeneity of this sample is located in the political topography of South Africa. According to Prince (2009), an estimated 40% of the 18 million children in South Africa are raised by single mothers, and there are many South African school children from all races and ethnic identities whose parents are divorced. Therefore, it can be concluded that race does not signify who has the propensity for divorce, above others as it affects all races. Snowball sampling (together with purposive sampling) was used for this research, and therefore the participants were from the Cape Flats, hence the common racial identity.

#### **4.2.1.3 Years in post-divorce phase**

The number of years in the post-divorce phase has an impact on the study in order for the researcher to have been able to explore the significance of the effects during this phase. Generally, participants were 4.8 years in the post-divorce phase. According to Combrinck (2014) and Brentano and Clarke-Stewart (2007), there are effects before and after divorce that can be discerned in the kinds of effects, for example, finances, losing friendships, changed family roles and functions, as well as emotional or mental health. In contrast, Brentano and Clark-Stewart (2007) argue that the consequences of divorce is not always negative, because most couples are disconnecting from conflict situations, for example domestic violence and unhappy relationships, and once they divorce they often have to acquire new talents, maturing as adults, improve general skills, and particularly parenting skills. The years in the post-divorce phase also will be distinguishable if the effects are during or after divorce, and the length of time might influence the outcome of the study by participants being able to provide discerning data.

The demographic profile provides insight into the participants as parents that were engaged in the study and ensures that it mirrors the research population as identified in the previous chapter, being parents in the post-divorce phase, so that the themes and subthemes are reflective of their circumstances and the objectives of the study. The following profile focuses on the adolescent children as participants in the study.

#### **4.2.2 Demographic profile of adolescents**

The adolescent demographic profile provides information about children who have experiences in the period following the conclusion of divorce. The profile will provide the age when their parents divorced, their age at interview, language, race and gender (see Table 5.3). In this

section, their age when the divorce occurred and the number of years post-divorce is further discussed.

**Table 4.3: Demographic profile of adolescents**

Gender	Participant	Age at divorce	Age	Race	Language	Years of parental divorce
Female	1	11	14	Coloured	Afrikaans	3 years
Male	2	11	16	Coloured	English	5 years
Male	3 (A)	14	14	Coloured	English	2 weeks +
Male	3 (B)	18	18	Coloured	English	2 weeks +
Female	4	Baby	14	Coloured	English	10 years
Female	5	9	16	Coloured	Afrikaans	7 years

#### **4.2.2.1 Age of adolescent at divorce**

Bridges and Insabella 1998 ( cited in Lansford, 2009) argues that studies have shown mixed results with respect to how the timing at the age of divorce has an effect on children in divorce. Hetherington (1989) further compares older and younger children in divorce and contends that younger children might feel more than older children that they are the reason for the divorce, and also more likely to feel abandoned and rejected. Aihoma (2013) also contends that there are many factors that affect divorce in children, for example, their age, family, psychosocial functioning; but specifically, parents who are inattentive to their children’s emotions and needs. In the current study, the adolescent participants are of different ages when the divorce occurred and because of this, their experiences are different and varied.

#### **4.2.2.2 Post-divorce years**

It is important to take into account the post-divorce years from the focal point of the adolescent participants. The study focuses on the post-divorce years and the years post-divorce might have different effects or none at all. According to Mahon and Moore (2011) and Lamb (2010), if families in post-divorce are in high conflict with one another, then the children’s struggles in



this phase are more intense than with families who had less conflict. This conflict specifically refers to verbal aggression that is displayed in the presence of the children. Kelly (2012) also refers to studies where they report that when there is high conflict in the post-divorce phase, it could last for two to three years and that children then concurrently also experience physical and verbal abuse. Bojuwoye and Akpan (2009) argue though, that children can forget about what happened during parental divorce, but this is only contingent if it occurred a significant period before. Emery (1999) also says that when divorce occurs (and there are adolescents that can remember the experiences as they are matured), it can then be said that the age of children at divorce does affect the study and how they react to the divorce.

#### **4.2.3 Section conclusion**

The profile data included important factors that were explored and discussed. Specifically important in the profile is the race, years of the post-divorce period, the age of adolescents at the time of divorce and post-divorce. These factors provide a foundation and context to the main findings and how it affected the findings.

### **4.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: KEY THEMES AND SUBTHEMES**

In this section the themes and subthemes will be discussed in an attempt to respond to the aim and objectives of this study. The main focus was on the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase, especially the effects on their psychosocial development. There were five main themes and 12 subthemes that emerged. The themes will be supported by narratives (quotes) from both the parents and the adolescents, and literature to substantiate the subthemes. Below is Table 4.4 that reflects the key themes and subthemes identified in the study.

**Table 4.4: Main themes and subthemes**

Main theme 1	Main theme 2	Main theme 3	Main theme 4	Main theme 5
Effects of divorce on family	Parenting in post-divorce	Psychosocial effects on adolescents	Role confusion	Adolescents post-divorce coping mechanisms
Theme 1 Subthemes	Theme 2 Subthemes	Theme 3 Subthemes	Theme 4 Subthemes	Theme 5 Subthemes
1.1 Economic effects and standard of living	2.1 Parenting of resident parent	3.1 Emotional effects	4.1 Adolescent role	5.1 Recreational and extra-mural activities
1.2 Housing, accommodation and lifestyle effects	2.2 Parenting of non-resident parent	3.2 Psychological effects	4.2 Self identity	5.2 Religious faith
	2.3 Trust in parents		4.3 Quality of intimate relationships	

Table 4.4 displays the themes and subthemes that emerged from analysing the data. Theme 1 shows the effects on the family experiencing divorce, specifically regarding economic, housing and lifestyle effects. It emphasises that it is not only parents affected, but the children as well. Theme 2 specifically focuses on how parenting changes in the post-divorce phase. The importance of psychosocial effects on adolescents is also discussed in Theme 3, specifically the emotional and psychological effects. Theme 4 discusses how the adolescent’s role can be confusing and can affect them reaching the next development stage as per Erickson’s theory. The importance of coping mechanisms is the final theme discussed as adolescents need ways to cope during and after the divorce.

#### **4.3.1 THEME 1: EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON FAMILY IN THE POST-DIVORCE PHASE**

In this theme, what emerged was the effects of divorce on the family in the post-divorce phase. As discussed in Chapter 2, in terms of the Family System Theory, Moran and Dombeck

(2006:1) confirmed that when couples divorce, the whole family unit is affected and disturbed. This is an important theme as it discusses how the family is affected in the post-divorce phase. The theme discusses these effects from the vantage point of the parents and adolescents.

Harkonin (2013) asserts that a significant area in post-divorce phase is the effect on parents' and the children's well-being. Furthermore, Harkonin (2013) asserts that many scholars have researched this topic and concluded that though there is an effect, it might not last long. Leopold (2018) also asserts that due to the changes in the economic, health and housing arrangements in the post-divorce phase, the effects differ between the genders as they become differently affected. The effects are evident in the family post-divorce and the narratives about the economic effects are of the major impacts which will be viewed further.

Theme 1 has two subthemes, namely, economic effects and the standard of living, and housing, accommodation and lifestyle effects.

#### 4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1 Economic effects and the standard of living

Leopold (2018), Smock (1994) and Smock, Manning and Gupta (1999) contend that there are many studies focusing on how divorce affects the economic position, specifically of women, as it appears to affect them the most. Baloyi (2011) further explains that the economic partnerships during marriage become complicated after divorce, especially when the unemployed parent has to change their lifestyle and pay for it. The following narratives will reflect how the participants experienced the economic effects.

**Child Participant 3B:** *I'm struggling as I have no one to help me with this. Because of divorce I can't go to extra classes or go to anyone, then leaving everyone here. I don't have enough time during the week and weekends they busy no one to go to. With divorce, financially it is a struggle and not in parents hands. I can't ask for tutoring, until this is finish.*

**Adult Participant 4:** *It was so tough he did not give money the child, so I asked the lady can you take the 2 sons for a few months, so they can eat as she eats from me. They were there 2 weeks then came back to me. Because there was also 4 children in that house and they become like brothers and sisters. She has 2 daughters and 2 sons.*

**Child Participant 2:** *I don't remember questioning my parents about it. For me it was like they were still together they spoke to each other, drive together, went grocery shopping together. For me it was as if they were still together and that is the way I saw it. They didn't tell me either.*

From the above, it is clear from their experience (as mentioned by Child Participant 3B) how difficult it is financially and how it is influencing his academic studies. Adult Participant 4 said that even the basic needs were something she struggled with to give her children and had to humiliatingly ask her husband's girlfriend to care for her children. Child Participant 2 mentioned that although his parents were divorced, his father still took an active role in providing for the family and he felt as if they were not divorced; which revealed a positive aspect in the post-divorced phase, where parents could work together and share the financial outlay.

Lansford (2009) explains how difficult it is for families, especially women, to adapt financially as most of them might not have been financially independent prior to the divorce. Participants' narratives verify that financially the families struggled in the post-divorce phase, as parents adjusted to this new financial arrangement, although some would never recover or become financially resilient. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), in their watershed study on divorce, find that adolescents were affected emotionally because of the economic changes in their accommodation and lifestyle. According to Haimi and Lerner (2016), there is economic loss and the children of the divorced families lack resources which might be available in regular family homes. McIntosh et al. (2009) also confirm the findings that there was a downgrade in the standard of living for women of single parent homes, and that they were economically at a disadvantage. Similar findings were also found by Makopane and Mogoane (2012) in their study in Limpopo on adolescent experiences in a post-divorce period.

However, there are situations where divorced parents do things differently and positively to the benefit of all. Therefore, Baloyi (2011) underscores the experiences of Child Participant 2 where (in some instances) the non-resident parent still provides financially, and that the participant felt that the couple had continued their financial arrangements from marital to the post-divorce phase.

How families handle the household after divorce, has an effect on the entire family, and although the parents have to manage the situation, the manner in which they do this affects the adolescent. Adolescents are at that age where they are wanting to be independent and wanting to find out who they are, and in this subtheme, adolescents are aware and are affected by the economic changes in the household.

#### 4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2 Housing, accommodation and lifestyle effects

The stressors of divorce have an impact on parents' standards of living, because the once-combined salary is now split, and this affects the individual parent's financial status (Amato, 2012). This subtheme focuses on how housing is affected in the post-divorce phase, and where participants' opinions will reflect the experiences of the parents and adolescents, as well as the effects.

Baloyi (2011) contends that some of the after-effects of divorce, and characteristic of divorce, for example, is that parents have to sell their house and divide the profit, which then leaves little to purchase a new home or live comfortably. Leopold (2018) also argues that home ownership is being lost, or seriously delayed; and it is the women who lose financially as they would mostly have been financially dependent. When women retain the marital home as part of the divorce settlement, it often transpires that they are then unable to maintain the house on their own, and this compounds an already stressed situation in the post-divorce phase. The following experiences are reflected:

***Adult Participant 3:** At the moment no we could not agree on certain stuff, he wants the house, wants to pay me out for the house. He wants the fridges and chairs, and TVs all the expensive stuff. I was not okay with that. But because of him taking money out of provident fund, he has to produce slips, because what did he do with the money? It was not for the family or the house. That still has to be sorted out.*

***Adult Participant 1:** I shared with the children we still lived together, I explained we will separate each in their own room. Even after the divorce, but I could not handle it any longer and put him out. Child Participant 1 was asked not to open the door or do his laundry. She*

*even gave her food to the father. I felt like a monster and Child Participant 1 and I would argue a lot. She only afterwards saw what was happening. She thought I was harsh and did not want to give him food.*

***Child Participant 4:*** *My mom and brothers told me they lived on the street. They did not have a place to live, my grandmother threw them out. They found out my uncle has a garage he lives in and saved money until he could buy a house and they moved in with them then I came.*

From the above experiences, it is clear that divorce has dramatic consequences on the lives of both the parents and the adolescents, specifically their housing conditions and lifestyles. Adult Participant 3 elaborates on the different changes, where household items had to be divided, and the ensuing conflict is evident in this narrative. Adult Participant 1 describes how the lifestyle of the family changed when the father continued to live in the home after the divorce. The adolescent did not understand when the biological mother asked him to leave the house. The effects on the family of Child Participant 4 can be seen as they were destitute and had to live with the maternal uncle. It is evident in narratives that the strain is often on the mother. Amato (2012) elaborates that the mothers usually take on the strain in the home, as they were now single parents and had to rear the children. Leopold (2018) contends that custodial parents are mostly the mothers, and had to ensure the continued care of the children. Maes (2011) also argues that from a child's point of view, they need to know that their parents are attentive to their best interests. The parents have the opportunity to ensure the children know that they care about them. As seen with Child Participant 4, Botha (2014) further contends that because the family unit is changing and the family feels pressurised, the adolescent's trauma of divorce is further compounded by their challenges in their development phase. Czapiewski (2014) also

states that the children's self-esteem may decline because the living conditions and financial circumstances are affected.

#### 4.3.1.3 Conclusion of Theme 1

The theme explored how divorce affects the family in the post-divorce phase in terms of two instances, for example, financial stability and housing, accommodation and lifestyle. It was also clear that the overwhelming experiences were that women took responsibility for the children, because it seemed that children mostly lived with them. This propensity and tradition meant that financially, women struggled as they did not have the same financial status as when they were married.

### **4.3.2 THEME 2: PARENTING IN THE POST-DIVORCE PHASE**

In Theme two, parenting in the post-divorce phase is focused on the fact that parenting undergoes dramatic changes during the post-divorce phase. Therefore, the three subthemes focus on the resident (custodial parent) and non-resident parent, especially the notion of trust in parents, and the effects on adolescents during this post-divorce phase.

Mahon and Moore (2011) highlight that post-divorce parenting is a highly researched topic since the watershed study by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) reflects the negative effects of divorce, and initiated family law on an international level. The study was not only on parents' relationship breakdown, but also between parents and children, and thus brought awareness to children's feelings about being abandoned by the non-resident parent. It also showed how a 'positive' divorce (where parents communicate) builds the parent and children relationship.



Aihoma (2013) relates how, in post-divorce periods, there is a lack of contact and affection when the children become adults. In post-divorce periods, the relationships between parents are conflictual and their unity diminishes, which affects parent-child relationships (Lansford, 2009). Furthermore, Lansford (2009) reports that the children suffer emotionally, and that parents are unable to recognise their children's emotional needs, thus affecting adolescents' functioning and behaviour.

The following three subthemes will reflect on the experiences of parenting of resident and non-resident parents, namely, parenting of the resident parent, parenting of the non-resident parent, and trust in parents.

#### 4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1 Parenting of the resident parent

Residential parents and parenting refer to the parent who has obtained custody of the children during the divorce settlement and who takes care of the children's day-to-day needs. When parents' divorce, the norm is that one parent leaves the home (the non-resident parent), leaving the resident parent in the home with the children; although in many instances the non-resident parent has to relocate, affecting the rearing of the children (Amato, 2010). According to Czapiewski (2014), literature finds that arrangements differ for everyone, and the one is not better than the other. Factors that could influence the situation could be the age of the child during divorce, and the relationship before the divorce, which affects the custodial arrangement. The following are participants' narratives attesting to the parenting of the resident parent.

