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**SINGLE, DIVORCED MOTHERS
EXPERIENCES
OF CHILD RAISING**

by

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**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the**

**Degree of Master of Clinical Social Work
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**This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the
award of any degree. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this
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has been cited and referenced.**

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date:

1/12/2006

A WOMAN OF WORTH WHO CAN FIND,
FOR HER PRICE IS FAR ABOVE RUBIES

...SHE OPENS HER MOUTH WITH WISDOM,
AND A LESSON OF KINDNESS IS ON HER TONGUE ...

...HER CHILDREN ARISE AND PRAISE HER ...

AISHET CHAYIL
(PROVERBS 31, 10-31)

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University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

This study explores single, divorced mothers' experiences and perceptions of raising their children. Divorce is recognized as one of the major stressors of modern social experiences. Previous research has explored the phenomenon from a deficit perspective, while this study will be undertaken from a post-modernist position by exploring coping strategies and competencies, using strengths based and narrative perspectives.

This basic, qualitative research study was conducted from within a non-probability framework. Data collection consisted of face-to-face unstructured interviews with a researcher-designed research schedule. This research schedule guided the interview while the respondents were encouraged to narrate their own (hi)stories. By adopting this approach, the researcher intended to uncover the respondents' beliefs and values regarding their experiences and perceptions of raising their children as single mothers, including understanding their coping mechanisms, challenges and constraints of their role. This study has also explored the mothers' perceptions of the behavioural, academic, emotional and psychological aspects of the children's development since the divorce.

The sample was drawn from divorced mothers of the parent body of the Herzlia School system, and was a voluntary, available sample of ten respondents.

The conclusions drawn from the study indicated that the main challenges to single parenting were assuming the roles of homemaker, nurturer and financial provider, and a shortage of time and emotional capacity to assume these multiple roles adequately. Support systems, such as respondents' mothers, friends and domestic workers, were the most valuable resources available to this population. The relationship between the ex-spouses was an important dimension affecting the well-being and security of the children. The respondents indicated that they were generally pleased to be liberated from the marriage which they had considered to be humiliating and undermining of the self. Benefits included an increase in their feelings of self-worth, competence and independence. An internal locus of control was found to assist mothers in viewing their situations positively. While respondents reported adopting both more authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, children seemingly adapted positively to these changes. Most respondents considered their new homes to be more peaceful and harmonious than the marital home had been.

The study concludes with recommendations as arising from the research, including those relevant to the school, profession and community, and suggests topics for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY:

This chapter introduces the setting and importance of the study, as well as the main research questions and objectives. An introduction to the research methodology and design and an overview of the chapters following is presented.

1.1 Background to the study:

In this study - divorced mothers' perceptions of being a single parent in relation to the raising of children - the researcher will explore the mothers' experiences and coping mechanisms from within a strengths based and a narrative framework.

Divorce is recognized as one of the major stresses of modern social experience (Holmes & Rahe, 1967, in Braude, 1993). Comprising the formal end of a principal socio-personal relationship, divorce may further prejudice the wider social network of which the couple has been a part. Three interrelated problem areas dominate the lives of single mothers: money, parenting and social relationships (Brown, 1989).

Bloom-Feshbach and Bloom-Feshbach (1988) invite comparison between loss of a spouse by death or divorce. Death is a clear and unambiguous incident that occurs at a precise instant. Divorce, however, is a process rather than event. It is not instantaneous, separation occurs, and reconciliation often follows, which might be followed by a further separation. When divorce occurs, adults and children experience a varying amount of loss of time in the company of the spouse or parent. The quality of time spent with the absent spouse/parent may also change or contact may be maintained, but the relationship will differ. Although no person has died, the marriage has, and in this sense the perception of loss is universal.

The South African Judicial System now considers the best interest of the child when affording custody to parents. Although joint custody is sometimes awarded, more frequently young children remain primarily in the care of the mother (Dreman, 1993; Parkinson, 1989). Issues of custody differ in various countries. For example, in California, USA, joint custody is awarded in all divorces unless a specific ruling is made to the contrary (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994). South African law therefore considers the best interest of the child. This research will investigate how the custodial mother experiences the raising of the children in her care.

Most research previously conducted on divorce has been undertaken from a deficit perspective (Wallerstein & Blakesee, 1989; Boney, 2003). This research intends to study the experiences of single divorced mothers from a post-modernist perspective by exploring coping strategies and competencies that have empowered them to manage and thrive after severe structural upheaval.

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION:

This study will explore the experiences, perceptions, strengths and coping mechanisms of divorced, single mothers who have the responsibility of raising the child/ren in their care. The custodial parent is often the mother (Parkinson, 1989), and this report will investigate perceptions and experiences of single mothers of pre/school-aged children, that is, between 4 and 16 years old. The general population of single mothers consists of separated or divorced, widowed or never married women. However, to exclude extraneous variables, this study will focus on single, divorced mothers who have not remarried.

Respondents will be mothers who have been divorced for two years or more, and are beyond the time period of acute adjustment to divorce. Two reasons for this allowance for adjustment are cited in the literature. Firstly, Derman (1993) explains the choice of temporal indicators, stating that women in the

period immediately following divorce tend to use denial coping mechanisms and overestimate their parental capability, while women in the later phase (after about 22 months of separation) use less denial and are more realistic. A minimum of two years is required for the family to readjust to its new structure and to progress to the next life style stage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Ahrons, 1980, in Dreman, 1993; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1978, in Barnes, 2004). Secondly, during the first two to three years following divorce, family members are thrown into a state of turmoil and imbalance until restabilization occurs. Thus, distress is considered a normal short-term response to the crisis (Peck & Manocherian, 1989).

The researcher will explore the interviewees' experience of child raising and the accompanying coping mechanisms from within the narrative and strengths based frameworks. These frameworks will be discussed in chapter Two. The method of gaining information will be achieved through the medium of in-depth interviews. The researcher has chosen the narrative approach which allows for numerous descriptions of uniqueness and leads to vivid images of lives and relationships (Morgan, 2000). The in-depth interview likewise "provides interviewees with an opportunity to speak for themselves without directing or interpreting the encounter" (De Vos, 1998:300).

Based on the assumption that "all people possess a wide range of talents, abilities, capacities, skills, resources and aspirations" (Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, Kisthardt, 1989:352), the researcher has chosen the strengths based approach as it recognizes the positive attributes and capabilities of individuals and the manner in which personal and social resources can be developed and sustained.

1.3 PROBLEM AREA:

The traditional nuclear family, in its broadest sense, consists of two parents of opposite gender and their children. This structure – and the concomitant accompanying familiar roles of mother as carer and father as breadwinner - is no longer necessarily the normative family formation. Supporting the idea that the classic image of the nuclear family applies to only five per cent of households at any given time, twenty per cent of children can expect to experience the divorce of their parents (Dallos 1991). Single parenting may be due to unforeseen circumstances such as the death of a parent, the separation or divorce of parents, or the separation of never married parents. According to Kane-Berman, Henderson and De Sousa (2001 in Spiro, 2005) 42% of children in South Africa live with their mothers in single-parent households. In 2002, a total of 31 370 divorces took place in South Africa, which is slightly down on the figures for 2001, of 34 045 divorces. The Sunday Times (August 14 2005) reported that altogether 28 587 divorces have taken place in South Africa in 2003, of which 5 224 are in Western Cape. These statistics indicate that many school-aged children are the product of single parent families. Problems in single-parent families may often be increased by a reduction of income in the home, and a decrease in economic resources.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

This research aims to:

- i. Explore and describe the experiences of single mothers in raising pre-school and school-aged children.
- ii. Explore and describe the perceptions of single mothers in raising pre-school and school aged children.
- iii. Investigate the coping mechanisms and strategies of single mothers in raising their pre-school and school aged children.
- iv. Investigate the challenges single mothers are faced with regarding the emotional, academic, psychological and behavioural development of their children.