**Adult Participant 3:** *Yes, I told them from the beginning explaining what is happening. What is going to happen and the decision is there's on where they want to go. I had to be the strong one. There were months when my husband did not come home. He will come bath and go and stays away for days.*

**Adult Participant 4:** *He never really supported her financially and she told him you don't even pay non-support I can buy me nothing. She rather talks to him as he got cross if I spoke to him. Now they understand each other. But I am still the provider, he cannot really provide for them.*

**Child Participant 3A:** *I would say I got to see the vulnerable part of my parents including my mother, not so much my father. My father at a young age learned to cope with difficult times in his life so he can cope. My mother different story.*

From the above experiences, it is clear that Adult Participant 3 was burdened with the responsibility of telling the children what the situation in the home was, in terms of the changes in parenting, that the separation and divorce would bring about. In addition, that the father had disappeared and/or would be absent for periods on end. This would essentially mean that the mother (resident parent) would be the sole parent. Adult Participant 4 reveals the sadness caused by the non-resident parents' behaviour, but specifically feels for the adolescent and how she is handling the situation in the post-divorce period. Child Participant 3A expresses his feelings of his mother not being emotionally strong in coping as the resident parent, how his father has coped and can cope in any situation; comparing one to the other. In the adult narratives the resident parents, who are both the mothers, are taking on the responsibilities in the home; and Adult Participant 3 (although the resident parent), is seen by Child Participant 3A as not being able to cope.

McIntosh (2009) asserts that the resident parent takes on the responsibility of providing for the adolescent as the non-resident parent is unable to do so for various reasons, but that often the parents maintain a good relationship. Harkoin (2013) and Amato and James (2010) concluded in their studies, that in the post-divorce phase children are able to function well if there are three main prerequisites: if financially there is a measure of stability, if the parents establish a good (responsible) relationship, and if the resident parent is psychologically healthy. The resident parent often feel the load as he or she suddenly is assuming more parenting responsibilities and often feel alone in this (Baum, 2003; McIntosh, 2009). McIntosh (2009) also states that parents are also seen as being good or bad by their children, and where children usually side with the resident parent. Mostly these children take on the burden of their parent's well-being, and may become upset, embarrassed, and sad at the effects of divorce on their parent(s). Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke (2014) contend that many children feel negatively towards the non-resident parent who left them.

Most of the adult participants asserted that they had learned to have a good relationship with the non-resident parent in the post-divorce phase, except for Adult Participant 3 whose divorce was finalised three months prior to the interview, and consequently there were considerable conflict between the parents. Furthermore, the value of maintaining a relationship with the non-resident father is that it will reduce conflict (Harkoin, 2013; Amato and James, 2010), which is evident for Adult Participant 4. By contrast, because of the recently finalised divorce, the parents were still experiencing conflict, thus taking an emotional toll on Child Participant 3.

In the study it was evident that resident parents carry the weight of primary carer as the children live with them; and it thus became their responsibility to take care of the needs of the child. Secondly, it is also clear that (despite a divorce order) the financial care of the children will

invariably be dependent on the financial goodwill of the non-resident parent. Conflict seemed minimal in most participant families as their divorce was finalised years before, thus the situation has had time to be resolved and for time to help to dissipate the anger and sadness. It therefore does suggest that the time or period of the post-divorce phase is significant.

#### 4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2 Parenting of the non-resident parent

Haimi and Lerner (2016) assert that when there is a divorce the children live with the resident parent in accordance with the recommendations by the court or therapists who provide the relevant court with evidence to this effect. Louw (2009) states that for a long time, joint custody of children in divorce was not favoured until the case of *Krugel v Krugel* where the High Court judge encouraged children to be cared for by both parents, shaping the gender roles in parenting. The following experiences attest to the participants' perceptions about non-resident parenting:

*Adult Participant 2: He adored his father all the years. Both of them, the dad always had a good relationship with the children. Irrespective of what he did he was always a good father before and after the divorce. We were married 18 years before.*

*Child Participant 1: I argued my father should speak with my mom then I always thought afterwards I started to realize that it's not going to work. Because I have seen how my mother started to struggle to look after us. And my father didn't worry he just didn't care. Perhaps he never minded sure but, no.*

*Child Participant 5: He is not there. I called him once and asked if I could come to him and he asked for what? Then I pushed the phone off and then he didn't have to come. I felt bad, but the next day he said I should come and my grandmother was there.*

In the first narrative, Adult Participant 2 related her son's relationship with his father before and after the divorce. In this relationship, the divorce did not have a significant effect on the father-son relationship. The participant attested to the fact that her son held his father in high esteem, and as a non-resident father he remained involved in the adolescent's life. By contrast, Child Participant 1's father was unemployed and not contributing to the household. Thus, the child realised her father's lack of responsibility and that her mother was struggling to provide for them. Child Participant 5's experience with the non-resident father was that he was not emotionally present in their lives. All the narratives are focused on the participants' experiences with regard to the non-resident parent, being the father in all the narratives.

According to Haimi and Lerner (2016), where parents are able to resolve differences, the children endure less stress. McIntosh et al. (2009) confirm that women's stress levels are higher than males. Bickerdike and Littlefield (2000) additionally find that those who leave the marriage fare better emotionally, than those who are left, and who thus feel abandoned, and resident parents experience the most strain and tension. This is evident in the narrative of Child Participant 1. Kruk (2010) contends that in some cases fathers have less contact if apart and have strained relationships with their children, which is confirmed by Child Participant 5.

Janning, Collins, Kamm and College (2011) found that mothers are the emotional support for children even before divorce and that non-resident fathers are not able to take a supportive role after divorce. According to McIntosh et al. (2009), children who do not have a relationship

with the non-resident parent, due to reasons such as family violence or poor treatment, can then have adjustment problems and intervention is recommended. Child Participant 1 also confirmed this effect. The non-resident parent was viewed as a visitor, as the children were with the resident parent predominately (Haimi & Lerner, 2016; Makopane & Mogoane, 2012). The study findings confirmed this. Lansford (2009) and Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that children in the post-divorce phase can excel academically, for example, if non-resident fathers are present in their life, maintain authoritative discipline, and pay maintenance.

In the study, the non-resident parents were predominately absent from the families participating in the study. However, there was one participating family where the non-resident father was involved and the adolescent consequently maintained a positive attitude (Child Participant 2). Czapiewski (2014) argues that the overriding factor is the importance of maintaining the parent-child relationship after a divorce for a child's continued well-being and to assist in alleviating the losses from the divorce. The study therefore supports the notion that good relations between parents in post-divorce make it easier for the adolescent to adapt to the new family situation and that eventually they come to accept their altered circumstances.

#### 4.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3 Trust

The notion of the loss of trust has also been observed in some of the literature. This is the loss of trust in the parent and others after experiencing a parental divorce (Cartwright, 2006). McIntosh et al. (2009) state that divorce brings conflicts such as extreme anger and a lack of trust, verbal abuse, intermittent physical aggression, inability to communicate regarding their children, not able to discuss the care of their children, and sabotaging the child's relationship with the other parent. Thus, Haimi and Lerner (2016) explain how the intensity of the conflict is detrimental to the well-being of the children. According to McIntosh et al.,(2009), parents

need to be emotionally stable to be able to provide similar emotional stability to their children. This can be attained through the following: they need to work at their problems and be able to resolve these, they must be able to adapt to their new living environments, and they must be able to be the parent that can be trusted. Furthermore, the parents must be able to create a low-conflict environment as this would help to create a comfortable and trusting place for everyone, as there would be less stress and conflict, and where all would be able to trust one another (McIntosh, 2009). This then says to family members that it is a space to rely and depend on each other.

The following are the narratives that underscore the trust in the relationship in the post-divorce phase.

***Child Participant 1:*** *Actually both of them. I felt it was my mother's fault. I felt I do not want to talk with my mother. Is Mummy's fault that Mummy has put my father out of the house. And also my dad's father's fault the drinking and the fighting. I cried a lot I couldn't handle it. I mostly blamed my Mummy. I got angry at her and we bumped heads. With my father was still not so bad. I pity him. I have spoken with him, and so on.*

***Child Participant 4:*** *I'm older now and I am expecting him to give me stuff and I am a girl needing stuff and he never has, either clothes. He says the next week but he never gives. He makes promises but it never happens.*

***Child Participant 3B:*** *Yes, they are. It's hard to trust them, really not a good position to put your kids in. So, we have to rely on ourselves to handle all this pressure. But if it's what we have to do then it's what we have to do.*

From these narratives it is clear that in the case of Child Participant 1, she did not trust her mother and blamed her mother for the divorce, although she later realised that her father's behaviour had precipitated the divorce, conversely she still maintained that her mother was to blame. Child Participant 4 lost the trust in the father (the non-resident parent) who never seemed to keep to promises made. This forms the foundation of trust and the very essence of reliance and dependence. Child Participant 3B asserts that both parents are unreliable and as children they have had to realise this and cope as best they could. He further admonishes parents for placing children in this position.

Olyani (2015) states that children from divorced families are vulnerable after the divorce, as their families, the main agents of socialisation, are non-existent, making it difficult to nurture and care for the children. Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke (2014) state that there are various reasons (for example, the mother's involved in new relationship or misusing finances) why children act negatively towards the mother in particular, which can result in mother-blaming (which is similar to the phenomenon of *victim-blaming*). Keynon and Koerner (2008) argue that, because in most cases the children live with the mothers and not the fathers, the mother tends to share negative information about the father, which can cause friction between the mother and the adolescent's relationship. Another view is that the mother, being in most cases the resident parent, can be a convenient scape goat for children's acting out behaviour. However, the literature is silent on this finding.

#### 4.3.2.4 Conclusion of Theme 2

In this theme we see how the relationship between the resident parent, the non-resident parent and adolescent has unfolded in the post-divorce period, and how the adolescent is affected by



the relationships with both parents. But trust is not only broken between the non-resident parent and adolescent, but also resident parent and adolescent, and for different reasons. The findings show there was a lack of time spent with parents, and thus the children started developing negative feelings towards their parents. Mother-blaming was an unexpected finding, which appears to be counter-intuitive. The effects of divorce on children's lives caused emotional upheaval that impacted on their relationships. This occurred in contrast to the traditional notion and the expectation that it is within the family that we learn about relationships and ways to build relationships. In terms of Bowman's theory (Haefner, 2014), one can see the effects of the divorce being carried through into the post-divorce phase and their decisions in future years, which underscore Bowman's multigenerational transmission process.

#### **4.3.3 THEME 3: PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS ON ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT**

This theme undergirds the study, as the focus is on the adolescent and exploring the psychosocial effects on them in the post-divorce phase. In view of developmental tasks, the psychosocial development theory focuses on personal and social conflicts in unison, and can identify when a crisis can occur in life stages (Newman & Newman, 2009). Sokol (2009) asserts that Erikson is world-renowned for recognising that each person should not be viewed without their social context, because this would have a profound effect on their development (See Chapter 2).

Psychosocial effects in adolescents are inevitable and it might seem that it is normal adolescent behaviour, and therefore could be difficult to discern if it is because of divorce or adolescent behaviour. The study of Hjelle and Ziegler in 1981 (Mundalomo, 2016), contends that where adolescents experience parental divorce, their feelings and behaviours do change, but the

intensity of these changes are differentiated from adolescent transitions. Divorce often makes adolescents feel abandoned, causing them to be confused, they might react (or over-react), display improper behaviour, and become destructive. According to Lansford (2009), research suggests that children of divorced parents display more externalising behaviour (for example, anger), and internalise problems (for example, depression). These behaviours could affect their academic achievements and social relationships, more so than for children whose parents are not divorced. Two subthemes that are discussed are emotional and psychological effects.

#### 4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1 Emotional effects

Cherry (2019) describes that an emotion can be seen as difficult sensation that you experience, it has an impact on how you think and on your actions. Furthermore, Hume (2012) describes emotions as an internal feeling that you feel towards a person or an object as opposed to a psychological effects. According to Mohi (2014), qualitative studies shows that children in divorce endure painful emotional effects (i.e. anger, suspicion, jealousy), which also then lower their levels of self-worth, trust, and communication with their peers. Njeru (2017) contends that many problems arise which could have an impact on the adolescent, especially their emotional well-being, such as the effects of having new step parents, feelings of being unwanted by the parent that filed for divorce, and custody battles. These are counted amongst the most traumatic for the adolescent. Furthermore, Njeru (2017) explains how adolescents are in an emotional turmoil whilst the divorce is in progress, and when they are older they reflect on this time in their lives and they feel angry as parents had disrupted their home life and world-view of how things should be. The following narratives of participants describe their emotional effects:

***Child Participant 3 B:*** *But in the sense of taking care. I would not say that this house was not built on love. Its certain emotional phases we have gone through and they have not been there*

*for us. But they have seen it. Like you a parent and you see what your kids go through and have gone through. But they have not really been there for those stages.*

***Child Participant 3A:*** *Academically this year is my best year ever. I'm excelling this year like I never did before. I have surprised myself and others. My ability I would say I'm not just proud of myself. I am proud of other people who have helped me get here. Physically I have achieved what I always wanted to. Going through emotional and physical pain. But you learn things every day. Doesn't phase me.*

***Child Participant 1:*** *I cried was the emotionally have been that because if my friends talks about their parents but my mom and dad are divorced it not feeling the same as described or as their parents. Because it was emotional end it was my mom's fault, and I take it up seriously because it has different feeling for me.*

From these descriptions, it is clear that Child Participant 3B is experiencing the emotional upheaval and instability that divorce brings and stresses the poor support from the parents during and after the divorce. Although Child Participant 3A is excelling academically he does admit to emotional pain brought about by the divorce, but he clearly shows resilience and approaches parental divorce in a mature manner, viewing it as learning. Child Participant 1 is very emotional and feels the full impact of the divorce, especially when comparing her unstable family circumstances to those of her friends. She is also frank about her mother being responsible for the divorce and her intense feelings of anger towards her mother.

During this time there might be more anxiety and anger, and being unable to express themselves resulting in externalising behaviour (psychological effects) such as low self-esteem and an

increase in suicide (see also subtheme 3.2 below) (Hartman, Magalhaes & Mandich, 2011). Parents might not be able to identify these emotions and could be unaware of how the divorce is emotionally affecting the adolescent who might be in need of counselling services (Mundalomo, 2016). According to Czapiewski (2014), children experience loss when they undergo divorce, and it can be seen as traumatic if it is not addressed. Siegel (1999) thus states that the children might have a disorganised attachment, or if older, they may have uncertainties, that can directly affect forthcoming emotional experiences.

#### 4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2 Psychological effects

Zareai (2015) asserts that the origin of psychology is from Greek meaning spirit or depth. Huppert (2009) defines psychological well-being where everything is positive and the person is functioning competently, even in the face of adversity (in other words, life's ups and downs). However, Huppert (2009) contends that if adversity (i.e. where you can fail, or be anguished or anxious) does occur, and it is not managed, then it can affect the functioning of the person's sense of well-being and psychological functioning. Thus, in divorce, the psychological effects can include feelings of sadness, losing hope, being overwhelmed, and unhappiness which can be followed by depression (Newman & Newman, 2009), and thoughts of suicide ideation or suicide behaviour (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Stroschein (2005) states that when parents' divorce, the children will suffer from nervousness, hopelessness and social withdrawal, in contrast to families that are not divorced. Importantly, Huppert (2009) asserts that one's psychological happiness can be affected by your family context, specifically your parental care. The following are participants' descriptions of the psychological effects.

*Child Participant 1: When my mom told me all of this this year. I think back and I almost try to commit suicide I can't take the fact that my father did that to my mother. My mother pushes me a lot. It's not nice to live without my father sometimes I miss him.*

*Participant Child 5 : So a blur I can't remember, I feel neglected. Through my mother and father (she struggles to control her tears) My mom is not there for me. My sister's lost her baby. It was my birthday, but I didn't feel special. Feeling off the whole month.*

The psychological effects might not always be as visible as other effects (such as housing and lifestyle), but Child Participant 1 admitted that the divorce and her father's behaviour towards her mother made her contemplate suicide (suicide ideation). Both Child Participants 1 and 5 showed that they lost hope. Child Participant 1 is blaming her mother and is sad because of how her father treated her mother and she wanted to engage in self-harm. Child Participant 5 felt neglected by both her parents, heightened by the perceived favouritism towards her sister; and thus showing signs of depression as she could not summon feelings of sympathy for her sister.

Maldonado (2008) states that studies verified that if there is inter-parental conflict and anger, it adds to children adjusting poorly to divorce, and importantly they could be at risk of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and behavioural problems. These risks can lead to psychological problems for the adolescent which might not be evident immediately, but later on in their lives. It is evident in the narrative of Child Participant 5 that after her parents were divorced for 10 years, she is feeling the psychological effects of the divorce. According to Haimi and Learner (2016), a study in Denmark showed a high risk of depression and attempts

of suicide in post-divorce periods, where girls were at a higher risk. This finding is thus a red-flag for the helping professions for the appropriate assessment of adolescents after the divorce.

#### 4.3.3.3 Conclusion of Theme 3

Psychosocial effects are evident in the study and the findings show that the post-divorce experiences affect adolescents differently. It is more intricate to identify the psychological effects, and thus the consequences of the divorce are more apparent in the emotional affects. Through both the psychological and the emotional affects, it is evident that their psychosocial development is affected in the post-divorce phase. The findings of the study support the literature in this instance.

#### **4.3.4 THEME 4: ROLE CONFUSION**

The research focuses on Erikson's stages of identity versus confusion, to explore the effects of divorce on adolescents in the development of the self. As noted in Chapter 2, Erikson identifies eight developmental periods or stages of psychosocial development. The stages during adolescence are identity versus confusion (Botha, 2014; Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). Furthermore, Botha (2014) explains that in this stage, adolescents attempt to figure out who they are. Divorce can affect this developmental stage as their sense of identity develops from the different roles they inhabit and the functions, responsibilities and tasks they engage in as they go about exploring friendships, initiating relationships, behaviours and roles to find themselves. Thus, Combrinck (2014) states that role confusion affects the adolescent, in questioning themselves, their personality and how other perceive them, and always questioning their existence, and becoming lost in all these insecurities and uncertainties. Most adolescents can experience confusion, due to physical, cognitive and social roles changes. In

this theme there are three subthemes, namely, adolescent roles in the post-divorce phase, the self-identity of the adolescent, and the quality of intimate relationships.

#### 4.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1 Adolescent roles in the post-divorce phase

The family continues to be the backbone of society, and the genesis of good and bad consequences are highly contingent on whether circumstances are positive or negative. Combrinck (2014) explains that a person should be valued and respected in their family. In enmeshed families, where there is a strong bond, one's behaviour reflects on the family, and not on you as an individual. Combrinck (2014) reiterates that the adolescent is confused with their new role in the post-divorce family, as the family unit had disintegrated. In relationships between adolescents and parents, Botha (2014) says that the adolescent forms their identity because of good and stable adolescent-parent relationships, they are then able to feel positive and have a good self-value (self-esteem). Furthermore, Botha (2014) stresses that the sense of worth of the adolescent is important in their development, as well as in their engagements and associations in peer relationships. Mundalomo (2016) states that as a consequence of unhappy childhood experiences, adolescents may not achieve their sense of identity, and a state of confusion can result with serious repercussions for their sense of self. This confusion could present in being disorganised, being aimless and having a profound sense of being useless. All these behaviours may even lead to conduct disorders and negative behaviour. The following are the narratives that reflect the adolescent role in this phase.

***Child Participant 3B:** He knew what to do, when to and how to implement it. He was good at doing that as being the man of the house not father. He could do those things. Those are the roles I have to fill in now. I am not used to it, I never watched him do these things.*

*Adult Participant 2: He just took on a bigger role where his brother was concerned. He took on a fatherly role actually. I remember one night when the older brother got sick. I screamed at him to bring stuff but he brought it, he screamed mommy help my brother. but from a very young age he took on responsibilities. Having only two children he was the one that had to stand in unfortunately. And I think it made him grow up very mature he had a sense of responsibility. Not just his brother, but his family. But I am very proud of him.*

From the narratives, it is apparent that the divorce made Child Participant 3B aware of the role (and function) that his father played when he was living in the house and when they were an intact family, and the void he left when the family separated. The participant now feels that he needs to take on that role usually played by his father, but that he was not used to performing these functions, and that he had also never observed his father doing them so he had no idea what to do. The participant is reflecting on several significant elements: the roles that father figure plays in families, the importance of father-son relationships, and the social learning that takes places that is the conduit for the continuation of traditions and roles. In his narrative one can detect his confusion being thrown between being an adult and a child (adolescent). Adult Participant 2 asserts that the adolescent took on a protective, caring and nurturing role in the family, whereas the parent should take on this role. She also stressed that the adolescent took on adult roles because circumstances dictated this, but that he had matured and that she was proud of him. This is a way of not being aware of the impact that having adult responsibilities can have on young, unprepared children. Parentification is when children take on some or all parental roles and duties, but it is too much responsibility such as cleaning, cooking, caring for siblings, especially for dysfunctional family members or when parents are ill (Dykes, 2014; Earley & Cushway, 2002; Jurkovic, 1997; Stein, Riedel & Rotheram-Borus, 1999; Wells & Jone, 2003).



Nelson (2009) states that adolescents who take on more responsibilities after divorce, tend to perceive themselves as more mature. Responsibilities are not necessarily forced upon the adolescent, but are taken on due to the void left by the departed parent (Cameron, 2008). Furthermore, it was evident that divorced families experienced “destructive parentification”, where children are given responsibilities regarding housekeeping, helping the parent emotionally, or being a mediator in or out of the house (Cameron, 2008).

Both narratives mention the role of the non-resident parent leaving a void and how they felt the need to fill it. This could prevent the adolescent from reaching the next developmental stage, because of the confusion between roles, the role of readiness and preparation, and the relative immaturity for a role that is meant for adults. It could change their self-identity and self-worth, which could have been different was it not for the divorce.

This subtheme highlights that the adolescents have role confusion after the divorce as they take on more responsibilities that should have, had the parents not divorced. It could therefore take them a bit longer to reach the next stage of Erickson’s development stages.

#### 4.3.4.2 Subtheme 4.2 Self-identity

Erickson (1968, in Sokol, 2009) defines identity for adolescents as allowing them to know their place in the world, feeling at ease with themselves, knowing where they going in life and feeling wanted. Erickson believed that having a solid identity is important for development. According to Scott and Lilja (2010), there is an increase of divorced families, and for children to develop psychosocially, they need an emotionally stable home to develop a positive self-image and self-identity. Adolescence is a time of considerable uncertainty and rebellion for the adolescent, as well as a stormy and stressful period (Aihomo, 2013). In the Nigerian context,

Makinde (2007) refers to adolescence as the period of the end of infancy and the beginning of maturity. Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke (2014) state that Erikson emphasised that as children get older, they are confronted with many new roles and adult positions, but where parents play a crucial role in helping them to navigate through these (Bandura, 1977; Ajidahun, 2011; Falana, Bada, & Ayodele, 2012). According to Scott and Lilja (2010), if the adolescent is helped to explore these roles and positions, a positive identity can be achieved. The following narratives reflect the effects of post-divorce on the self-identity of adolescents:

***Child Participant 3A:** I would say no. To please them I would have to be me and not change as I said I try to be the best me all the time. I would say that is my way of pleasing others. Even if others feel I'm not a good person I know I am a good person. You can say I steal or I drink or I walk with the wrong crowds but I know I don't do that things I am not that type of person. I know who I am.*

***Participant child 5:** Only certain times, my mom knows I will not ask. I ask my mother the least, but is least given, the eldest cares for herself. I feel I want to stay away from them, my mother and father I want to be on my own.*

***Child Participant 2:** I was fine with it seeing it is my family. My mother would always say seeing that my father was not there. She would say a part of my childhood was stolen, because I had to run around. It never had an effect on me.*

Child Participant 3A is very aware of who he is and what he wants to achieve and thus appears to possess a solid identity. By contrast, it is evident that Child Participant 5 is emotionally affected by the divorce as she wants to be on her own, be independent, as it feels that the parents

are not providing for her. The Bowman theory (Haefner, 2014) concurs here about emotional cut-off as the adolescent wants to move and be independent, but her actions are being controlled by her parents who might be unaware how the divorce is affecting the adolescent.

In this instance, it might take the participant longer to reach the next developmental stage. Child Participant 2, by contrast, feels that he is not resentful for the added responsibilities, because everything he did was for his family, although his mother admitted that these responsibilities had impacted on his childhood. This participant can be experiencing parentification and over-identification with his mother (Makopane & Mogoane, 2012).

Because an adolescent is faced with many challenges and expectations, divorce must be sensitively managed, otherwise the adolescent faces emotional difficulties, and it will affect future emotional relationships, especially if there is little support from the parents (Esmaili & Yaacob, 2011). Portnoy (2008) concludes that divorce is a “life transforming” experience for an adolescent who is on a journey into adulthood. Furthermore, the adolescent’s post-divorce experiences may change the way of they feel about marriage, divorce and future relationships. Conversely, some do have a desire to succeed at marriage, and/or future relationships, by being careful, concentrating specifically on their communication, personal identity and finances before committing to a marriage or long-term relationship (Darlington, 2001; Nelson, 2009).

This subtheme revealed that the post-divorce period affects the identity of the adolescent, mainly if the parents are not supportive of the adolescent. They can feel alone and become alienated from the family unit and lose their sense of belonging. In extreme instances, the adolescent may want to be independent and live elsewhere believing that this would solve their emotional needs, which are associated with the emotional ties and bonding with other people who are supportive and attentive to their needs. The sense of isolation will have an effect on

them in the future and it would take longer to reach the next development stage. In the instance of one participant (Child Participant 3A), he continued to feel attached and bonded to his family and this then had helped him on the road to self-identity and self-worth.

#### 4.3.4.3 Subtheme 4.3 Quality of intimate relationships

Nelson (2009) states that Bowlby (1969) developed a theory of attachment, the relationship and bonding between the parent and child; giving the child the emotional connections that models to the child what a relationship is and how to deal with different life experiences. Furthermore, the theory makes an assumption that parents are the example for future adult friendships or romantic relationships for their children. Relationships are formed early and if there is a divorce, it could cause relationship problems later (Carranza, Kilmann, & Vendemia, 2009; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). Ivanova, Mills and Veenstra (2011) confirm the effects of parental inattentiveness before, during and after divorce, on the adolescent, and their increasing sense of emotional isolation, resulting in precarious relationship behaviours and views.

The descriptions below attest to the approach towards intimate relationships.

***Child Participant 4:** Mostly when I date boys they use me. Then I tell my mom that they use me. But the first one I had the girls interfered in the relationship, they got jealous telling us things about each other. I didn't listen but he listened to them and broke up.*

***Adult Participant 1:** She wants to be like her aunt, she is not going to get married. When I ask, is this because I am divorced. She says, yes perhaps mummy. But sometimes it is so, you not going to get married as you might also get divorced.*

*Child Participant 3B: No, I will definitely not jump into a relationship. It's hard with the one I have been in and seeing my parents. It's hard to understand the concept of love right now. I had my own ideas of what love is and as long as I have passed and this relationship to look back onto its hard to know what is suitable and what is right to do.*

The latter two narratives reflect a cautious approach to future relationships and with one participant (Adult Participant 1) saying that her daughter is grappling with the notion not to marry as a result of the circumstances around divorce. Child Participant 4 has been in more than one relationship and she is aware that this could possibly taint her reputation, as she already has had to contend with rumours about her. Child Participant 3B also had a relationship, but it ended and he feels that the parents' marriage did not provide him with a positive example for his future relationships.

Lansford (2009) contends that there has been several studies that confirmed that divorce in childhood affected children and youth more strongly when they became adults; and that parents' divorce could increase the likelihood of the failure of their own marriage. According to Portnoy (2008), in their study, the adolescents (and adults) after divorce argued that the effects of the divorce on their own relationships; and how upset, angry, shocked, and lonely they felt after the divorce (also see Nelson, 2009).

In this subtheme, the focus was on the effects of parental divorce on the children's approach to their own current or future relationships. Most importantly, the adolescents viewed their parents' relationships as a role model or example of marriage and in this the example was not favourable. As such, they do not seem positive about future relationships. The findings

therefore are supported by the literature and attest to the important role of parents' marriages in the ability and approach of children to initiate and forge their own intimate relationships.

#### 4.3.4.4 Conclusion of Theme 4

The theme focused on role confusion and in each sub-theme the adolescents were confused by different aspects of their roles, the development of their identities, and forming romantic relationships. These findings respond strongly to the overall aim of the study regarding the psychosocial effects on adolescents in the post-divorce phase as it compelled participants to consider the effects of divorce on their future relationships. This theme also supports the premise that divorce exerts a potent influence on the adolescent finding his or her identity, according to Erikson's identity versus role confusion.

#### **4.3.5 THEME 5: ADOLESCENT POST-DIVORCE COPING MECHANISMS**

The focus of this theme was on how the adolescent coped after the divorce, and the coping mechanisms that assisted them. Green (2011) suggests that how parents manage their divorce affects the family and how they rebuild the family. This further suggests that affected individuals needed to survive, endure and cope throughout their experiences in order to emerge positively at the other end. Frydenberg (1997, in Du Plooy, 2013:19) says that "coping is about made up of the responses (thoughts, feelings and actions) that an individual use to deal with problematic situations that are encountered in everyday life and in particular circumstances". Velez, Wolchik, Tein and Sandler (2011) offer three ways adolescent's cope with divorce: through modelling, coaching, and striving for good relationships with the adolescent. Positive parenting and consistent discipline are important for bonding between the child and the parent and helping the child to cope through difficult times (Schofield & Weaver, 2015; Velez et al., 2011). Two subthemes will explore how adolescents cope after divorce and what assists them

during this post-divorce period, namely, through recreational and extra-mural activities, and religious faith.

#### 4.3.5.1 Subtheme 5.1 Recreational and extra-mural activities

According to Gulam (2016), recreation is an activity where the body and mind relieves the body from stress and exhaustion, both physically and emotionally. Recreational activity offers both relief and renewed energy and joy.

The following narrative underscores the role of recreational activities in the post-divorce phase:

*Child Participant 3B: My hobbies recently I have come up on doing a hobby. Like riding a bike, skateboarding. We had bikes we gave it away. But I was thinking of getting a skateboard, learning to skate, because of my travelling.*

*Child Participant 3A: It's my way of blocking out what's happening around me. That is my key point for my sadness, or if I have anger, my sports. I won't say I will bring it onto the field. In my training, not with others they might get hurt. But in training in the gym, surf, jogging.*

In all of the narratives, it can be noted how important recreational and extra-mural activities are for adolescents, as it removes them from their situations at home, and importantly, assists in them learning about themselves and their strengths and growth areas. Child Participant 3B wants a new hobby, for example skateboarding, as he believes it will help him and will take him places. Child Participant 3A uses his activities as a means of coping and escaping from the conflict at home.