- v. Explore the constraints experienced by single divorced mothers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The researcher will explore the following questions:

- i. What are the perceptions of single mothers in relation to the raising of pre-school and school-aged children?
- ii. What are the coping strategies of single mothers in relation to the raising of pre-school and school-aged children?
- iii. What challenges do single mothers experience in respect of the behavioural, academic, emotional and psychological aspects of the child's development?
- iv. What are the constraints experienced by single mothers in child rearing?

1.6 RESEARCHER'S ASSUMPTIONS:

There are a number of assumptions regarding single parenting. These assumptions will be examined against the findings of the study.

They include:

- i. That the financial situation of the mother plays a role in her perceptions of the resources that she is able to provide for her child/ren.
- ii. That mothers are able to conceptualize their positions regarding their strengths and constraints in order to cope.
- iii. That crises are more easily overcome when support systems are in place.
- iv. That the absence of a father-figure in the household will lead to a modification of the parental/child relationship which will result in an altered pattern of communication within the family.
- v. That the quality of the relationship between divorced parents will play a role in the emotional, behavioural and academic stability of the children.

1.7 HERZLIA SCHOOL SETTING:

Herzlia school has been chosen as the location of the study. It is a private school, attended mainly by children of the Jewish faith. The children at the school are all from similar cultural backgrounds. The culture of the school also requires that Jewish holidays are observed, and that Jewish studies and traditions are included in the syllabus. Hebrew is taught as a second language. The children attending the school are mainly from middle class families, and private school fees are charged. However, no Jewish child is refused admittance because of financial difficulties, and remissions are awarded when deemed necessary. The standard of education is regarded as above average, and the school prides itself on the general high achievements of its pupils. This similarity of background therefore could eliminate some variables that might otherwise impact on the study. It is a co-educational school, and mothers of both boys and girls will be included in the study.

It should be noted, however, that although the sample of respondents is being selected from mothers of the Herzlia school population, these mothers may also have children who are either older and have left school, or may be of school going age but are not within the Herzlia school system, or are not living with their mothers. In some cases, a few children may be living with their fathers, because of difficult relationships between mother and child. However, the mothers' global functioning might therefore also be impacted on by her experiences regarding these children. The focus of this research is centred on the mothers' experiences regarding the children presently in her care.

This study is being conducted in the context of a strengths based approach and will also explore the support systems available to interviewees. The Jewish population of Cape Town is a closely-knit community that prides itself on supporting its own members in their areas of need. To this end, the Jewish Board of Deputies, a national organization, governs many community organizations, including United Herzlia Schools. Support offered by the

Jewish Board of Deputies includes financial assistance, housing, social welfare, mental health organizations, housing and workshop for the mentally and physically disabled, as well as study benefits. Thus, it can be seen that the Jewish community endeavours to help its members to cope, and offers support when necessary.

As at any school individual and family problems occur. These include family disintegration and divorce, which impact on both parents and children. Herzlia schools employ either clinical psychologists or social workers at each of their five campuses in the Western Cape. These clinicians offer counseling and support to the learners, and are available to discuss problems with parents. The school urges parents to advise it of times of crisis at home, in order that the learner may be supported and counseled when necessary.

1.8 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH DESIGN:

The researcher has chosen to undertake a qualitative study "concentrating on qualities of human behaviour" (De Vos, 1998:241). As suggested by Burgess (in De Vos, 1998:241) qualitative social research refers to "the interpretation or construction of the lived experience of the subject."

This is a basic exploratory research study which will focus on the mothers' experiences and perceptions of their role, through the administration of a semi-structured interview schedule.

The unit of analysis for this micro research is the individual. Mothers who have been divorced for two years or more were invited to participate in this study, and ten mothers comprised the sample. The two-year time lapse will allow for the respondents to have passed through the critical adjustment period immediately following divorce. The means of sampling was therefore availability and purposive.

In order to obtain an “insider perspective” (De Vos, 1998) of the experiences of the target group, the researcher compiled a research schedule for an unstructured interview. The unstructured interview with a research schedule allows the interviewee to give a full narrative of the subject matter. The data collection process was based on the narrative and strengths based approaches. The interviewer began the interview by asking questions that allowed the interviewee to tell her (hi)story, and the research schedule ensured that at the end of the interview, all relevant areas had been covered. Each individual face-to-face interview lasted between one to one-and-a-half hours. The manner in which meaning was transmitted to and received by the researcher will be expanded on in chapter three.

The data obtained at the interviews was audio-recorded (with the permission of the interviewee), transcribed, and collated to form observations and themes. The data was inductively analyzed. Inductive generalization, according to Mouton (2001:117) “involves applying inferences from specific observations (such as a sample of cases) to a theoretical population.” Experiences are frequently generalized from a small quantity of observations to a universal population or set of actions. The data was analyzed according to Tesch’s approach which will be expanded on in chapter three.

1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS:

De Vos (1998:24) describes ethics as a set of moral principles that offers regulations and behavioural expectations about the most proper conduct towards experimental subjects. These guidelines serve as regulatory principles on which the researcher should evaluate his/her own conduct. These ethics will be expanded on in chapter three.

1.10 REFLEXIVITY:

In conducting qualitative research, the researcher aims to be objective towards the respondent, while absorbing her (hi)story and interacting empathically with her. In order to achieve objectivity it is necessary that the

researcher bears in mind and aims to control her own bias towards the respondent and the subject matter, thus adopting an attitude of neutrality. Tutty, Rothery and Gronnel (1996) suggest that as qualitative researchers bring their own cultural assumptions with them, they risk enforcing a foreign frame of reference in understanding the experience and meanings of the people they study.

1.11 PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND RATIONALE:

The researcher became interested in family dynamics while counseling children during a training placement at a school in Athlone, Cape Town. She became aware of many interpersonal family problems that affected her clients adversely. This has led to an interest in exploring the effects of family dynamics on members of the family system.

Advice by social commentators is freely available on how society should respond to divorce. Differing opinions suggest either strengthening the traditional family, cutting down on resources to force the woman to remain in the marriage, or providing more benefits and social supports to single parents. Kurz (1995) states that little information is available on what divorced women themselves think about the impact of divorce on their lives, in particular in raising their children. The researcher has therefore decided to explore the subject from the single mother's perspective, and to conduct the data collection from a narrative and strengths based perspective. The reason for choosing this approach towards questioning is because it encourages the respondent to view the situation from an empowering and strengths based perspective.

1.12 LITERATURE REVIEW:

The researcher has undertaken an extensive literature appraisal, which includes the history and impact of divorce, stresses and support systems of single mothers, narrative, strengths based and feminist approaches to

divorce, and psychodynamic perspectives. These will be explored in chapter two.

1.13 DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY:

Single parent refers in this study to mothers who were previously married and have now been divorced for a period of 2 or more years. For this purpose, single fathers and mothers who are separated, widowed, or were never married, have been excluded from the study. Single parent, or one-parent family, implies that the family contains only one parent, while in most situations both parents are alive (Parkinson, 1987).

Divorce refers to the legal dissolution of a marriage. For the purpose of this study, mothers who have been divorced for a period of two or more years are being interviewed.