Skolnick and Skolnick (2009) confirm that if adolescents continue to participate in recreational activities, it does help them physically and emotionally to offer relief from any conflict at home. McIntosh et al. (2009) also confirms that during the post-divorce phase, adolescents need to maintain their normal social and school activities, and that these should remain flexible for them. Soderman, Eveland and Ellard (2006) encourages parents in a post-divorce phase to keep the routine, the home, the friends, the school the same if possible, as adolescents can be overwhelmed by the changes that divorce brings. In accordance with the attachment theory, where there are everyday activities, it can form positive bonds and confidence in the parents for strong connection in child-parent attachments (Mahon & Moore, 2011).

In this subtheme the importance of recreational activities and routines was found to be important after the divorce. Adolescents need coping mechanisms and these activities assist them in their everyday lives to live so that the adolescent is not overwhelmed by the changes wrought by divorce.

#### 4.3.5.2 Subtheme 5.2 Religious faith

In the participants' narratives it became evident that the participants regarded their religious faith as essential to their lives. According to Simonic (2017), spirituality is a vital dimension of life: for daily living it is manifested in life's turning points, revealing mystery and insight in important moments in time. Furthermore, it is relevant to how we think, act and engage with each other, it reflects on another dimension of life. Researchers estimate that if couples belong to a religious group they have a lower chance of divorce, if couples share the same religious affiliation, chances of divorce are even lower. The study of Mnyango and Alpaslan (2018) shows how faith communities and support groups assisted their participants in adjusting in the post-divorce phase. This is confirmed in the findings of other studies on the topic (Brentano &



Clark-Stewart, 2007; Frisby, Booth-Butterfield, Dillow, Martin & Weber, 2012). According to Du Plooy (2013), people cope with divorce in various ways and religion is one of the important coping methods, as it reduces stress and assists with handling difficult situations, especially divorce. Masten (1994, in Taruvinga, 2012) states that religion assists us to be resilient and find release and relief from situations that are out of our control.

The following are excerpts that attest to the value of faith according to the participants.

***Child Participant 2:*** *No, you never dig up the past and what is done is done so and I can say at that time my father never knew the Lord. So he knows Christ now. So that time he didn't really know what he was doing.*

***Child Participant 4:*** *When I was younger I use to go to church with my mother a lot. And I would say my father might be my father but the father that I know is God he created me. So, I accept him to be in my life. I dance at church that his my goal for Him, I appreciate God so my dad don't understand me. My father wants me to be by the worlds things to drink, smoking all of that. Unfortunately I'm not and he must just accept that.*

***Adult Participant 2:*** *It took years. I was always against divorce I never wanted to divorce. Since I was saved I didn't want to divorce, but there came a time where I just knew I had to let go.*

Child Participant 2 believes that his father did not understand what he was doing when he divorced his mother, but is willing to forgive his father as he is now religious. Child Participant 4 says her faith is so strong, and feels her own father does not understand her appreciation of

God. It seems as if her father wanted her to live a different lifestyle. Adult Participant 2's faith was so strong she did not believe in divorce as it was against her religious beliefs, but because of the severity of the problem she had to relent.

According to Simonic (2017), spirituality or faith helps people to understand the incomprehensible and to handle the impossible. All the narratives describe the participants' deep beliefs and how they handled their situations during the divorce and how it assisted them to cope. According to Krumrei, Mahoney and Pargament (2009), positive religious or faith help people who encounter stress, it reduces emotional upheaval and increases well-being. Furthermore, Krumrei, Mahoney and Pargament mentions that Meisenhelder, 2002 found that people who utilise the positive methods of religion, have less stress and better mental health. Simonic (2017) confirms that faith includes a strong relationship with God, and with the community you serve with, as it gives an understanding of the meaning of life, and a positive learning experience.

In conclusion of the Subtheme 5.2, the literature summarised the importance of religious faith in both the literature and the narratives. The participants showed a strong faith and believed that this would help them cope emotionally, as well as developing a sense of forgiveness. The mental state of the participants reflected as positive, despite the stress of the divorce.

#### 4.3.5.3 Conclusion of Theme 5

Coping mechanisms are important for post-divorce periods, as there is conflict in the home, everything that is familiar has been dismantled. This theme arose as both parents and adolescents maintain how important coping mechanisms are after the divorce. The coping mechanisms that emerged were recreational activities where the adolescents could use the

activity to reduce stress. The other subtheme was religious faith, where the participants' deep sense of religious beliefs helped them through challenging situations whilst experiencing divorce.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In this study the researcher presented the experiences of parents and adolescents after divorce. The demographic profile of the participants in the study is divorced parents and their adolescent children from the Cape Flats area. The participants consisted of six adult participants and six child participants. All the adult participants were women as females predominately carry most of the consequences of the divorce and predominately the resident parent, caring for the children. The family systems theory argues the importance of the family unit as a whole and how a family depend on each other, and how divorce dissolves this unit and has enduring effects on the family and the functioning unit after divorce.

In this study, the researcher could identify themes that emerged from the study emphasising the experiences of the parents and adolescents and describing the effects on the adolescent after the divorce. There were five main themes and 12 subthemes. The main themes were: effects of divorce on family, parenting after the divorce, psychosocial effects on adolescents, role confusion, and adolescents' post-divorce coping mechanisms. These five themes explored and described the perceptions and the experiences of post-divorce of both parents and adolescents. Previous studies were utilised to compare and to contextualise and verify the findings of this study. From the themes it could be ascertained that there are adverse effects on adolescents' psychosocial development. Their psychosocial development was linked to Erikson's stage identity versus confusion, the age targeted was 12–18 years. This stage assisted to explore the

similarities with role confusion post-divorce and the effects on the adolescent's identity formation, and the effects on the next development stage.

The findings confirmed with the literature that there are effects on adolescents' psychosocial development, which causes immense confusion in this stage, but is dependent on the age of the adolescent when parents' divorce and how long the parents have been divorced.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher was motivated to do this study because of the interest of the psychosocial effects on the adolescent in the post-divorce phase. The researcher works with families on a daily basis and divorce is a concerning phenomenon in communities, because of the enduring effects on all concerned. The literature review and previous studies on this topic conclude that divorce has an adverse effect on adolescents. The concern was for adolescents who, as described by Erickson, would not be able to claim their identity or positively traverse the stage of role confusion competently to exit adolescence intact. However, the nature of their family lives, the parents' divorce, and their post-divorce experiences compromised their experiences during this vital developmental phase. Thus, the study focused on adolescents' experiences and the effects on their psychosocial development.

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents and their parents in the post-divorce phase, and focused on the effects on their psychosocial development in order to arrive at meaningful recommendations for social work practice. The objectives of the study were to attend to the following:

1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on their psychosocial development.

2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach and exploratory design, as the researcher believed that the nature of the topic and the objective to focus on participants' experiences justified this approach and design. The non-probability sampling type with purposive and snow-ball methods were appropriate as the researcher encountered many obstacles in recruiting an appropriate sample. The interview method was semi-structured, where participants could express their experiences and perceptions at their own pace and in their own narrative styles.

The data was collected, transcribed and then analysed using thematic analysis and the eight steps pioneered by Renata Tesch (Schurink et al., 2011). The data then emerged with themes and subthemes, which was supported and/or compared to the literature, to verify the findings or disputed the findings. The following section provides a summary of the main findings. This summary includes the conclusions, limitations and implications of the study and recommendations.

## **5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

The study produced five themes and 12 subthemes, which were based on predefined and emergent codes. The findings were based on African, South African and international literature sources. The findings were generally in keeping with the literature, with some exceptions which will be further expounded on in the conclusions that follow.

### **5.2.1 Conclusions and implications of demographic profile of parents**

The study sample consisted of 12 participants: six adult females and six adolescents. All adult participants were females. Literature also concurred that females are the parents that carry the consequences of divorce. The female parents were willing to participate and they were the resident parent, willing to share their experiences. The participants' ethnic group was Coloured, which was not uncommon for the socio-historical and geographical setting of the Cape Flats. Additionally, because divorce is a common phenomenon, the racial profile did not affect the main findings of the study, as divorce does not occur only in a specific culture or belief system. Another important factor was the number of years after the divorce. This had a significant impact on the study, which showed that the longer participants were in the post-divorce phase, the better were the outcomes for their well-being.

The **conclusion** is that women again fulfilled the accepted and traditional caring role, and this could also be contributed to their social location in the Cape Flats. The **implication** is that gender is still a deciding role and the social context of participants was still significant in the kinds of narratives that were uncovered. A further implication is that this profile reflects the ongoing gender discrimination and patriarchy that continue to exist.

### **5.2.2 Conclusions and implications of demographic profile of adolescent participants**

There were six adolescent participants in the study of which three were female and three male participants. This demographic was fortunate for the study as it could then provide perspectives from both genders. The ages of the participants were from 14 to 18 years, with the average age of 15 years. The significant aspect of the mean age of the participants is that they were all experiencing the throes of adolescence and the divorce and post-divorce upheavals affected their developmental tasks.

The **conclusion** is that the targeted age group was reached in the study, where the perspectives and experiences of both genders were taken into account. The **implication** is that the study could offer the perspectives and experiences of both genders as adolescent effects in the post-divorce phase, which can be construed as holistic. However, these perspectives were not looked at individually, so if the genders had different experiences, it was not identified or discussed, as the study explored the perspectives and experiences as a whole. This can be identified as a gap.

### **5.2.3 Conclusions and implications of main themes and subthemes**

Five themes and 12 subthemes emerged from the findings. The study produced rich, thick findings, as could be observed in the narratives of the participants, as they shared their experiences and perceptions after the divorce. The findings in terms of the main themes were focused on the effects on the family, parenting after the divorce, psychosocial effects on the adolescent, role confusion and coping methods used by the adolescents in the post-divorce phase.

#### **5.2.3.1 Main Theme 1: Effects of divorce on the family in the post-divorce phase**

In Main Theme 1, the narratives of the participants delivered two subthemes, namely:

- Subtheme 1.1: Economic effects and standard of living
- Subtheme 1.2: Housing, accommodation and lifestyle effects

The findings highlighted that in subtheme 1.1, the family members struggled financially after the divorce. These struggles mirrored the gender and patriarchal roles in the family as the resident parents were all females who were either stay-at-home parents or unemployed, which complicated the situation for the resident parent who remained dependent on their ex-husbands



for financial sustenance. This affected the family, specifically the adolescents emotionally, who wants independence, but, because of the economic changes, their standard of living is also affected. In subtheme 1.2, the findings highlighted how housing and accommodation had been impacted. This finding reflected the essence of the stability of the family in the post-divorce phase. As the divorce was finalised, the resident parent (in most cases the woman) was not able to maintain the house. These reasons again underscored the patriarchal way society was structured in that women were either stay-at-home mothers or were unemployed. Thus, they had no personal resources with which to support their changed position financially. They were compelled to sell the house. This action had far-reaching consequences, because it reflected the family's low financial status and concomitantly their low social position in the community. The findings showed how this impacted on the adolescents' self-esteem as the family was now at an economic disadvantage.

A **conclusion** for Theme 1 is that the financial and living conditions of women, and thus consequently the family, is severely compromised after a divorce. The theme concluded that the women take on the overwhelming responsibility after the divorce to try to maintain the stability of the family. An **implication** of this theme is the continued extension of women's roles as the primary care-giver, maintaining patriarchal subjugation in terms of social status and employment opportunities. Secondly, the role of men in the family life and stability after the divorce should not be ignored and services and legislation must be geared towards the gap between the roles of both genders (parents) in post-divorce policies and services.

### 5.2.3.2 Main Theme 2: Parenting in post-divorce

In Main Theme 2 there were three subthemes:

- Subtheme 2.1: Parenting by the resident parent
- Subtheme 2.2: Parenting by the non-resident parent
- Subtheme 2.3: Trust in parents.

In subthemes 2.1 and 2.2, the narratives further substantiated the differentiated roles of the women and men in terms of women being the resident parent and men being the non-resident parent. Thus, women again took on the overwhelming responsibility of being the primary caregivers. Non-resident parental absence, mostly by fathers, was still an obstacle. An important factor in the narratives was the relationship between the resident and non-resident parent after the divorce. As most of the divorces were finalised years before, there appeared to have evolved an amicable relationship between the parents. However, an interesting finding was that in one family where the divorce had been recently finalised prior to the study interview, the conflict between the couple was significant. The findings thus suggest that the period after the divorce is significant in the continued conflict between the couple that would have led to the divorce. The findings also suggested that if the non-resident parents are present in the children's lives, it improved the positive outcomes of the children. In sub-theme 3 the issue or the lack of trust in the parents emerged. All the participants referred to the lack of trust in either the mother, father or both parents. One important finding was the mother-blaming that emerged, which could be a matter of scapegoating from the participant. The underlying premise of this sub-theme was that parents were not keeping their promises and the children came to know them as unreliable and undependable.

In **conclusion** of Theme 2, it was clear that relationships after the divorce between the parents and specifically the child is a vital component and vehicle of positive and successful outcomes from a divorce. Parents must work through their conflicts and concentrate on their relationships with their children and between themselves. An **implication** of Theme 2 is that positive relationships are the backbone of successful outcomes for both parents and children and thus require focus from all role players.

#### 5.2.3.3 Main Theme 3: Psychosocial effects on adolescents

Psychosocial effects on adolescents is one of the objectives of the study and the following two subthemes emerged from the study:

- Subtheme 3.1: Emotional effects
- Subtheme 3.2: Psychological effects

Psychosocial upheavals are inevitable in adolescents, but the pertinent question would be whether divorce increased the chances of these effects. Sub-theme 3.1 was evident in the study through the narratives. The adolescent participants reflected the huge emotional toll that a divorce has had on them. If not addressed, the losses and grief wrought by the divorce can have long-term effects. They might have disorganised attachments, or when they are older, insecurities because of the divorce, affecting their future emotional experiences. Subtheme 3.2 focused on the psychological effects, which were not easy to assess. The findings also showed inter-parental conflict and anger, adding to the children's poor adjustment to the divorce and had led to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and behavioural problems which might only be evident later on in their lives, and thus not visible immediately.

The **conclusion** of Theme 3 is that parents (specifically mothers) and children suffered immense emotional and psychological effects from the divorce. The added element is that parents might be so absorbed in their own conflicts and be unaware of the emotional and psychological effects on their children. The **implication** is that the family must still be viewed as a unit, regardless of the divorce, but because of the common-place attitudes of society towards divorce, the focused attention on women as resident (or custodial) parent has been neglected. Thus, this should receive emotional support from the helping professions, because of the real possibility of the long-term emotional and psychological effects.

#### 5.2.3.4 Main Theme 4: Role confusion

Theme 4 focused on the role confusion of adolescents and produced three subthemes:

- Subtheme 4.1: Adolescence and roles after the divorce
- Subtheme 4.2: Self-identity
- Subtheme 4.3: Quality of intimate relationships.

Theme 4 is an important theme that emerged, as it particularly focused on the effects of the divorce on Erikson's development stage identity versus confusion. Subtheme 4.1 explored the adolescents and the roles they are compelled to take on in their new home circumstances in the post-divorce phase. Some roles and tasks are onerous and taxing for their age, and could have a negative effect on their future development and could affect their self-identity. An important finding was the important role played by fathers in social learning and how the absence of fathers impacted on how boys learnt to be men. In subtheme 4.2, self-identity was explored, where the adolescents' ambition for independence was compromised by their family circumstances. During this developmental stage, the adolescent's sense of belonging was vital. In this regard, the role of parents and family stability can play a significant role in providing

the adolescent with a sense of self in the onward struggle to reach self-identity and self-worth. Subtheme 4.3 speaks to the quality of intimate relationships. In instances of divorce, the modelling of mature and positive adult relationships has been compromised and thus the parents do not often serve as an example. This could affect the adolescents' ability to initiate and forge (and sustain) future relationships and specifically intimate (romantic) relationships.

In **conclusion** of Theme 4, the roles of parents and care-givers to assist their children through adolescence are paramount. Role confusion is an inevitable element during the teen years as the adolescent strives to develop his or her identity. Divorce and poor role modelling by parents impact on the adolescent's ability to achieve self-identity and self-worth and to negotiate the myriad obstacles in building relationships with others. The **implication** is that the adolescent's emotional future, in terms of self-identity, need to be supported as they might then struggle to reach the next development stage. Another implication is the importance of parents' social modelling of positive adult relationships for adolescents.

#### 5.2.3.5 Main Theme 5: Adolescents' coping mechanisms in post-divorce

Theme 5 focused on the ways that adolescents managed the post-divorce phase, and produced two subthemes:

- Subtheme 5.1: Recreational and extramural activities
- Subtheme 5.2: Religious faith

Theme 5 focused on the coping mechanisms of adolescents as they traversed their new circumstances in the post-divorce phase. Theme 5.1 correlated with the common activities of youths during adolescence. Recreational activities assisted them to manage their stress positively and concentrate on something other than the divorce. In subtheme 5.2, faith came

through strongly for the adults and the adolescents who depended strongly on their faith to sustain them through their struggles.

In **conclusion** of Theme 5, coping mechanisms are important after a divorce, as the adolescent diverts the attention to something other than the divorce, and their faith assisted them during this time of readjustment. The **implication** is that these are two useful means for both parents and adolescents to relax and reflect (with mindfulness) and are worthwhile to pursue in the helping professions.

#### 5.2.3.6 Overall experiences of participants and the psychological effects on adolescents

The overall experiences of the participants were concerning their housing, accommodation and lifestyle in the post-divorce phase, which affected the family's economic status. This, negatively impacted the adolescent's emotional state; specifically, their struggle with their identity and self-esteem. The adolescents had difficulty trusting their parents as they were perceived to be unreliable and made empty promises. The findings revealed that this caused emotional (anger and anxiety) and psychological effects (suicide ideation, self-harm, depression). For teens, role confusion was inevitable, but divorce was shown to have impacted adolescent transition into the next development stage. The adolescents, like their parents, struggled with building relationships, affecting their social and romantic relationships. It was also apparent that adolescents and parents needed coping mechanisms and in this study the participants found recreational activities and religious faith helped them to cope post-divorce.

### **5.3. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

The following overall conclusions have been formulated regarding the main findings.

#### **5.3.1 Conclusion of Main Theme 1**

Theme 1 concluded that the financial and living conditions of women, and thus consequently the family, is severely compromised after a divorce. This is also premised on the patriarchal social patterns still prevalent in communities on the Cape Flats. The theme also concluded that women take on the overwhelming responsibility after the divorce to try to maintain the stability of the family.

#### **5.3.2 Conclusion of Main Theme 2**

Theme 2 concluded that the relationship in the post-divorce phase between parents and specifically the child is a vital component and vehicle of positive and successful outcomes from a divorce. Theme 2 also concluded that parents are key, and thus should work through their conflicts and concentrate on their relationships with their children and between themselves.

#### **5.3.3 Conclusion of Main Theme 3**

Theme 3 concluded that parents and children suffered immense emotional and psychological effects of the divorce. Since the divorce rate is so high, this thus represent a huge number of angry and anxious children and youths. Theme 3 also concluded that parents might be so absorbed in their own conflict so as to be unaware of emotional and psychological effects on their children.

#### **5.3.4 Concluding Main Theme 4**

Theme 4 concluded that the role of parents and care-givers in assisting their children through adolescence is paramount. Theme 4 also concluded that divorce and poor role modelling by parents impact on the adolescent's ability to achieve self-identity and self-worth and to negotiate the myriad obstacles in building relationships with others.

#### **5.3.5 Concluding Main Theme 5**

Theme 5 concluded that coping mechanisms are important after a divorce as the adolescent diverts his or her attention to something other than the divorce, and that their faith assisted them through this time of readjustment.

### **5.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study had two objectives focused on exploring and describing parents' and adolescents' perceptions and experiences of how adolescents experienced the post-divorce phase and the effects on the psychosocial development. The following section discerns the ways in which the research findings achieved the established study objectives.

**5.4.1 Objective 1:** To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce phase and its effects on their psychosocial development

This objective was achieved as the perceptions of the adolescents were explored by conducting interviews with six adolescents, and where literature concurred with their experiences and perceptions during the post-divorce phase. It was evident from the findings that there are



psychosocial effects on the adolescents. The findings were that there are psychosocial effects as expressed by the adolescents and came through strongly in the following themes:

**Theme 3 Psychosocial effects** that included **subtheme 3.1 (emotional effects)** and **subtheme 3.2 (psychological effects)** that showed the kinds of effects on the adolescent compounding the common emotional upheavals in adolescence, in accordance with Erik Erikson's developmental stages.

In **Theme 2 Parenting after divorce**, where all subthemes were applicable. In the **subtheme 2.1 (parenting by resident parent)** where mother-blaming emerged and which highlighted much anger; **subtheme 2.2 (non-resident parenting)**, which illustrated the effects of absent parenting, especially fathers, on boys; and **subtheme 2.3 (trust in parents)**, which showed the loss of this essential relationship ingredient and the effects on the adolescent.

In **Theme 4 (role confusion)**, all subthemes were also appropriate to the objectives. **Subtheme 4.1 (adolescent role)** reflected the new responsibilities of the adolescent and where parentification also emerged as an issue to be addressed. In **subtheme 4.2 (self-identity)** the poor or lack of positive role modelling by parents also impacted on the self-identity and self-worth of the adolescent. In **subtheme 4.3 (quality of intimate relationships)**, the ability for the adolescent to engage in age-appropriate intimate relationships were also jeopardised by their parents' acrimonious relationships.

All these themes supported the claims that there are effects on adolescent psychosocial development in the post-divorce phase and thus it can be stated that objective 1 was achieved.

**5.4.2 Objective 2:** To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce period and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.

In this objective the parents' perceptions and experiences were explored to ascertain parents' experiences in the post-divorce phase about the psychosocial effects on the adolescent. From the themes it was evident that the parents identified psychosocial effects which were evident in the following themes:

**Theme 1, Effects of the divorce on the family**, in **subtheme 1.1 (economic effects and standard of living)** where the family's diminished financial circumstances caused embarrassment to the adolescent participants. In **subtheme 1.2 (housing, accommodation and lifestyle)**, where it showed the effects following moving house and accommodation that reflected a lower social status.

In **theme 2, parenting after the divorce**, specifically **subtheme 2.1 (the resident parent)** where mothers especially could identify the emotional effects on their children.

In **theme 5, adolescents post-divorce coping mechanisms**, in **subtheme 5.1 (recreational and extra-mural activities)** where parents also related to the kinds of activities that their children were engaged in. Also, in **subtheme 5.2 (faith)**, it also showed that parents did provide positive role modelling with regard to religious adherence and faith, which then became assimilated by their children. Both of these subthemes emerged from heightened levels of stress, but also represented positive activities during the post-divorce phase.

The parents in these themes could identify the aspects that affected the adolescent and it came through strongly. Objective 2 was therefore achieved and supported the claim that there are psychosocial effects on the adolescent in the post-divorce phase.

In view of the above, the conclusion is that the aim and objectives of the study was successfully achieved, as the findings reflected the experiences and perceptions of the adolescents and their parents and highlighted the psychosocial effects after the divorce.

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents and their parents in the post-divorce phase, focusing on the effects on their psychosocial development in order to arrive at meaningful recommendations for social work practice. Therefore the main research question was: *What are the experiences of adolescents and their parents of the post-divorce phase and the effects on the adolescents' psychosocial development?* In light of the above, it can be claimed that the aim and objectives of the study were effectively achieved, as the findings, represented by the five themes and 12 subthemes, showed the effects on the adolescents' psychosocial development after the divorce.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS EMANATING FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The following recommendations are offered as a result of the study findings and literature review on the psychosocial effects on adolescents in the post-divorce phase.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations based on study themes**

The following recommendations are based on the four themes that emerged from this study.

#### **5.5.1.1 Theme 1: Effects of divorce on a family**

The implication of theme 1 is that the role of men in family life and stability after the divorce should not be ignored and that services and legislation must be geared towards the gap between the roles of both genders (parents) in post-divorce policies and services. So, as a result of this implication, effective and concise parenting plans should be implemented so that the role of men (fathers) is precisely stipulated in order to encourage them to have an active role in their children's lives. The parenting plan ensures the care, contact, guardianship and maintenance in the post-divorce phase.

#### **5.5.1.2 Theme 2: Parenting in the post-divorce phase**

An implication of Theme 2 is that positive relationships are the backbone of successful outcomes for both parents and children and thus require focus from all role players. As a result of this implication there should be an option for family counselling at recognised and registered organisations and NGOs with the aim to restore positive relationships after the divorce. This requirement should be a prerequisite within the parenting plans.

#### **5.5.1.3 Theme 3: Psychosocial effects on adolescents**

The implication of Theme 3 is that the family must still be viewed as a unit and in terms of this, should receive emotional support from the helping professions because of the anguish experienced by them and the long-term emotional and psychological effects. As a result of this

implication, there should be counselling services available to adolescents or all children during and after the divorce to ensure strong emotional and psychological well-being. This recommendation is also a supportive mechanism for the parents, especially the resident parent.

#### 5.5.1.4 Theme 4: Role confusion

The implication of Theme 4 is that the adolescent's emotional future, in terms of self-identity, need to be supported as they might struggle to reach the next development stage. Another implication is the importance of parents' social modelling of positive adult relationships for adolescents. As a result of this implication, with regard to the Children's Act no. 38 of 2005 section 10, that adolescents (depending on their maturity and age) participate in proceedings so that they feel included and acknowledged as a significant part of the process, and also to ensure that their rights are protected with the necessary support from an objective professional. It will provide the adolescent with an opportunity to state his or her views, specifically regarding guardianship. It could assist in their developing stages and their emotional future as they had input into their future care and well-being.

#### 5.5.1.5 Theme 5: Adolescents' post-divorce coping mechanisms

The implication of theme 5 is that these are two useful means for both parents and adolescents to relax and reflect (mindfulness) and are worthwhile to pursue in the helping professions. As a result of this implication it would be advantageous to promote activities for the family to do together during the family counselling sessions (as alluded to previously).

### 5.5.2 Recommendations for social work practice for pre-divorce phase

The following recommendations are suggested for families who are contemplating divorce.

- **Mediation:** Mediation is strongly recommended for couples who are considering a divorce, so as to avoid the conflict being transferred to the children. This will assist with the parenting plan and with custody battles after the divorce. The mediation can be conducted by a family advocate or social worker. It is part of the Divorce Act 70 of 1979, but is unregulated and should be regulated by law.
- **Couple counselling:** That parents who are contemplating divorce should attend counselling as a couple or individually. They need to understand the impact of what happens legally, financially and emotionally after the divorce. The children need stable parents who can convey the decision to the children to ensure children feel safe and secure.
- **Preparing children:** The adolescents in the study were not prepared for the drastic changes after the divorce. They lacked emotional and psychological support from the parents. Children should also receive counselling before the divorce.
- **Mandatory pre-divorce counselling:** The divorce Act of 70 of 1979 should be amended to include this recommendation of counselling before the divorce for the family as a unit. This will ensure the best interest of the child principle is upheld.

### 5.5.3 Recommendations for social work practice for the post-divorce phase

The following recommendations are offered for social work practice in the post-divorce phase.

- **Parenting plans:** These should be implemented according to the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, as it ensures that the parental rights and responsibilities of the parents are established, in the form of the contact, care, guardianship and maintenance. Provision

is made for this in the Divorce Act of 70 of 1979, and the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, but it is not always implemented. It should be regulated by law.

- **Divorce specialists:** Social workers and family advocates should be employed as specialists so that mediation and counselling can be implemented to assist the best interest of the children and the family as a unit.
- **Individual and group counselling:** These have been emphasised thus far for families, parents and children; within the state, NGOs, private and faith-based organisations.
- **Recreational activities, youth activities and family activities:** These should be combined with the family counselling sessions that ensure that families are treated in a holistic programme. Recreational and youth activities should be formalised, as these are haphazard and not implemented within a family well-being context.

#### **5.5.4 Recommendations for social work education and training**

The following recommendations are suggested for social work education and training.

- The Bachelor of Social Work degrees should include a focus on pre- and post-divorce phases as a key focus area in a module or modules across curricula, especially pertaining to the theoretical and knowledge perspectives, but also the assessment and interventions with adults and children.
- CPD training needs to be provided to social workers and other helping professions regarding pre- and post- divorce phases and the procedures one should follow when assisting families and children in divorce, legislation and implementation, and the psychosocial effects thereof.
- Specialist mediation training should also be developed and offered.

### **5.5.6 Recommendations for policy and government's role**

- The study concluded that the Divorce no. 70 of 1979 needs amending to protect the rights of the children and the family as there is no provision for counselling.
- The Divorce Act 70 of 1979 should regulate mediation as compulsory as it is currently voluntary.
- The government's role to employ social workers to assist with mediation will reduce conflict after divorce and the adolescent and/or children will feel part of the decision-making process after the divorce.

### **5.5.7 Recommendations regarding future research**

The following recommendations are made for possible future research areas.

- The study was focused on the experiences and perceptions of the adolescent and parents after the divorce, but there was no time period indicated in which to ascertain the effects. Future research should thus specify the time period on which the study would focus.
- The experiences of adolescents where the non-resident parent is absent after the divorce and the effects on the adolescents, again specifying the period, for example, not exceeding two years after the divorce.
- The role of fathers and father absences in terms of the effects on children and the family unit in the post-divorce phase.
- The regulation of mediation and counselling in the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 as an amendment to the Divorce Act no. 70 of 1979, as it is currently voluntary but needs to be made compulsory.



- The experiences of families who had counselling before and after the divorce and how effective it was after the divorce, specifying the period on which the study would focus, for example a two-year period.
- A follow up study could be done using more data collection methods other than using semi-structured interviewing, for example, participatory action techniques, especially when children are participants.
- A study which would differentiate the data in accordance with genders in adolescents so that the study could perceive whether these would be different and varied.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In review of the research process and findings of the study the following limitations are identified:

- The limitation of the study was that there was no time period was indicated in which to ascertain the effects. This would ensure richer data as the findings of the current study confirmed that the length of the post-divorce period lessened the effects of the divorce or other focus of the studies.
- The non-resident parent not participating also limited the research as their experiences and perceptions could not be explored. It is important that both parents are included so that all the experiences and perceptions can be viewed from the perspectives of both parents for more holistic findings.
- Using only one method of data collection, for example, semi-structured interviewing was a limitation as triangulation could not be attained. More creative methods with the children as participants would have been more enriching for the participants and possibly obtained richer findings.

## **5.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In this study, the researcher explored the experiences and perceptions of adolescents and parents after a divorce. The study aimed to understand the psychosocial effects on the adolescent in the post-divorce phase. The findings supported literature that there are psychosocial effects after a divorce.

The effects are strongly affected by the family unit being dissolved and with that the foundation of building relationships. The mostly negative experiences in the post-divorce phase severely affected the household and the way it has been functioning and structured, which entailed the housing and lifestyle and standard of living of the family after the divorce. This, in turn critically affected the emotional well-being of the adolescent. This study underscored that the family unit is important, in accordance with the FST. The FST emphasised that if one family member is affected by different factors, the family unit will be affected. The study findings concur with FST that divorce not only affects the parents, but the immediate and extended family.