Custodial parent refers to the parent who has been legally granted the right to guardianship of the child. The child will spend most of its time with this parent, while being allowed by the court to spend weekends or holidays with the remaining parent. In the cases being explored, the mother is the custodial parent and she attends to the daily requirements and supervision of the child.

Experience refers to what happens to a person, what is seen, done, felt or lived through. It is also the knowledge or skill gained by doing, observing or living through things: all of the actions, events or states which make up the life of a person. However, experience of the same event by different individuals will result in differing perceptions of the experience.

Perception relates to insights, apprehension, discernment, inferment, and comprehension. Roth (1976) states that "perception concerns both our knowledge of, or belief about, the world in all its facets, and the means by which we acquire this knowledge". She suggests that perception "involves going beyond what is given" (Roth, 1976). Accuracy in perception may be inconsistent and idiosyncratic. Social perception relates to the information and beliefs we have about people; their characteristics, qualities and inner states, and the ways in which we obtain this knowledge. The ways in which

a person perceives a situation or relationship is dependent on how he/she appraises the event and construes what is happening (Lazarus, 1999).

Culture refers to the widely shared customs, beliefs, values, norms, institutions and other products of a community that are transmitted socially across generations (Weiten, 2001).

Support refers to the social and emotional strength and sustenance that people require of each other through their interactions (Braude, 1993).

Childrearing refers to bringing up and raising of children. Aspects of childrearing include providing for the child's emotional, physical, spiritual and educational needs.

1.14 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION:

Chapter one has provided a brief introduction to the study. In chapter two the pertinent literature addressing the topic is explored, including narrative and strengths based theories. The literature review situates this study within a broader context and affords a critical framework within which to examine and observe the subject matter. Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology of the study, the limitations of the research, and research ethics. Chapter four contains an analysis of the data collected. Chapter five presents and discusses the finding of the study. Chapter six, the final chapter, presents the findings of the study, and recommendations are made.

1.15 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

Chapter one has provided an introduction to the study, including a brief introduction to the methodology, the setting, rationale, aims and objectives, the research questions and definitions of terminology. Chapter Two will discuss the literature pertinent to the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER:

This chapter explores the literature surrounding the experience of divorce, the impact of divorce on mother and child(ren), and on their relationship. Various selected theories and approaches are presented in order to set the discussion within the conceptual framework of the study. The following areas will be covered.

1. History, process, stages and impact of Divorce
2. Support systems, stress and coping
3. Theoretical frameworks
4. Psychodynamic perspectives
5. Post-modern approaches

2.1 DIVORCE:

2.1.1 History of divorce:

Until the mid-1900's divorce was frowned upon socially and religiously, the general understanding being that a couple married for better or worse, until death. Shifts in values and customs in the last century allowed for divorce to be contemplated in secular society under certain circumstances, such as mental illness and criminal offences. Certain religions, notably Roman Catholicism, still deny divorce to their members.

During the late 1950s, ideas regarding the individual's obligations to family and society underwent modification. A change occurred, away from an ethic of obligation to others and toward an obligation to the self. Concurrently, a greater emphasis seemed to be placed on individual satisfaction in family relationships, emphasizing individual fulfillment and personal growth. It seemed that divorce became an event linked to the search for individual satisfactions, opportunity and growth (Whitehead, 1998). Conventionally, the presence of children in the family was seen as a major obstacle to divorce, as

it was considered that dependent children would incur hardship as a result of their parents' divorce. After the 1960s, dominant views suggested that the happiness of individual parents, rather than an unbroken marriage, was the most important factor in children's family well-being. If parents were happier, so would their children be. Contrary to this outlook, divorce has indeed hurt children (Poponoe, 1988; Kurz, 1995; Whitehead, 1998) by creating economic insecurity, more fragile and unstable family households, and the exodus of fathers from the children's households and possibly their lives.

A pervading 19th century concept of the mother-child bond as the most important and durable of all family relationships, required mothers to emotionally identify with children and to accept responsibility for their children's emotional pain, physical health and safety. The idea that mothers and children share the same status and fate in family life shaped the impact of divorce on women and children. Their destiny was seen to be emotional distress, economic struggle and social isolation (Whitehead, 1998).

In the early 20th century, the literature noted that "life after divorce was limiting and unliberating, tying mother to new and burdensome economic responsibilities" (Whitehead, 1998). After the marriage ended, the mother was seen as unable to break free from the ex-husband, bound to him in economic dependency. Another theme that emerged was that children suffer emotionally from the absence of the father in the household. Goode, in his 1956 study, observed that "at every developmental phase of childhood, the child needs the father (who is usually the absent parent) as an object of love, security or identification, or even as a figure against whom to rebel safely" (Whitehead, 1998). A third theme suggested that mothers would bear the weight of their children's pain. As the mother considered herself responsible for her children's well-being, their unhappiness would constantly remind her of both her marital failure and maternal failure. The message given to mothers was that divorce was difficult and children would suffer. Pressure

was placed on mothers to rather remain in unhappy marriages and work towards fixing them, rather than divorce.

The psychological revolution of the 1970s led to the creation of the term "expressive divorce" (Whitehead, 1998). The relationship between economic well-being and personal contentment weakened as women's sense of personal well-being became more reliant on the richness of their emotional lives, the intensity and quality of feelings and the diversity of opportunities for self expression. People redefined unhappiness as psychological in nature rather than situational. Many of those who were dissatisfied with their personal happiness within the marital relationship sought divorce. Expressive divorce excluded other parties from the right of the individual to seek divorce. Moral obligation for the happiness of others was no longer the responsibility of the adult seeking divorce. The individual was entitled to divorce in order to pursue inner contentment. The individualistic approach to divorce neglects the image of marriage as the principal realm of obligation and commitment, particularly to children.

2.1.2 The Jewish perspective on divorce:

Divorce is discouraged in the Jewish religion and attempts are made to convince a couple contemplating divorce "to preserve the marriage for the benefit of the family" (Kaufman, 1993:182). Special provisions in obtaining the Jewish divorce contract, (the *get piturin*) are designed to slow down the process and provide time for the couple to reconsider the decision to divorce, to encourage reconciliation, and to protect the woman (Kaufman, 1993). However, the Jewish religion recognizes that divorce is necessary when there is a marital breakdown that is beyond repair. In these instances, divorce is liberally granted; citing of irreconcilable differences that make living together unbearable is sufficient grounds for divorce.

2.1.3 Stages of divorce:

The process of divorce involves a great deal of stress, ambivalence, indecision, self-doubt and uncertainty. Divorce seldom occurs abruptly but

involves a number of events before a decision to separate is made. Bohanan (1970; 1984, in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994) describes six overlapping stages before divorce is accomplished. These include emotional divorce, legal divorce, economic divorce, co-parental divorce, community divorce and psychic divorce. The whole procedure stems from the past, before the divorce was considered, and will affect the future. Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) as well as Kaslow and Schwartz (1987, in Goldberg & Goldenberg, 1994), argue that each family member, including children and adults, will be greatly affected at each stage. Each person will have to redefine him/herself as part of a divorced family, and must learn how to cope with this identity, integrating it with society at large, as well as with other family members.

Divorce is seen as comprising two separate events – the inner breakdown of affection and commitment, and the official dissolution of the marital partnership. The emotional divorce precedes the legal divorce, and is sometimes not completely over with until long after the marriage has legally ended. But it is the psychological, rather than the legal divorce, that denotes the true divorce. The legal divorce purely confirms the emotional divorce (Whitehead, 1998; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

The first year after the divorce is described by Carter and McGoldrick (1989) as the aftermath; it is a time of bewilderment and confusion. It is necessary for the woman to reclaim her self and her personal life goals from the marriage and to reinvest expectations in the self. Changes must be made to the nuclear family and roles and tasks within the remaining family system. The next phase is described as the realignment, moving from a state of crisis to one of transition. This period lasts two to three years and changes in relationships are established as well as economic and social adjustments. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) refer to a third stage as stabilization at which time energy and attention should be available to deal with the natural developmental tasks of the family system.