One of the effects also highlighted that the adolescent struggles to find identity and this was compared to Erikson's development stage identity versus role confusion. It was evident after the divorce that adolescents and the parents needed coping mechanisms. One of the mechanisms was extra mural activities which emerged as important, and their faith assisted them to cope during and after the divorce.

The research suggests that mediation is strongly recommended for families who are enduring divorce. The resident and non-resident parents will have the opportunity to raise certain concerns with a mediator to ensure that most conflict and differences can be addressed. If the

parents are amicable towards each other, the adolescent will have fewer psychosocial stressors and be able to reach the next level of development. The literature supports the view that a parent and adolescent who have good relations, put their children's needs first, especially in the post-divorce phase, and then the children would continue to thrive and to have good relations with both the resident and non-resident parents.

The study recommended that counselling would benefit families before and after the divorce so that every family member can be sufficiently informed in terms of what the changes will be after the divorce and they could be prepared and adjust better psychologically and emotionally.

## **5.9 OVERALL STUDY CONCLUSION**

The study initially proposed that a study with regard to the experiences of adolescents after the parents' divorce finalisation (post-divorce) and the effects on their psychosocial development, would be significant. It also emphasised how social workers would be able to assist the family during and after divorce proceedings. One important recommendation is that adolescents or children (who are mature and age appropriate) be present in court proceedings to be part of the decision-making.

In the literature review, the researcher explored the phenomenon of divorce, providing insight and understanding regarding the factors in the marriage, especially the types of contracts involved when the marriage is legally entered. There was a discussion of divorce in South Africa, in Africa and internationally, to understand the differences in policy and legislation and the reasons why parents opt for divorce. Interestingly, the cultural and traditional practices and perceptions upon entering marriage, or then divorcing, were also explored and explained.

The consequences of divorce, which formed the backbone of the study, dealt with the effects on the adolescent. The aim of the study was to ascertain the effects on the adolescent after the divorce of the parents, and whether there were any psychosocial effects as the adolescents were in the development stage of identity development. The study focused particularly on Erikson's adolescent stage, identity versus confusion.

The methodology of the study detailed what philosophy, theoretical perspectives, type of design, population and sampling, how data was collected and analysed within an ethical framework. The researcher emphasised that a qualitative research approach was the most appropriate method used in terms of the study aim and objectives. It also highlighted how difficult it was securing participants, and that the small sample still produced thick, rich quotes appropriate to the study and qualitative sample size.

In view of the rich findings, the study could make comprehensive recommendations for social work practice, social work education and training, policy, and future studies. The overall purpose was also to suggest any impact on legislation or policy, and how social work can have a positive impact on the pre- and post-divorce phases, specifically for the well-being of the family as a unit.

The overall conclusion of the study is that there should be intervention in the form of counselling and mediation in the pre- and post-divorce phases. The adolescent and/or children will feel part of the process and feel secure in the knowledge that all parties strove to ensure their best interest and the family's emotional and psychological well-being will be more positive.

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# Appendix A



## UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

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**E-mail:** [ward.maxine7@gmail.com](mailto:ward.maxine7@gmail.com)

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

**Project Title: The post-divorce experiences of adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development**

#### **Introduction**

We would like to invite you to partake in the study. The reason for the study will be explained, why the research is being done and would it would involve for the participants. Please read the information and familiarize yourself with the study. The research study will be conducted by Maxine Ward who is studying at the University of the Western Cape.

#### **What is this study about?**

The study focuses on adolescents who have parents, that are divorced. The study wants to understand their experience after divorce and if there are effects on their development as growing adolescents. This study also invites parents to participate to get a deeper understanding of adolescents and the effects on their development.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

If you agree to participate you will be asked to do:

- a) You will be asked to read the information sheet. To give the researcher permission to explain the contents of the information sheet to the adolescent.
- b) As parent to sign a consent form agreeing that your adolescent can participate in the study
- c) The adolescent will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the study.
- d) The parents will sign a consent form to agree to participate in the study.
- e) Both parents and children will be asked to answer interview questions. The parents and adolescent questions will differ.
- f) The interview will be conducted at the organization where the participants are receiving counselling. The language of communication will be either in English or Afrikaans depending on your preference.
- g) If at any time you feel that you do not want to participate, you are free to leave, with no questions and there will be no consequences.

#### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

All information disclosed in the interview will remain confidential. As participant you are guaranteed that your identity will be safeguarded, and not traced to you. Pseudonyms (aliases) will withhold your identity. Thus you will remain anonymous (nameless). All information

recorded with a tape recorder will be accessed for academic purposes only and the supervisor at the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape will have access as it is part of the academic requirement. You have the right to inform the researcher of information that must be excluded from the study.

### **What are the risks of this research?**

The risk of participating in the study might be an emotional (risk) for the adolescent or the parents. Either of the participant might divulge information that is not known to the other participants. However, the participants must be ensured that if such an incident should arise there will be moral support from the researcher. If any uncomfortable or life threatening event arises the parent should be assured that they will be informed. With parents consent there will be a referral to the adolescents counsellor/social worker. The researcher will attempt to minimize risks.

### **What are the benefits of this research?**

The intended study might benefit the participants as they will be able to reflect on their experiences. The study will assist others who are considering divorce specifically the parents making them aware of their adolescents struggle to find identity. It will benefit the professionals working with families facing divorce with the necessary information to assist the families as a whole unit. The reason for the research is to enlighten parents and professionals of adolescents conflict in this development stage and how divorce could add other factors into this already confusing stage.

### **What if I have questions?**

This research is being conducted by *Maxine Ward* at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Maxine Ward at: [ward.maxine7@gmail.com](mailto:ward.maxine7@gmail.com).

Should you have any questions regarding this study, your rights as a participant or wish to report any problems you experienced related to the study, please contact:

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# APPENDIX B



## UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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### ASSENT LETTER

**Title of Research Project: The post-divorce experiences of adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development**

The study focuses on adolescents who have parents, that are divorced. The study wants to understand their experience after divorce and if there are effects on their development as growing adolescents. This study also invites parents to participate to get a deeper understanding of adolescents and the effects on their development.

Before participating you should consider the following. You might experience some unhappiness when describing your experiences post-divorce. You must know that if you feel that you are uncomfortable about expressing your experiences or emotions, you may ask me to stop the interview. I will refer you to your counsellor for debriefing. If you would like to stop, it will go unquestioned and there will be no consequences.

If you are unsure about what the study entails you may ask me. A report will be compiled but your name will not be mentioned, or reflect in any way that you have participated.

*If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name below after you have also read the following:*

**The study was explained to me in a language of preference and I understand what I need to do. The researcher has answered my questions and I am participating on my own accord. I understand that my identity will not be reflected in the study. I know I can stop the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, want to participate in the research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sign your name here)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

# APPENDIX C



## UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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### CONSENT LETTER

**Title of Research Project: The post-divorce experiences of adolescents and the effects on their psychosocial development**

The study was explained to me in a language of preference and I understand what I need to do. The researcher has answered my questions and I am participating on my own accord. I understand that my identity will not be reflected in the study. I know I can stop the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences.

**Participant's name.....**

**Participant's signature.....**

**Date.....**

# APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – Adolescent Participant

This interview schedule is to address the following research question: What are the experiences of adolescents and their parents of the post-divorce period and the effects on the adolescents' psychosocial development?

The following study objective emerged from the main research question:

**To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of adolescents during the post-divorce period and its effects on their psychosocial development.**

Before you take part in the study please make sure that you have given your written consent. All information shared during this interview will be used for the research project and pseudonyms will be used to insure anonymity.

Date of interview: ..... Pseudonym: ..... Age: .....

<b>Questions</b>
<p><b>Introductory question:</b></p> <p>My name is Maxine Ward and I will be conducting the study.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Do you remember what this study is about? Would you like me to go over the topic one more time?</li><li>2. Would you like to share a bit about yourself? And I will tell you more about me?</li><li>3. How are you feeling today?</li></ol>
<p><b>Questions on the divorce experience:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. When did your parents get divorced?</li><li>5. How do you think the divorce affected your relationship with your parents?</li><li>6. How do you feel about your parents' divorce?</li><li>7. What are your feelings since the divorce?</li><li>8. What has changed since your parents' divorce?</li><li>9. What is your role in the family since the divorce?</li><li>10. What was your biggest challenge since the divorce?</li><li>11. What do you think are your coping skills? How did you cope and manage?</li><li>12. What is your experience of divorce?</li><li>13. How did your parents support you through the divorce?</li></ol>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>14. Is there anything that you would like to ask or tell me?</li></ol> <p>Thanks and appreciation.</p>

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE: ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANT

Participant number:.....

**1. Gender**

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

**2. Racial classification**

Black		Coloured		Indian		White		Other	
-------	--	----------	--	--------	--	-------	--	-------	--

**3. Age group**

12-14		14-16		16-18	
-------	--	-------	--	-------	--

**4. Which organization are you receiving mediation/counselling?**

Hope House		Parent Centre		Famsa	
---------------	--	------------------	--	-------	--

**5. Are you in primary or high school?**

Primary School		High School	
-------------------	--	----------------	--

**6. Which grade are you in? (Primary School)**

5		6		7	
---	--	---	--	---	--

**7. Which grade are you in? (High School)**

8		9		10		11		12	
---	--	---	--	----	--	----	--	----	--

**8. Are you employed?**

Yes		No		N/A	
-----	--	----	--	-----	--

# APPENDIX E

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- Parent

This interview schedule is to address the following research question: What are the experiences of adolescents and their parents of the post-divorce period and the effects on the adolescents' psychosocial development?

The following study objective emerged from the main research question:

**To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of parents of adolescents during the post-divorce period and its effects on the psychosocial development of their adolescent children.**

Before you take part in the study please make sure that you have given your written consent. All information shared during this interview will be used for the research project and pseudonyms will be used to insure anonymity.

Date of interview: ..... Pseudonym: ..... Age: .....

Questions
<b>Introductory question:</b> My name is Maxine Ward and I will be conducting the study. 3. Would you like to share a bit about yourself? 4. How are you feeling today?
<b>Questions on the divorce experience:</b> 5. In your opinion, what were the factors and incidents that led to the divorce? 6. How do you think your child/ren reacted? 7. How did you include your child in the divorce process? 8. How do you think your child is adapting to the divorce? 9. How is your child expressing his/her feelings post- divorce? 10. What changes do you see in your child's behaviour (if any) post- divorce? 11. What concerns do you have regarding your child, since the divorce? 12. What was your child's biggest concern since the divorce?
<b>Concluding question:</b> 13. How do you think you would have behaved differently or made other decisions? 14. What do you think you would put in place now to help your child/ren adjust and adapt better? 13. Is there anything else you would like to ask or tell me?

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE: PARENT PARTICIPANT

**1. Gender**

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

**2. Racial classification**

Black		Coloured		Indian		White		Other	
-------	--	----------	--	--------	--	-------	--	-------	--

**3. Age group**

31-40		41-50		51-60		60+	
-------	--	-------	--	-------	--	-----	--

**4. Which organization are you receiving mediation/counselling?**

Hope House		Parent Centre		Famsa	
------------	--	---------------	--	-------	--

**5. Are you employed?**

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

**6. Have you remarried?**

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

**7. How many children are there in the household?**

1		2		3		4+	
---	--	---	--	---	--	----	--

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# APPENDICE: F

## PARENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer: How are you feeling today?

nterviI just had a down day today. The last couple of days just down (very emotional)

**Interviewer:** It is not an easy thing you going through, and there is children involved. You have to look after them and yourself. I understand.

**Adult Participant 3:** All of this, all of this and (cant you handle it)it's not too much. Its not too much but the spot my ex-husband put me in is.. (tearful) I use to be a very independent person. I never use to ask him for anything. I would rather get it myself you know. He put me in this spot where I had to start begging. Asking people.....for help and I am not that kind of person. It's very difficult for me. It took a lot from me. My being me he took away. Cause I thought why didn't he come up with the truth when I was working. I was dependent I did not need anything from him. Why wait till I resign because of my kids. Cause he was pulled down one November 2016. He was pulled down It was on Sunday and I was in work . I got a call there is police at your house, you must come home, blah blah. I thought he is at home but now he was sitting in the police van at the back. He was picked up for driving home for drinking and driving. I thought that is enough, more than enough. For him to put my kids in that kind of situation, why could you not spend quality time at home with the kids. For him he had to be somewhere out partying and drinking and I was like sorry, We were four people in the house not a family. I was working shifts and the boys were home alone.

They had to but maybe I taught them way to early to be independent. They cook and clean and they do the basic stuff what so ever but in the end. My husband was like they big enough they can do it.

I was no they are teenagers now, they are going to start living and somebody has to be here. That is when I stopped working. Somebody has to be here. That was just horrible. That is when he came out with girlfriend but okay. He has been having affairs my whole life.

This time he came out he is having an affair and blah, and I was like you kicking a dog while its down. When I found out I went straight for divorce. I should have done it so many years ago. I should have done it many years ago but I was thinking of my kids.

I came to a decision enough is enough and made a decision. I did not think ahead.

**Interviewer:** don't worry, nobody knows what happens on the other side is always decisions and consequences. Always things happening but as long as you know in your heart you made the right decision.

**Adult Participant 3:** I should have made it so long ago.

**Interviewer:** You made the decision.

**Adult Participant 3:** Then he came and starting taking stuff away from me like my phone I could not contact anybody. He took away my car it has been standing now for seven, eight months. I can't drive my car. His paying for it, it's a privilege I am not supposed to have, no key. It's on his name his paying so fine.

**Inteviwwer:** It was not just a plain and straightforward divorce.

**Adult Participant 3:** no why could he just get a straightforward divorce, because he was already sorted. Do you know what, my husband pre-planned our divorce. He pre-planned it he told me on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May after we went for maintenance, he actually planned this whole thing.

Because of him there is no way I am getting half of his provident fund. Because I will be established and go on with my life. He don't want that for me.

He put stuff in motion that time he knew what I was going to do. He found out about stuff he would be that foul. Everything pre planned he took out loans on his provident fund. And whatever. The house in not paid for in full. He stopped paying the water account all that. He left me alone November and December all by myself. With no food and electricity and took my kids to his mother. Like she is the best person to look after them now. After that he is living his life and I am the one breaking apart.

It is affecting my kids big time. But then the blame is on me it's my fault.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever spoken to them about the reason for the divorce?

**Adult Participant 3:** They know exactly I told them. I told them he is been doing it for how many years. I am so tired of all the cover ups and stories. I wanted them to know it has been happening my whole life and I had to make a stop to it. Sorry for putting you guys through it now.

For him it is like a walk in the park, he shows pictures of the two of them or go pick the kids up with them in the car. Go for drives with her in the car. His living his life. I don't know what affect he is having on his kids I don't know.

I mean here was the bus strike the older boy could not go to school for 3 weeks, because it was winter time it was dark no buses.

What I was used to taking my child to school. The younger one goes to soccer practice and I could not do that although I was used to doing that. I couldn't go to soccer matches.

At the end of the day it is going to be like the kids are going to think less of me. Because he is buying them Mcdonalds, KFC taking them to spur.

**Interviewer:** You can't give things but you can give love and support. And they see your vulnerability?

**Participant Adult 3:** You know I don't cry in front of them, I don't

**Interviewer:** You can feel you tell them stuff about their father and it's against him for them. And you could be telling the truth but for them it could be stories about their father. Or talking bad about their father.