2.1.4 Impact of divorce:

The mother and child are a dyad and therefore the impact of the divorce on the mother will also affect her child/ren and visa versa. As noted by Winnicott "there is no such thing as an infant" because wherever there is a baby there is someone taking care of it (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987).

2.1.4.1 Practical considerations

Immediately after the divorce, mothers are often overwhelmed by their situation, often finding themselves financially insecure and having to deal with a multitude of changes, including accommodation, moving to a new neighbourhood, finding employment, dealing with the new family structure and playing the roles of carer and provider. Women have described these stressful events as "overwhelming" (Kurz, 1995:105).

Findings in a study by Hart (1976, in Parkinson, 1986) indicated that 80% of divorced adults considered loneliness their most pressing problem while other researchers have found a decrease in economic resources to be most critical (Kurz, 1999; Whitehead, 1998; Hendrick, 2004).

2.1.4.2 Mother's awareness of her role

Societal values

The consequences of divorce have been explored by Wallerstein and her colleagues from a deficit perspective, (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Corbin, 1989), and these findings continue to be most often cited in studies of divorce, and have been most influential in determining popular beliefs regarding the consequences of divorce (Boney, 2003). The researcher intends to study the experiences from a post-modernist perspective by exploring coping strategies and competencies that have empowered individuals and families to manage and thrive after severe structural upheaval.

Boney (2003) suggests that alternative research perspectives need to be explored to investigate positive outcomes in children of divorce, normal development in different family types, and processes that positively influence adjustment to family transitions. Research on variations within groups of individuals who have experienced parental divorce have indicated positive growth and encouraging adaptation in many post-divorce families (Arditti, 1979, in Boney, 2003; Barnes, 2004).

The mother's understanding of and perceptions regarding family roles, and in particular her own role in the family system, will impact on how she deals with the divorce. The values substantiated by her culture and society will also influence attitudes. Those mothers emerging from a traditional nuclear family perspective might incur feelings of guilt at their perceived failure to succeed at marriage. Feminists, on the other hand, might consider the failure of their marriage to be relational and a cause of lack of personal growth. Thus, the mother's own perceptions of her circumstances will influence how well-prepared she is for the divorce and how she deals with the consequences.

Women and marriage as an institution

Betty Friedan, a renowned feminist, explains in *The Feminine Mystique* the quandary of women in psychotherapeutic terms. She describes "the problem that has no name" as a vague "inner feeling, a yearning, a restlessness, a malaise, its symptomatology is as hard to pin down as its name" (in Whitehead, 1998:50). Friedan sees the cause of the problem as the stunting of women's opportunities for personal growth. Referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, she suggests that women's domestic roles prevent them from progressing up the scale of needs toward individual fulfillment and the realization of their complete human potential. Friedan recognizes that women require emotional and intellectual fulfillment as well as economic rewards.

Bernard argues that marriage was good for men but not for women. Her depiction of marriage as being unequal for men and women reflects the

feminist view of marriage as an “institution of patriarchal power and dominance which kept women in a subordinate and inferior status” (Whitehead, 1998:51). She further suggests that marriage is the source of reduced physical and emotional welfare of women. On the other hand, contrasting views suggest that marriage and parenthood play a major part in identity and social status. Parkinson (1987) states that persons who lose their identity and social position may become seriously depressed and even lose the will to live.

Reasons for divorce included personal incompatibilities and personal-growth issues, as well as interpersonal difficulties (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994; Kurz, 1995). Kurz (1995) refers to power differentials within unequal marriage in which women are encouraged to work, but also to accept full responsibility for the family’s health and welfare. While the majority of married couples believed that husband and wife should share the responsibilities of earning money and household responsibilities, the majority of housework remained the burden of the wife adding a second work shift to her paid labour. Another cause for concern in marriage was the belief that men should control family decision-making. Experts believe that this has led to wife battering and violence towards women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kurz, 1995).

Since divorced mothers must play the role of two parents, they have less time to devote to the children. Divorced mothers’ own reports indicate that they have less time to read to their children, share meals with them and supervise their school activities. They also implement fewer rules and exercise less control regarding their children’s activities (Whitehead, 1998).

2.1.4.3 Financial impact

Problems in single-parent families are often increased by a reduction of income in the home, and a decrease in economic resources. Pryor and Rogers (2001) states that single mothers often have to move to cheaper

accommodation, and "the instability of neighbourhoods, households, and relationship that accompanies multiple family change is the greatest threat to children's wellbeing". Other researchers (Dizard & Gadlin, 1990; Kurz, 1995; Whitehead, 1998) concur, reporting that divorce is a primary cause of families ending up in poverty, and being obliged to accept severely reduced standards of living, isolation and struggles with welfare, employers and schools.

Impact on children

In the Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) study on white, middleclass families in the U.S.A. results indicated that divorce carries multiple risks and losses for children, including loss of income, loss of contact with fathers, loss of residential permanence, lower educational and job achievement, and likelihood of teenage parenthood, that could not be fully explained by income effects. The decline in economic resources of mothers after separation averages fifty percent, indicating that divorce is a cause and not an effect of economic disadvantage (Whitehead, 1998). Financial hardship is commonly encountered in single parent families, and fathers' financial contributions to their families decrease substantially when parents separate, and further as the father-child bond deteriorates (Whitehead, 1998).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980, in Carter & McGoldrick, 1989) have found that children aged six to eight suffer the most from divorce, as they are able to realize what is happening but do not have the skills to deal with the situation. They suffer tremendous guilt, often feel responsible for the breakup and appear to be sad, and fantasize about reconciliation. Bitter divorces may result in children having loyalty conflicts and assuming inappropriate parental roles and responsibilities. This may result in increased guilt for having broken up the marriage, frustration with the child not accepting the situation, and a threat to family homeostasis.

Some writers (Coll, Surrey & Weingarten, 1998; Hendrick, 2004) state that there is a greater risk of antisocial involvement, poorer academic achievement

and lower self-esteem, in adolescent boys raised without a father's influence. Although girls also need a father figure, the risk for fatherless girls is not as urgent. The father figure provides boys with self-esteem, discipline, gender identity, supervision and financial support. Coll et al (1998) however suggest that instead of asserting that boys need their fathers, we should concentrate on what single mothers need to raise their children successfully. These issues are often politically manipulated. They note that an important component of a child's self-esteem is cognitive, and the child is in a position to strengthen his self-esteem and reduce shame by having cognitive clarity over why the father is no longer present in the family.

2.1.4.4 Familial relationships

Mother's relationships with children

Single, divorced mothers often lack confidence in limit setting with their children. Critics of single mothers have stated that "mothers destroy manliness" and produces feminized men. This problem is often the result of a mother's lack of conviction of her own effectiveness (Pryor & Rogers, 2001).

Mother's relationship with ex-spouse

The mother-child bond may also be challenged by their extremely varied attitudes towards the children's father. In a loving relationship, affection between parents is communicated to the children in many ways. Once the marriage has dissolved, the mother seldom communicates positive feelings regarding her ex-spouse. Mothers may be openly hostile toward the father, or silent when he is mentioned. Children may feel the need to hide the love they feel for their father.