**Adult Participant 3:** I do not want to do that I am basically telling them the truth. It is like they don't know their father has never been a father. He never been present never taking them camping or doing father and son things. Suddenly he is doing it all. He never used to give them pocket money I use to do that. If they needed something they would ask me. Suddenly he is doing everything. He taking them anywhere, daddy can buy and mommy can't.

That is what he told them in the beginning, mommy is going to have money but not enough money. Mommy is going to stay in someone's yard in a shack. Saying he will get a flat and showing them mommy can't handle life.

**Interviewer:** Like you can't handle stuff and not stable enough to look after them in living conditions and maybe emotionally and create that impression. How does it make you feel?

**Adult Participant 3:** I told a lot of people I don't hate him anymore, it is not for me to hate him but I can't believe after knowing him for 23 years, I didn't know him. You know I don't think He ever loved me. You know I took him out of a life of poverty.

I have four other sisters so I came out of an established house. He did not. He grew up with his mother and two sisters. None of them ever knew their father. I met him he was laying mattress on the floor. That type of life. His mother did not have a geyser had to boil water in an urn. He did not know other lifestyle. The year I met him my mother passed away and he was comforting me.

I didn't like him initially he thought too much of himself and I needed that he is going to be there for me. He was going to be there for me. He used that opportunity to get out of a bad life. Two years later my father passed away, my sisters moved out, I got the house. 27 years old and in his own place. He did not have to work for house just moved in. He never loved me he was having affairs since the oldest child born.

Told me I am imagining yourself you mad, and who is telling you all this nonsense. Who are you listening to. I thought I was imagining stuff. As years go by I was like for my kids sake. If I had done it long ago it would not be so sore.

### **Questions on the divorce experience:**

**Interviewer:** How do you think your child/ren reacted?

They were quite into themselves. They were thinking it can be sorted even the youngest child asked can they fix it. Can't you guys just talk it out. I had to explain it has gone to far. That was when they started retracting from me and closer to the father. Both of them. He is the man with the money and he just gives.

**Interviewer:** where it concerns them and the living conditions has that been finalized?

**Adult Participant 3:** The magistrate said the youngest will stay with me, the older son can decide as he is 18 years old.

**Interviewer:** how does that make you feel?

**Adult Participant 3:** It's going to be painful if he decides to go with his father as he has never really been there for them. I spent my whole life around them, I have friend who will visit and go. But I will never go for weekends or parties away. For me it was my boys are alone. Daddy's working my boys are alone. I have made peace with it if he decides to move with his father.

The youngest a different story he is now grandma happy suddenly. Grandma has never been a grandma. No, his mother, my parents passed away.

I remember when I was working one weekend and asked can she looked after the oldest and she said no I have this function and that function. She was never involved but now that they bigger now she is involved never got them toys. Never had that grandma thing.

Now every holiday he will take my kids to his mother without me asking, she is the perfect mother now. Its fine with me. My family does not count at all, never goes there only his family.

**Interviewer:** do you take them to your family?

**Adult Participant 3:** When I had my car I used to take them to my family. I use to take them to my friends as they also have kids. He can't do that with his friends. Now I can't do anything, waiting on the court order. It is finalized. The 23 July It was final. We waiting on the provident fund stuff and all that nonsense and who is getting what. But that was finalized in proceedings but it must be finalized.

**Interviewer:** you were fine how everything went in process?

**Adult Participant 3:** At the moment no. we could not agree on certain stuff, he wants the house, wants to pay me out for the house. He wants the fridges and chairs, and tvs all the expensive stuff. I was not okay with that. But because of him taking money out of provident fund, he has to produce slips, because what did he do with the money? It was not for the family or the house. That still has to be sorted out.

**Interviewer:** How did you include your child in the divorce process?

**Adult Participant 3:** Yes, I told them from the beginning explaining what is happening. What is going to happen and the decision is there's on where they want to go. I had to be the strong one. There were months when he did not come home. He will come bath and go and stays away for days.

**Interviewer:** you were the one who relayed the information.

**Adult Participant 3:** He would come home late at night and talk to them, I did not know what about, whispering and they never told me.

**Interviewer:** there is animosity between you and he wants them to side with him?

**Adult Participant 3:** I told him you don't know how to be a father as you never had one. Now with worldly stuff. He switched off the dstv. He got them some WIFI. They can now watch on their phones and play games.

He never wanted to buy them phones, now they have the phones and wifi. Never wanted to give them pocket money. For maintenance he is giving each child R2000. I don't know what they do with the money. Its theres and they in control, and I say if I didn't go for maintenance you would not even have.

Who must buy food? I asked them each R500 each for food. He and his family went ballistic cause how can I steal from the children.

He bought them like pies, vienas, burgers and it was winter time. This is not what they used to eating.

**Interviewer:** **He is showing them he can provide for the children and not you.**

**Adult Participant 3:** he wanted to give me R3000 for someone earning R30000+\_. The boys R2000 and me R3000. This month I bought food as I am use to doing it and went shopping and they asked how much they should contribute. I wanted them to know it is not about money and said give me each R200 each.

**Interviewer:** How do you think your child is adapting to the divorce?

**Adult Participant 3:** They turned out to be different, the way they talk to me. The way they answer me they not the same boys anymore. There whole attitude towards me. I asked the older boy for R20, he said you need to budget your money. My child talking to me like that. They are in charge and I am the child.

**Interviewer:** **So reversing roles they have money.**

**Adult participant 3:** They in charge and I am the child. I can't get angry at them I can't do nothing. They draw into themselves. I thought in my bank account I give R500 a month and save the rest. It's like I am going to steal their money. Creating an atmosphere in the house.

He has his life, his mother spreading rumors, I am a whore and I am a alcoholic and a thief. Why can't he leave me alone? He does not want to see me prosper in life.

**Interviewer:** How is your child expressing his/her feelings post- divorce?

**Adult Participant 3:** They selfish and in control. The youngest will go for practice in yard, I will say it is late and he will say you can't tell me. I will ask who am I? he will ignore me and go practice. No respect for me. The oldest one wanted to know how I can still believe in a God who allows all this. I said God is the one who gives me strength. For them it is I made a mistake I have to live with it. They say I started the whole thing. Not the father.

**Interviewer:** What changes do you see in your child's behaviour (if any) post- divorce?

What concerns do you have regarding your child, since the divorce?

**Adult Participant 3:** The oldest started to smoke and drink part of teenager but I use to know his friends but now the father drops him. He told me he stopped and I trust him, he is 18. The youngest says I have money and now I have friends. Bad to have this attitude. They in control.

**Interviewer:** What was your child's biggest concern since the divorce?

**Adult Participant 3:**Where are they going to stay. If they go with me where are we going to stay are we going to have money and food. With daddy not that problem as daddy has money. Mommy go find a job, it's what I want but it is not easy. So teary all the time, won't be able to concentrate at the moment.

**Concluding question:**

**Interviewer:** How do you think you would have behaved differently or made other decisions?

**Adult Participant 3:** I would not have changed. I have given my all and it was not enough. People ask are you not going to fight for the marriage. How can I fight for something that was never mine.

**Interviewer:** What do you think you would put in place now to help your child/ren adjust and adapt better?

**Adult Participant 3:** I don't know really maybe the assurance everything Is going to be fine. Counselling if needed but to know everything is going to be okay.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for appreciate it and will share the findings. Its confidential it wont be spoken to anyone.

## APPENDICE G

### Adolescent Interview (Age 18) transcription:

**Interviewer:** Welcome Jermaine. How are you feeling today?

**Child Participant 3B:** I'm feeling fine. I would say I am a bit stressed out. About my future.

**Interviewer:** What about your future?

**Child Participant 3B:** I would not say it looks bleak. Its how you see it and how you can prevent it from happening. But with everything going on it seems that it has been narrowed down.

**Interviewer:** so you mentioning everything that is going on. What is going on?

**Child Participant 3B:** I have just got out of a relationship that I have been in for 4 years. My parents got divorced. Basically, I've become there is no structure in the house. So, I have become the head and the mind of the house. Which is kind of stressful.

**Interviewer:** You have to or?

**Child Participant 3B:** Yes cause no one else is. Then there is still school I have to do, and all of this cant really fit into a timeslot. Cause I really don't have a lot of time on my hand.

**Interviewer:** What grade are you now. Your age

**Child Participant 3B:** I am grade 11. I am 18.

**Interviewer:** So you feel you almost taking on the head of the house role now.

**Child Participant 3B;** by that I mean I mostly see to my brother, because I am the eldest.

**Interviewer:** What kind of decisions to have to make?

**Child Participant 3B:** because of divorce, it is seeing to me and my brother we get a fair share of R2000. We have to sum it up between the both of us and we have to look at expenses and pay for that. I have to take the role of everything that is paid for make sure everything is stabilized in the house.

**Interviewer:** If not to personal, If I may ask is the money for the two of you, is it for the household?

**Child Participant 3B:** It is for the two of us the household is on its own.

**Interviewer:** for school toiletries, stuff like that.

## Questions on the divorce

**experience:**

**Interviewer:** When did your parents get divorced?

**Child Participant 3B:** This all started in December. I don't know if they announced it in December but that is when it started end December, the beginning of January round about then.

**Interviewer:** When did you start seeing that things are different?

**Child Participant 3B:** That would be November , October side.

**Interviewer:** When was it finalized?

**Child Participant 3 B:** About 2 weeks plus ago.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the divorce affected your relationship with your father and your mother?

**Child Participant 3B:** It did not affect my relationship with both my parents. I still feel the same in the current state. I am not going to say they the center of my world. Not going to say they the greatest parents and I am not going to say bad parents. For me they did the best not saying there best is not okay. Im not a parent I cant really say. But I feel they could have done more.

**Interviewer:** In which way?

**Child Participant 3B:** It's understandable my father has not always been there for us. He was always working that is understandable, but it was to support the family. My mother has always been on and off on jobs. But she's always been home. She has done what a mother should do. Like looking after your kids. But there is a difference between looking after your kids and taking care of them. Like I said he was not always there, not like we did a lot of activities with them. So, if we needed things, we could ask and they would provide for us.

But in the sense of taking care. I would not say that this house was not built on love. Its certain emotional phases we have gone through and they have not been there for us. But they have seen it. Like you a parent and you see what your kids go through and have gone through. But they have not really been there for those stages.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk about a stage where you needed them and they were not there?

**Child Participant 3 B:** That would be my academics. Once I started high school it was still fine until I started grade 9, till now my mother has been home. She has worked but in stages she has been home. Or basically in primary school she never really helped me with my education. Like when I had homework or projects, she didn't check if I had homework. She didn't ask if I had homework. Or she did but we kids, so she asked and we would lie. She just took It that way. Which is odd for you as a mother you should ask if there is a task but she



just let it slide. When I failed my first term, I never understood why. That was in grade 10 and I excelled so far and as a parent, you kind of would investigate and see what 's going on but, not like they did that. They showed there concerns here and there but not all the way through. As my father not being here, its not like he could pick up on that.

Relationship wise for that 4 years we did not tell anyone because we did not want to tell anyone and because of my bond with my parents I did not know if they would be okay with it. They knew about relationship but showed no concern. I would tell them at the beginning of the relationship here and there. It felt I didn't have to tell them and continued doing my own thing.

It's been 2 or 3 months and we ended our relationship and my parents have not shown any concern about that.

**Interviewer:** You want them to show interest in your education and your relationship.

**Child Participant 3B:** I told them about it but they still showed no interest.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think there was no interest can you maybe think.

**Child Participant 3B:** For the years that I have known them, there was no concern, in a majority of things.

**Interviewer:** what type of concern should they show?

**Child Participant 3B:** Just ask me questions, anything that pops up, I can tell you in this house nobody has been able to hold a long conversation. Always short conversations about your day. So, there is no other stages I can think of now.

**Interviewer:** So the relationship you had before the divorce is no different to now after divorce?

**Child Participant 3B:** No nothing different. I can see that they trying more but because of the divorce. Now they both on their own now, so they looking for someone to consolidate with. Someone to be there for them or with them. But you have not been there all the time why do you need us now? It seems a bit unfair for us, we can get past this but you cant it does not seem fair for us. This could have been sorted and handled long time ago, it seems from my perspective like this has been coming on for a while, and could have been handled earlier.

But my father was with this woman for a while now, I don't know when he was going to tell us about her. I feel it could have been handled different. Instead of confronting him and making all the wrong choices and making the wrong mistakes. It didn't just affect her but all of us.

This came about somewhere November side. November was my finals and that had a huge impact on me. When I wrote my tests, and my brother has not had a huge impact, because now he is focusing on soccer.

**Interviewer:** It is his getaway

**Child Participant 3B:** there is nothing else, nowhere else. I am trying to find a few hobbies I have lots of time out of a relationship. So I am trying a few hobbies I always wanted to try.

**Interviewer:** So can I ask you. The relationship ended more or less the same time as your parents relationship. Did what you went through affect the relationship. Or were there concerns in the relationship before the divorce?

**Child Participant 3B:** Its not that I have any issues she is going through things as well at the moment. So we both come out of unstable houses and cant be there for each other. So sometimes you think of yourself and not others and that also affected the relationship.

**Interviewer:** Is that she was not there for you. Were you distracted?

**Child Participant 3B:** She was there for me I did not consider her concerns. I was not concerned even if her parents did not know. Her parents were very religious, and keeping it a secret was difficult for her. I was not able to see that.

The divorce affected my lifestyle and in a way it did affect my relationship. There was times she wanted to come here and could not because of what was happening here. I wanted to take her out and could not. I am confused about the ending, trying to find out what I did wrong. What could be prevented but I can just better myself.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about future relationships. Is it something you would just get into?

**Child Participant 3 B:** No I will definetly not jump into a relationship. It's hard with the one I have been in and seeing my parents. Its hard to understand the concept of love right now. I had my own ideas of what love is and as long as I have passed and this relationship to look back onto its hard to know what is suitable and what is right to do

**Interviewer:** how do you feel about your parents divorce?

**Child Participant 3 B:** I feel ok it is there fight. It's a fight over the kids. It tends to get annoying and frustrating.

**Interviewer:** So they fighting over the two of you?

**Child Participant 3B:** For me it is if you get the kids you basically get the beneficial facts that go with that. You get the kids you get the house. You get the kids you get the money. So it is the fight over the kids.

**Interviewer:** Is it still a fight or was it finalized with the divorce?

**Child Participant 3B:** Right now even though the divorce is finalized, we still have a say where we want to go, that is why for me its like which one. They like playing more of a role right now, to influence us.

**Interviewer:** Do you think its that or real or you thinking it's a game. Are they not really caring about you?

**Child Participant 3B:** Its different now, than if you started showing emotions now than in the past.

**Interviewer:** so you don't trust it or?

**Child Participant 3B:** No I don't trust it because I notice that even if it was not a game. Because of the rumours that the spread about each other. You would not do that and come to your kids with that rumours. You will try to keep it away and try them not to get hurt by it.

**Interviewer:** they bad mouthing each other?

**Child Participant 3B:** Yes they are. Its hard to trust them, really not a good position to put your kids in. So we have to rely on ourselves to handle all this pressure. But if its what we have to do then its what we have to do.

**Interviewer:** How are you coping or beginning to cope?

**Child Participant 3B:** Terrible, there is no other words to say. I just got out of a relationship so I had nowhere else to turn to. So I spent my entire June holidays away from home. Staying at other people's houses, friends. Not bad houses just houses where I was comfortable by. I would stay there for a week then the next one and the next one. Till the holidays were finish.