Whitehead (1998) states that empirical evidence provides a means of assessing the claim that children's emotional problems are caused by marital strife rather than divorce. The study indicates that children with warring married parents do suffer from emotional difficulties before the divorce, compared with children in families where the parents' relationship is amicable.

The same research raises doubt on the assumption that divorce consistently improves children's relationships with their parents or elicits domestic peace and contentment. Pryor and Rogers (2001) argue that the mother might suffer severe stress by maintaining contact with the children's father, and that this stress might actually outweigh the benefits of the contact to the children, by reducing the quality of the mother's relationship with her children. However, they continue that when fathers are involved parents, children show high levels of well-being in many ways, including cognitive competence, empathy and internal locus of control. This, in turn, decreases anti-social behaviour and consequently reduces additional stress to the mother. Amato and Rezac (1994:24) found that "children's contact with nonresident parents decreased children's behaviour problems when interparental conflict is low, but increases ...when interparental conflict is high" amongst boys, but found no evidence to support this hypothesis with girls. Machida and Holloway (1991) describe post divorce adjustment for children to be more favourable when there is low parental conflict before and after divorce, and when child-father contact is regular.

Owusubempah (1995) conducted a study that investigated the amount and quality of information possessed by children aged 5 to 19 about their absent parent on their emotional, intellectual and social development. Findings indicated that those who possessed adequate and favourable information about the absent parent fared better on emotional well-being, academic achievement and behaviour.

Peck and Manocherian (1989) regard the post divorce relationship between parents as the most critical factor in the functioning of the family. While the continuing contact with both parents is the most important factor in children's post separation adjustment, the level of interparental conflict may be more essential to the child's post divorce adjustment than parental absence or the divorce itself (Emery, 1982). A study by Luepnitz (1982, in Carter &

McGoldrick, 1989) found ongoing conflict was the only predictor of poor adjustment in children.

Father's Role

The father's contribution to his children is not only financial, as, most importantly, he is a provider of guidance and discipline. He plays a role on which children can model their own behaviour. Concerns have been aired regarding whether boys, in particular, can develop suitable gender roles without the presence of male role models (Pryor & Rogers, 2000; Popenoe, 1996). Zastrow (1989) and Allison and Furstenberg (1989, in Pryor & Rogers 2001) note that boys are more adversely affected immediately after divorce than girls, but that this statistic changes in the long term.

Mother's sexuality modeling

A large number of single and cohabiting mothers bring lovers into the children's household. The climate in these new relationships is far more passionate than that of parents who have been married for a number of years and have settled into a sedate sexual lifestyle. The mother may influence her daughter's attitude towards sexual behaviour by role modeling inappropriate actions. Thornton (in Whitehead, 1998) suggests that daughters of divorced and remarried mothers have more lenient views of sex outside of marriage than daughters whose mothers remained in their marriages. These girls also have more permissive views regarding divorce itself.

2.1.4.5 Positive impact of divorce

In a study rating different life events as stressful, divorce scored second only to death of a spouse as a life-changing event. Despite the economic hardship experienced by mothers after divorce, Kurz (1995) found that women have more positive feelings about their state of mind after the dissolution of the marriage, than during the marriage. This is largely due to not being undermined, controlled or in difficult marriages. Women have reported that

benefits include independence, autonomy and freedom to make their own decisions.

Critical mediating factors include the reason for the divorce, the way decisions are made, and the way the process is managed and experienced. People can cope with high levels of stress if they are adequately supported and divorce may lead to greatly improved physical health and far greater happiness (Parkinson, 1986).

In general, researchers have failed to establish agreement on whether divorce has a long-term negative impact on children. Some researchers believe that after an initial period of adjustment, children of divorced parents continue to lead as normal and productive lives as those whose parents did not divorce. Other researchers maintain that children in marriages of poor quality with high levels of conflict are worse off than children of divorce.

2.2 SUPPORT SYSTEMS:

Divorce does not always create better-tempered mothers. Barnes (2004) states that divorced mothers may become more punitive, bad-tempered and unpredictable. Support systems are the most important resources available to single mothers to help them cope with their situations.

2.2.1 Programs:

Barnes (2004) has found that parenting programs that focus on stability, explanation based discipline and time-out procedures are effective in assisting parents to become less susceptible to coercive cycles, and to gain confidence. Others (Miller, 1987; Pryor & Rogers, 2001) concur and suggest that programs focusing on reducing loyalty conflicts in children are useful resources.

2.2.2 Family support:

Barnes (2004) also suggests family meetings should be conducted to reduce negativity and mutual dislike between family members. The literature states that the custodial mother, despite her own stress and problems, is the most significant source of support for the child (Braude & La Grange, 1993; Barnes, 2004). Pryor and Rogers (2001) state that after divorce, mother and children become closer and children experience psychological growth, maturity and independence, as well as good understanding of people and relationships. On the other hand, however, they do warn against blurring of boundaries, when children bear the burden of providing emotional and practical support for the custodial parent. Taking this a step further, evidence exists of the damaging effect of overtly rigid mother-child boundaries (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey & Simek-Morgan, 2002).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee's 1989 research found that the mother-child bond is damaged by divorce. At the ten-year mark, more than a third of the good mother-child relationship had declined, with mothers emotionally or physically less accessible to their children (Whitehead, 1998).

Supportive relationships from extended family members, including both maternal and paternal grandparents, siblings, as well as from neighbours, and friends are important support resources. Miller (1987) describes family loyalty and open communication between family members as providing comfort to members. Religious faith and religious ties offer some families support.

In a study by Combrinck-Graham (1998) among poor, black, single mother families in the USA, it was found that those families who were more involved with their family and relatives experienced higher stress. Higher levels of stress occurred when there was more regular contact with relations, when more emotional assistance was given to relatives, and when mothers had stronger emotions about relatives than relatives had about them. Thus, the

social networks of less adaptive families seemed to provide more stress than support. Distress seems to be caused by a lack of reciprocity, and perceptions of giving more than receiving in return. Social relationships can have both negative and positive psychological results, leading to disillusionment about the quality and quantity of social support given in times of crisis. Thoits (1986, in Lazarus, 1999) states that having support depends on an attempt to nurture social relationships and to draw on them when necessary.

2.2.3 Rehearsal:

In response to the problem of the mother's ability to cope with living alone with children and without coupledness, Barnes (2004) suggests that mothers benefit from the opportunity to rehearse situations with an outsider to the home. This person may be a therapist or a friend.

2.2.4 School support role:

The value of the child's school environment as a source of support for the family experiencing divorce appears contentious. On the one hand, Braude and La Grange (1993) suggest that the school is in a position to – and should – offer effective emotional support and groups for children and parents. They further emphasize the value of teachers – within the school system – knowing the children and key family particulars, promoting open expression and acceptance of emotions, demonstrating acceptance of diverse family structures (and adjusting letters and assignments to display this), and maintaining communication with parents (Braude & La Grange, 1993). Contrastingly, however, Ferri (1976) counters this opinion by suggesting that care should be taken in divulging family circumstances to schools, as – when teachers are aware of home circumstances – poor scholastic performance may be attributed to the family situation, and the prophesy of low expectations of children from single-parent families fulfilled. Worth noting, however, is the fact that this opinion dates back to 1976 and attitudes to divorce have since changed.

Pertinent to this study, is Braude's research study in 1993 into the divorced mothers' evaluations of the above support systems. Braude's research at a Jewish school in Gauteng found that 52% of divorced mothers perceived support from school to be positive, and 71% perceived the teacher at time of divorce to have been supportive. Eighty percent described the school's attitude towards divorced parents and their families as accepting. Her study also indicated that religious leaders, doctors and groups or programs provided little support.

2.2.5 Support systems for children:

Child's significant others

Braude and La Grange (1993) state that siblings, friends and neighbours constitute significant sources of support for the child experiencing parental divorce. Furthermore, grandparents – especially maternal grandparents – appear to play the crucial role of buffer between parents and children (Miller, 1987; Braude & La Grange, 1993; Pryor & Rogers, 2001). However, Combrinck-Graham (1989:238) warns that "cross-generational alliance between grandparents and child frequently defeat parental authority".

Finally, formal support networks - for example, doctors, religious leaders, lawyers, schools – and professional helpers – such as social workers – serve a similar, systemic, supportive function. Thus, the existence of these support systems will indirectly assist the mother in coping.

Child's preparedness for divorce

The extent to which the child is prepared for divorce constitutes a measure of support for the child. Parents should provide the child with a reasonable explanation of divorce and according to his/her developmental level, the consequences for the child. A lack of preparation of the child leads to feelings of insecurity, abandonment, confusion and being overwhelmed, resulting in a lack of clarity about the immediate future, a tendency to fantasize and an inability to accept and communicate feelings (Pryor & Rogers, 2001). It is

thus the responsibility of the mother to present an unbiased view of the divorce to the child. Likewise, a study by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980, in Braude & La Grange, 1993) found that parents had not realized the extent of their children's anxiety at the time of the breakup of the marriage. Mitchell (1985, in Braude & La Grange, 1993) states that parents often underestimate the effect of their divorce on their children because of their own extreme inner turmoil.

2.3 STRESS-INDUCING NATURE OF DIVORCE:

Stress is defined by Falloon, Laporta, Fadden and Graham-Hole (1993) as an individual's response to threat. These responses may be psychological, behavioural, physiological or biochemical.

2.3.1 Stress and family:

The objective event of divorce

In their 1967 study, which included forty-three life stress events, Holmes and Rahe found that the objective event of gaining or losing a family member ranked within the top 14 listed stressors. Indeed, The Social Readjustment Rating Scale of Holmes and Rahe (1967) lists divorce as the second most distressing life change, second only to the death of a spouse.

Raparport (in Hoffman, 1981:162) describes family stress events as "the critical transition points in the *normal, expectable* development of the family life cycle: getting married, birth of the first child, death of a spouse". This is best understood in the context of John Haley's (1993) linear Family Life Cycle model, wherein the family is assumed to naturally progress through six developmental stages (young adults, new couple, childbirth and childrearing, middle marriage, leaving home and new families). While family tension is to be expected during stage transitions, extreme stress (even family dysfunction) is purported to be the result of "a dislocation or disruption in the anticipated natural unfolding of the life cycle" (Capuzzi & Gross, 2003: 285). The complete collapse of the marital dyad may constitute such an interruption

– indeed, according to Eliot (in Hoffman, 1981) – family crisis is a likely consequence of the family membership alteration that accompanies divorce.

Further explanations for the stress-inducing nature of divorce are provided with reference to major versus minor life events. Recent research has indicated that daily hassles are more significant factors in negative health effects than major life events (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1981; Lazarus, 1981, Lazarus, 1984). To explain this incongruity, Lazarus (1999) explains that a major life event such as divorce affects morale, social functioning and health by disturbing and altering the day-by-day grind of stress, adding new burdens and aggravations, and in turn resulting in more daily hassles, many of which are recurrent or chronic.

Family's perception of divorce

In contrast, some literature suggests that the event of divorce is not in itself stressful; rather, it is the subjective perception of the event that determines the intensity of stress-reactions. According to some researchers, the family's perception of stressful events is an important factor in evaluating its impact. Here, the cognitive process of subjective perception decides the nature of the stress response and ensuing coping abilities. Adaptive families tend to highlight positive events and to downplay negative aspects of stressful events. Those who argue for a more objective view (above) cite their findings: no correlation between the negative perception of an event and the amount of stress attached to it (Holmes & Rahe, 1967, in Braude, 1993).

Stress regarding children

Studies by Arditti and Maddenderdich (1995) reported that single divorced mothers anxieties were often focused on how the divorce had affected the children and the difficulties associated with single parenting. The mothers' loss and guilt was offset by positive attributions that divorce had led to greater personal happiness and more rewarding lives for mothers and better parent-child relationships. However, Ethier and Lafreniere (1993) examined

the relationship between maternal stress and childhood aggression, and found that more children were categorized as aggressive in single parent families. The effect of this was that divorced mothers demonstrated a higher level of stress than married mothers of similarly aggressive children. In relation to child-rearing, such elevated stress may result in single mothers being more controlling and less positive with their children (Ethier & Lafreniere, 1993).

A further problem raised by Barnes (2004) is the worry women have regarding the irresponsibility shown by fathers, and apprehension over how children thrive or deteriorate during contact visits. Mothers may be concerned over their ex-spouses drinking, television watching or television supervision, as well as safety issues. But Hetherington et al (1978, in Barnes, 2004) notes the importance of overnight contacts as an occasion to extend relaxed relationships and routines that create a bond between fathers and children.

2.3.2 Mitigating factors:

Individual's vulnerability to stress

It is necessary to consider why some people are more vulnerable to stress than others. Lazarus (1999:55) states that "stress cannot be predicted without reference to personality traits and processes that account for the individual differences in the ways people respond to a so-called stressful stimulus". Following the 'subjective-appraisal' logic, Lazarus suggests that it is the meaning that a person constructs about the event that is fundamental to the arousal of stress reactions. Individuals will experience the same stress in different ways and a report of no stress or moderate stress may be due to the individual's ability to deal with the demand by adopting certain attitudes, calling on social support or incorporating the hassle into daily routines.

The individual's coping mechanisms

Gottlieb (in Lazarus, 1999) suggests that some people may have the skills necessary to integrate hardships, while others may experience incessant disturbance and distress. Indeed, the coping behaviour of a person will alter the level of stress experienced as a consequence of any stressor. Falloon and McGill, 1985 (in Falloon et al, 1993) state that the manner in which stress is managed is dependent on the problems associated with the stressor as well as people's immediate responses to it, and includes the problem-solving capacity of the person's close social network.

Locus of control

Whether the mother considers that she has any control over her circumstances and the behaviour of her children, may depend on her locus of control orientation. Persons with an "internal locus of control perceive the consequences (rewards, punishments) which they encounter as under personal control (due to or influenced by their own actions and abilities) as opposed to the external forces beyond their personal control (luck, fate or powerful others)" (Rotter, 1966 in Morgan, 1988:35). Others, who consider what happens to them as being outside of their control, have an external locus of control. The literature (Everett, 1989; Machida & Holloway, 1991; Carr, 1999) states that the characteristics of warmth, availability and authoritative control in parents assist children in having a positive adjustment to the new family structure.

While divorced mothers often have little control over their circumstances- especially in regard to finances and their ex-husband's behaviour, Machida and Holloway (1991) found that those who used avoidance strategies to cope suffered more distress, felt less in control and were less authoritative.

2.4 COPING:

Coping relates to the manner in which individuals manage stressful life conditions (Lazarus, 1999). Coping is an essential feature of stress and

emotional reactions, and may be considered a structural or personality characteristic or – as Lazarus recommends – a *process* formulation. The former refers to an habitual trait or method of dealing with stress, while the latter refers to an unacceptable life situation that the individual wishes to change.