**Interviewer:** Did they know where you were?

**Child Participant 3B:** My father knew where I was as he had to take me places. My mother when I came home to wash then I would tell her where I am going. But my concern was not that they know my whereabouts, cause if they did they would come after me to look for me. I was trying to get away from them. So, it was best they didn't know where I was.

**Interviewer:** Is this something you would do under other circumstances?

**Child Participant 3B:** It is definetly out of character this past few months. For me it feels more than character development. I'm doing things out of my comfort zone. I'm usually doing things in my comfort zone.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think you testing boundaries and trying new things?

**Child Participant 3B:** Its because my comfort zone is not my comfort zone anymore. My comfort zone is not my comfort zone anymore its hostile. I am worried about my brother's future as well

**Interviewer:** Why do you feel so pressured to take it all on you?

**Child Participant 3B:** Because who else is going to take that role?

Interviewer: You have parents.

**Child Participant 3B:** I don't have parents now if they fighting with each other. The house is not stable because of that. I have to take that role. As the eldest it feels like it is my responsibility. For me it is like I am trying to escape as well, not sticking on one place, just going around.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean sticking to one place?

Child Participant 3B: I am trying to travel to places on my own. Not telling people about where I am going. I have done it going to neighbouring suburbs, by walking. I have done it, by taking bus and train. I don't feel comfortable with a lot of people, I have always felt like this. 'Something that has always been. I don't like a lot of people around me. I have developed a kind of paranoi where I have to look over my shoulder. But I have nowhere else to go so I can only see myself moving forward.

**Interviewer:** the places you going and the stuff you doing. Is it building up your character or can it be destructive in any way? Harmful to you.

**Child Participant 3B:** It could be destructive and harmful, but its helping with navigational skills and the ability to communicate with others. I like to stay in my comfort zone but socializing with people I don't know also can be beneficial. Skill.

**Interviewer:** but you not experimenting with substances?

Child Participant 3B: I was during the holidays I started cigarettes, that was not for me. I started drinking it is not for me. Yes that is all I can think of.

**Interviewer:** you said you stopped why do you think you stopped?

**Child Participant 3B:** It does not suit me. Rumours it will help you with stress and like I said I couldn't go with this to my parents. Cause they can't even handle themselves. So I took it upon myself to do this. But it did not really relieve me from stress from worries, didn't make it worse but it did not do anything for me. So, I just left it.

**Interviewer:** So if you learned and it make you a better person. SO you know what works for you. What does not work for you. But you still searching.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about your parents' divorce , your feelings and what has changed?

**Child Participant 3B:** A lot has changed. Lifestyle wise. I am living on a schedule , where I have not got enough time for myself. Its in the morning I have to get ready got to go to the

bus, to school. From the school back to the bus, to home. To gym back to home. And repeat that routine all over again. I have no time for myself only when I go to the gym. That is only for an hour or two. So my lifestyle is busy I have no time to do chores in the house but due to the decrease, not really. My mother has not been making as much food as she used to do in the past. There is less productivity in the kitchen. Less work in the kitchen. She does not walk around as much. So, there is less sweeping.

The movement and atmosphere has changed so that really changed our roles in the house.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about the changes. Do you understand why the divorce happened.?

**Child Participant 3B:** I am okay but it is rapid though, but rapid enough to catch up. It is a bit unstable though because it is not we use to and it is like constant change. Especially when you play a role in your house. Making sure everything is there.

**Interviewer:** big responsibility are you ready?

Participant 3 B; If I was alone it would be simpler but when I have to take care of two people. Especially when I take up roles like this then she refers me to my father all the time. Puts it in a bad sense like I am trying to be controlling. He was kinda like that.

**Interviewer:** How did you see the relationship, you say he is controlling did you like that role?

**Child Participant 3B. :** He knew what to do, when to and how to implement it. He was good at doing that as being the man of the house not father. He could do those things. Those are the roles I have to fill in now. I am not used to it, I never watched him do these things.

**Interviewer:** did they ask you to do this?

**Child Participant 3B:** No I have to take it upon myself, no one else is doing it and not just myself but also looking after my younger brother too.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about it, do you have time to think about it? Are you coping

**Child Participant 3B:** no I don't know, coping sort of. Nothing bad is happening. Not good or bad, good it happened now I know how to survive on your own and be independent. But not good as I need to focus on other aspects of life. I can't do that with all that responsibility.

**Interviewer:** What was your biggest challenge since the divorce?

**Child Participant 3B:** Getting over the relationship, my parents have not played a huge factor in my life for me. So when the divorce happened it was more annoying than anything else. Because of the fighting back and forth. In my relationship my girlfriend was my pillar. Something to stand against to lean against. Just support and now that I don't have that I have to get up on my own two feet that I have ever stood on my own.

**Interviewer:** it is making you grow up faster than you wanted and that is your challenge?

What do you think are your coping skills? How did you cope and manage?

**Child Participant 3B:** my hobbies recently I have come up on doing a hobby. Like riding a bike, skate boarding. We had bikes, we gave it away. But I was thinking of getting a skateboard, learning to skate, because of my travelling. I want to travel by Table Mountain, Seapoint. Just be there to see the sights, get to know people. Its better to speak to strangers than people you close to. It is easier, like with you. I won't be able to speak to family like this. Being open like this.

**Interviewer:** is it in general or do you like speaking to strangers?

**Child Participant 3B:** Any strangers , speaking to strangers its like a coping . like any person would react and ask if you okay and if you well and give you ways to cope with it. Ive started playing guitar and listen to lots of music that is one of my coping mechanisms. Gyming has been one of my coping mechanisms. And joining school activities I have never done that in the past 3 years. I have joined 5 organizations to keep my mind occupied and my time.

**Interviewer:** how is your academics at the moment?

**Child Participant 3B:** because of the divorce, I can't get help but from anyone but myself. I am struggling with Pure maths, always had a struggle with it. It's not that I cannot grasp but I constantly I have to be motivated to focus on the math. If they explain in classroom I can grasp and do it. Once I get home I literally switch off when it comes to academics. I don't focus. When it comes to home it is the last thing I want to do. I feel like, school is school and home is home. I can't combine them too much distractions. I am not motivated, and always felt like that.

I'm struggling as I have no one to help me with this. Because of divorce I can't go to extra classes or go to anyone, then leaving everyone here. I don't have enough time during the week and weekends they busy no one to go to. With divorce financially it is a struggle and not in parents hands. I can't ask for tutoring, until this is finish.

**Interviewer:** when is this all going to be finish. You must decide where you want to live? Who we going to live with? Will you be living together?

**Child Participant 3B:** it is better that we together wherever I go, I can say we have the strongest bond in this household and where the one does the other follows with. That is why he is not with me and doing this together because whatever I answer I give he will give as well. So I need him to think and answer for himself. So I am not going to be there for him I am going to travel. He has to learn to be on his own feet like I am.

**Interviewer:** when are you going to start travelling after school.

**Child Participant 3B:** after school I need to start studying. I want to go into chemical engineering. So that is probably seven years and then after that.

**Interviewer:** How did your parents support you through the divorce?

Saying that they would be there. My father said we can call whenever we need him knowing he is always busy from 3-4 in the morning. And 10 and 7's. so if I request something it is understandable if he forgets. I cant go to my mother for support she is emotionally unstable. Its hard to go there for support. So my father I don't go for emotional just for things I cant do alone at home.

**Interviewer:** if you need emotional support just want to cry or can t cope. Where do you go?

**Child Participant 3B:** I haven't had anyone like that at all.

**Interviewer:** would you feel better if you just let it out?

**Child Participant 3B:** I had my girlfriend so I could do that with her until June. I have not got her so I have not done that. I could not express myself in that kind of manner.

**Interviewer:** something you think would be good

**Child Participant 3B:** it would be good with someone who you can bond with.

**Interviewer:** any family members you can talk to

**Child Participant 3B:** you cant even talk to family members as they fighting the same battle your parents are fighting. Not my brother as you trying to show him you being independent.

**Interviewer:** you have the same thing in common, you can be vulnerable with your brother.

**Child Participapnt 3B:** Not just in front of him right now.

**Interviewer:** Sum up the divorce, your experience?

**Child Participant 3B:** Horrible everything. From beginning till now, its annoying its frustrating. It seems like it never wants to end. You think its done it take on a whole new track and does not want to end. Even when they said its finalized its still on.

**Interviewer:** its going to feel as you still have to readjust your life, your lifestyle. The way things were, financially, economically. Some people have to sell their homes. Its a lot of things happening at the same time. And..

**Child Participant 3B:** the easier part you have to readjust and as long as you have a certain goal not so bad to get from point a to b.

**Interviewer:** you just want stability and you don't have that now. That is what you want.

**Child Participant 3B:** yes that will be better. You have to make it for yourself.

**Interviewer:** what do you need at this time you and your brother?

**Child Participant 3B:** I need someone to talk to .

**Interviewer:** you never had counselling someone to talk to.

**Child Participant 3B:** no

**Interviewer:** would you want counselling. would you be able to go to where there office is.

**Child Participant 3 B:** Yes I would want that.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything that you would like to ask or tell me?

**Child Participant 3B:** No.

**Thanks and appreciate that you participated.**



# APPENDICE H

## MEMBER CHECKING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Dear Participant

I have elected to do a member checking to improve the findings in my research.

Member checking is used to verify and check if the data is in line with the information that you have provided the researcher.

Member checking is important in qualitative` research as it enhances the truth and accuracy of the findings. The reason for the member checking is also important as the participants has an opportunity to agree with the themes and subthemes that emerged from the study.

### Your member checking role:

As a participant in the research you are able to check if the themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews are consistent to the input your provided. There might be that the themes and subthemes might not be relevant to you as participant as the findings include interviews of 12 participants. As participant you will be able to verify if there are specific aspects of your narrative in the findings.

In the box below you have to please respond to me whether you **CONFIRM and ENDORSE** (that is you confirm / agree that the themes and subthemes are largely characteristic of the narratives you have provided) or **NEGATE OR CONTRADICT** (that there is little or no similarity or connection with the narratives you provided). If you disagree/contradict please give reason, and I will relook at the original transcriptions.

Please note further that the themes and subthemes are confidential and will be edited further editing and amended and remains the academic property of the researcher and cannot be duplicated or distributed at this time.

THANK YOU for your kind cooperation. It is much appreciated.

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING. [Tick the relevant box.]**

<b>ADULT PARTICIPANT</b>	
<b>CHILD PARTICIPANT</b>	
I hereby <b>CONFIRM and ENDORSE</b> (that is I confirm / agree that the themes, subthemes and categories are largely characteristic of the narratives I have provided to the researcher) <b>OR</b>	
I hereby <b>NEGATE OR CONTRADICT</b> (there is little or no similarity or connection with the narratives I have provided to the researcher)	

**THANK YOU.**

---

**Signature:**

**Table 5.4 highlights the themes and subthemes identified in the study. As per my communication with you individually, the entire thesis will be made available once it has been approved.**

**Table 5.4: Main themes and subthemes of study**

<b>Main theme 1</b>	<b>Main theme 2</b>	<b>Main theme 3</b>	<b>Main theme 4</b>	<b>Main theme 5</b>
<b>Effects of divorce on family</b>	<b>Parenting in post-divorce</b>	<b>Psychosocial effects on adolescents</b>	<b>Role confusion</b>	<b>Adolescents post-divorce coping mechanisms</b>
<b>Theme 1 subthemes</b>	<b>Theme 2 subthemes</b>	<b>Theme 3 subthemes</b>	<b>Theme 4 subthemes</b>	<b>Theme 5 subthemes</b>
1.1 Economic Effects and standard of living	2.1 Parenting of Resident Parent	3.1 Psychological Effects	4.1 Adolescent Role	5.1 Recreational activities
1.2 Housing, accommodation and lifestyle Effects	2.2 Parenting of Non-resident parent	3.2 Emotional Effects	4.2 Self identity	5.2 Faith
	2.3 Trust in Parents		4.3 Quality of intimate Relationships	

Five themes and 12 subthemes emerged from the data. The main themes emerged were part of the literature, but also emerged from the interviews with the participants on their experiences post-divorce. It was interesting that from the data the main themes were the effects on the family, psychosocial effects and the adolescents development stage, identify versus role confusion as it is links to the topic of the research. The experiences of adolescents and parents after parents’ divorce finalisation (post-divorce) and the effects on adolescent psychosocial development.

# APPENDICE I

## Axiology (Reflective Journal of Belief and values during the research process)

The researcher started the research to understand how the best interests of the children are upheld during and post the divorce process.

The researcher is a believing Christian and biblically, divorce can be granted if there is adultery. The Bible states that if you divorce you not allowed to remarry but have to wait until your spouse is deceased.

The entire divorce goes against my Christian principles and beliefs. The researcher, however always wanted to ensure that the children are protected and therefore this research was so important.

Divorce is such a big phenomenon in the world and seems to be the easy option if the couples are not in agreement about issues like finances, lack of communication whereas I believe communication can resolve differences. The other belief you can resolve issues by trusting God in prayer.

My belief that your faith and belief in a Higher God should carry you through any situation. For so many couples they refuse to work through their differences. As a social worker I believe communication and counselling can assist in conflict situations.

My belief you are an adult and should be mature enough to put your own problems aside to ensure your children are safe, protected, coping emotionally and psychologically. Through this research the researcher became aware of the fact the parents suffer as well as the children. My belief then grew to then ask the question? Why do the parents not get professional assistance

so they can be there for the children? The researcher does not encourage parents to put on a façade as they can crack under pressure post-divorce.

A further belief is then that if resident and non-resident parents have good relations it creates further learning in relationship building for adolescents or children from divorce.

It materialised that the mothers are more susceptible to even talk about their conflicts, social problems and emotions specifically. The fathers were not willing to participate in the study. The researcher believed that for this research to be less limited the fathers had to participate in the study.

The researcher values the family as a unit, it is so important for the children to learn how to act and react in different situations. The relationship building in the family assists us as humans to build relationships with other people.

In this experience the researcher has gained new understanding of specifically relationships how we interact with each other. The most difficult is to express your emotions and being real with yourself. The period post-divorce is difficult for the adolescent but the study presents the findings which is real and gives a new perspective on the psychosocial effects post-divorce.

My beliefs did not cause any bias to the study as I have learned through the study that in life there is no black and white, and that God does not judge as humans do. God is a fair judge and I need to strive to be more like Him, therefore there was no prejudice.



## APPENDICE J

### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

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06 November 2017

Mrs M Ward  
Social Work  
**Faculty of Community and Health**

#### **Science Ethics Reference Number:**

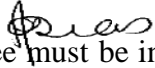
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**Project Title:** The experiences of adolescents and parents after parents' divorce finalisation (post-divorce) and the effects on adolescent psychosocial development.

**Approval Period:** 03 February 2017 – 03 February 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee  must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

**PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049**

# APPENDICE K

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Language Editor and Translator  
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15 November 2019

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## DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the thesis by **Maxine Ward** was properly language edited, but without viewing the final version.

The track changes function was used and the author was responsible for accepting the editor's changes and for finalising the reference list.

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**THE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS AND PARENTS AFTER PARENTS'  
DIVORCE FINALISATION (POST-DIVORCE) AND THE EFFECTS ON  
ADOLESCENT PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**



.....

JUANITA DU TOIT  
Strand  
South Africa  
26 July 2019

# APPENDIX L

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