The means of coping in the process-focused approach (or problem-focused coping) is to acquire information about what to do, and activate procedures to change the reality of the distressing person-environment relationship. Emphasized here is the relationship between the demands of the stressor itself, and the resources available to the individual. Thus, problem-focused coping involves direct, proactive attempts to either minimize the demands of the stressor itself, or increase the resources available in dealing with them (Lazarus, 1999). The emotion-focused approach, by contrast, is geared towards normalizing the emotions attached to the stress situation, without altering the realities of the stressful situation (Lazarus, 1999). Machida and Holloway (1991) suggest that in the case of divorce, emotion-focused coping may be more appropriate, as many aspects of the situation are outside of the control of the mother.

After the divorce, the individual partners must deal with a sense of failure in the marriage, maintain contact with the divorced partner and deal with post divorce problems of child custody and financial affairs (Lazarus, 1999).

2.4.1 Single mothers and coping:

Financial Coping

The main area of concern for most divorced mothers is economic hardship. Many living below the poverty line (39% in America, according to Kurz, [1995]), divorced mothers endure a constant battle to maintain an adequate standard of living. Due to a lack of work opportunities, increased family responsibilities, inadequate childcare services and low-paying jobs, many women are forced to lower their living standards post-divorce. Child-support

payments from fathers provide necessary aid, but many women do not receive the required payment from ex-husbands.

Adopting problem-focused coping strategies, many such women take on extra work to make ends meet, thus requiring additional childcare arrangements. The resulting decrease in quality time spent with the children is accompanied by an increase in fatigue. Alternatively, women may turn to their families of origin for financial support. This, however, creates dependence and enhances feelings of failure. Furthermore, while parents are often willing to give financial and social support, they frequently expect compliance in return.

Social and Emotional Coping

Adopting a more emotion-focused coping style, divorced women may deal with social and emotional difficulties by taking il/legal drugs or turning to alcohol to block out the pain (Kurz, 1995). Anti-depressants and nerve medications have been helpful to some women. Use may be made of certain defense mechanisms, including denial, repression, altruistic surrender, displacement, reaction formation and others. These reactive defenses, whether negative or positive, comprise a form of emotion-focused coping which may assist the individual in coping with stress. Some women have sought counseling. Kurz reports that all the women she interviewed who had received counseling found it beneficial, as it was reported to have assisted them in gaining confidence and creating a new identity. Religion was also described as a source of material and social support.

Single mothers often find that they lack time to socialize, and Dizard and Gadlin (1990) state that many single parents prefer remaining single to the stress of maintaining a relationship. While divorced mothers gain autonomy, they are often lonely.

2.5 UNDERSTANDING FAMILIES

The respondent in this research study is the mother, but her experiences are being shared regarding other family system members, that is, the children. The mother is one member of the family system, and her experiences and perceptions may be seen to represent the system's functioning. Therefore, this study is set within the framework of General Systems Theory and the Structural Approach. The mother is seen as part of a family system, from which the father has been removed or distanced.

2.5.1 Systems theory:

General systems theory emerged in the 1940's as a way of "conceptualizing seemingly unrelated phenomena and understanding how together they represent interrelated components of a larger system" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994:58). In order to understand how systems work, the functioning of separate parts can be examined and this requires investigating the relationship between family members, and the interfunctioning of all the parts that comprise the unit. Each experience within the family is multiply decided by all of the forces working within the system, and each variable will influence every other variable, often recursively.

When parents divorce, generally one parent becomes a full-time and the other a part-time parent (Braude & La Grange, 1993). The different dimensions in the McMaster Model of Family Functioning (Epstein & Bishop, 1981) may be affected in the family system, in a single parent family. Systems theory links well with narrative approach, as the exploration of "unique outcomes" are also used to explore different ways of managing difficult situations more competently. Basic family functioning comprises two full time occupations. One is maintaining the household and caring for the children, and the second is income production. Therefore, a potential problem for all single mothers is task overload (Combrinck-Graham, 1989; Coll et al, 1998).

In relation to how families regard their own functioning, the term "family concept" has been used by Combrinck-Graham (1998). In a study undertaken by Combrinck-Graham successful single parent families viewed themselves as "integrated, support-giving units that valued loyalty, home-centeredness, consideration, communication and closeness" (1998:125).

2.5.2 Structural approach:

Minuchin's structural approach is based on systems theory and family functioning within the nuclear family. His work is founded on a well functioning family which is organized and has clearly marked boundaries. Therapy entails noting the dysfunctional boundaries and roles in the family and redesigning family organization to encompass clear generational lines (Hoffman, 1981).

When a married couple raises children together, there is a natural system of checks and balances. While exceptionally opposite approaches to child rearing can raise conflict, most parents agree to common goals while using different emphases, compassion and capabilities in raising their children. Generally, their complementary approaches help stabilize and buffer their respective relationships with the children. However, after divorce, these harmonizing differences could change into unrelenting disagreement, distrust and antagonism. Boundaries could be affected in terms of clarity and definition.

After the dissolution of a marriage, each member of the family is required to alter the role he/she plays in the reconstructed family. Family disintegration could destabilize the members' lives, and may lead to the loss of the family home and a move to new neighbourhoods. For example, the custodial parent could assume extra roles, while the non-custodial parent no longer lives with a family. The removal of the father from the nuclear family may result in a child taking over the parental role or the mother becoming more dependant on the children. The level of family organization is most important in shaping

how tasks will be performed. The executive sub-system (Combrinck-Graham, 1989) is crucial in indicating who may engage in parental executive behaviour and who must obey those in charge. In situations where the single mother is the only adult figure actively involved, the likelihood of overload swells. Should the cultural ideal of the two-parent family exist, the parent may attempt to play the role of both mother and father. The result of this structure may result in over dependence in both parent and child/ren. Especially in cases where the mother lacks support of her peer group or another adult, vital parent tasks such as discipline could be compromised, due to the complexity in generating the emotional distance needed to set limits. Combrinck-Graham suggests that the most challenging executive structure is formed when a child takes more responsibility than the parent.

Pearson (1993) suggests roles may shift in the newly created single-parent family. It is difficult for one parent to play the role of mother, father, and wage earner. One child might play the role of surrogate parent. An older child may become the emotional comforter for younger siblings. A child may become a "sounding board" and help to solve problems. In this situation, the family could become more democratic and share decision making, rather than parental control being enforced.

Parkinson (1987) suggests that family patterns are changing speedily because of large-scale divorce. Traditionally it has been assumed that women should be the primary caretakers of their children and that women and children should be financially dependent on men. These assumptions are based on a patriarchal society. Psychoanalytic theory has influenced the theories of child development, including the importance of the mother-child dyad. A close relationship between father and child may be seen as less essential, provided the mother-child relationship is intact.

A study by Leve and Fagot (1997) conducted to investigate parental discipline and gender-role socialization amongst five-year-old children in different family

structures indicated that single-parent families had less traditional gender-role socialization than two-parent families. Discipline processes were also affected by family structure and single-parent families reported more positive behaviour from their children and reported using more problem-solving strategies.

2.5.3 Psychodynamic perspectives:

Psychodynamic theory is a broad set of constructs and practices with its origins in psychoanalytic theory, diverting emphasis from unconscious biological drives (Freudian drive theory) to the influence of an individual's early object relations (the key people an individual relates to in time). Emphasized is the idea that although individuals are primarily unaware (unconscious) of their influence, such object relations are acted out in daily behaviour, resulting in repetitive patterns of interactions (Ivey et al, 2002). Bowlby's theory of attachment (1969) and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978:36) attribute this to " 'internalized 'working models' of interpersonal interactions between the self and others".

2.5.3.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a useful tool to identify ways in which mothers and children relate to each other. The change in the family system may impact on the attachment dimension of the relationship between all members in the system, including that between mothers and their children.

Types of attachment

Ainsworth has identified five types of attachment experience. Each pattern of attachment generates a broad style of personality, modified by the natural temperamental differences each individual brings to a relationship. The quality of a person's relationship environment is largely influenced by his/her attachment experiences with his/her primary caregivers. Therefore, different patterns of attachment result in different behaviours, personalities and

relationships style (Howe, 1996). The five types of attachment experiences are:

- Secure attachment – involves consistent, responsive and loving parental care. Communication is rich and full, reciprocal and accurate, and harmonious. Children are able to establish a clear understanding of themselves, others and the relationships they have.
- Insecure, anxious and ambivalent attachments - parents are inconsistent, unreliable and unpredictable. Children feel unable to communicate their emotional and cognitive state to their caregivers, and display ambivalence – need and anger, dependence and resistance.
- Insecure, anxious and avoidant attachments – parents are indifferent towards or rejecting of their children. Children find it difficult to make close relationships. They become compulsively self-reliant. They are unable to handle conflict and anxiety.
- Insecure, anxious and disorganized attachments – parents are not consistently rejecting, but might be very hostile. Children experience their parents as either frightening or frightened, which triggers the child's anxiety. The child approaches the parent for comfort, but the attachment figure's behaviour frightens them away. They freeze and become emotionally absent.
- Non-attachments – occur mainly in institutions where children have not had the opportunity to develop any selective attachments at all. Children are indiscriminate in future relationships.

The attachment behaviour constitutes the child's endeavor to cope with the apprehensions produced by the caregiver-child relationship.

Mother's childhood attachment

The way in which the mother in the family was initially attached to her family of origin will impact on all her further relationships, including those with her husband and children. All attachments to other human beings derive from

the original bond with the self-object, or mother, in the earliest connection with a significant other (Bloom-Feshbach & Bloom-Feshbach, 1988). According to Bowlby's Theory of Attachment (1969) loss of the object relation is as important as the attachment itself. While the response occurs initially in regard to separation from the mother, importantly it is repeated later whenever there are separations from significant others, such as a marriage partner (Bloom-Feshbach & Bloom-Feshbach, 1988). Considering the repetitive nature of early attachment patterns, the mother's reaction to the loss of her spouse in divorce could be viewed in relation to her primary attachment style.

Child's attachment to parents

It is important to consider whether the child feels abandonment and rejection when parents separate. Pryor and Rodgers (2001) report that children under the age of five are most likely to be afraid that both parents will abandon them. Young children will probably show symptoms of grief and may fantasize that the missing parent will return.

Children aged five to eight years may still yearn for the missing parent, but will be more aware of the tangible aspects of deprivation. Nine to twelve year olds may have an enhanced understanding of the situation, and may feel some mastery, but they will still feel sad, and may use anger to mask their feelings of helplessness and sadness. Adolescents may feel vulnerable in the realm of relationships. Some might develop an accelerated emotional and intellectual maturity, while others might withdraw from the normal teenage challenges of increasing autonomy and peer orientation.

Mother and child: divorce as loss of attachment (& mourning)

In discussing separation and loss in marital dissolution, Bloom-Feshbach and Bloom-Feshbach (1988) draw a comparison between divorce and death, particularly in relation to mourning. While death is considered a clear and unambiguous event that occurs at an exact moment in time, divorce is a process. However, both constitute a universal loss. Regarding divorce, the

sense of being part of a marriage and an intact family dies. The loss of the conviction that a spouse is a lasting and reliable part of life needs to be mourned. This work of mourning requires a confrontation of the inner disorganization and despair (Bowlby, 1979, in Jobson 1991) and a redefinition of identity.

Individual's mourning of lost relationship

White (1989:35) – in discussing the incorporation of the lost relationship in the resolution of grief – refers to those people who are aware that they are suffering from “pathological mourning” or “delayed grief”. Obsessive mourning of the lost relationship conjures feelings of intense emptiness, worthlessness and depression. White suggests that further grief work based on a normative model of working through the stages of grief will complicate the situation further, rather than empower the individual and enrich his/her life. He therefore devised the “saying hullo” metaphor which raises the possibility of the individual reclaiming the positive aspects of their relationship with the lost loved one, embracing the good of the past relationship rather than lamenting the bad.

Attachment and the absent father

Laumann-Billings and Enmery, (2000, in Pryor & Rogers 2001) state that children generally want to have their fathers around, and the absence of their fathers can be a source of continuous pain. However, children benefit from having fathers in their lives when the association is positive, supportive and involved, whether their parents live together or are separated. Negative, intrusive and abusive fathers are detrimental to children, irrespective of the family structure. Popenoe (1996) suggests that the father's involvement is the most important factor in order for children in divorced families to develop prosocial behaviour and empathy. He considers that sons especially model their father's behaviour.

2.5.3.2 Developmental Perspective/Stage Theory

As children grow and mature, it is important to understand normal development. Stage theories explain the normal needs of children at different ages of their lives. As discussed in Attachment Theory, the mother is initially the most important figure for the infant and young child, but the father plays an important role in encouraging separation from the self-object. A discussion of stage theory assists in understanding the role of the parents in aiding their children to develop to full potential. A further dimension is to consider the type of childhood and upbringing the mother herself underwent in her own development, in order to understand how she will react to the circumstances she now finds herself in.

Mahler's stage theory

Mahler suggests six stages of a child's ego development until separation and individuation occur. The first phases are identified as *normal autism* and *normal symbiosis*, during which the infantile ego develops from absolute narcissism and isolation to a vague recognition of an external, gratifying object world. Progressing through graduated steps, the child experiences symbiotic fusion with the mother and progresses to a stage of *differentiation of the self*, followed by the *practicing* and *rapprochement* stages, during which there is increased awareness and acceptance of separateness from the love object. In the final stage, the child merges matured verbal, locomotive and cognitive skills into a coherent unity and is self-reliantly able to function apart from the mother (Monte, 1999).

Although it is well recorded that the mother figure is the most important object in the early life of the child, Mahler suggests that the father figure becomes important in moving the child from the symbiotic orbit into the separation-individuation phase of development. The child's capacity for attachment to others expands, and the emotional range increases. During *rapprochement* (aged 16 to 25 months) the toddler realizes that a relationship exists between his mother and father, and this paves the way for the Oedipal

situation. The importance of the father is significant in the earliest years of life. When he is absent, impairment has been shown in basic ego functioning such as delay of gratification, perception and/or intelligence (Mischel, 1958; Barday & Cusumano, 1967). Signs of oral fixation have been observed in fatherless children (Neubauer, 1960; Yarrow, 1964).

Erikson's stages of human development theory

The developmental model deals with the relationship between personality development, interpersonal behaviour and the quality of social environment during childhood (Howe, 1996). Erikson and other ego-psychologists focus on a person's interaction with the significant people in his/her life. While acknowledging the significance of instincts and drives, Erikson's main concern is on the interpretation of phasic needs in a social/cultural context. Erikson proposes eight stages of development from infancy to old age. The mothers in this study would be in the stage of adulthood, and in the 7th stage of development in which the task is to acquire a sense of generativity versus a sense of stagnation. The fundamental characteristic of the ego at this stage is "its ability to transcend the immediate self-related interests of the person in favour of a view of generations to come" (Erikson, 1968, in Monte, 1999:399). Erikson refers to the ritual of this stage as "generational", meaning that the adult must be primed to exercise authority with confidence. While exercising his/her authority, the adult must not succumb to authoritarianism and become an oppressive model of insensitivity.

Their children, on the other hand, in the age group of six to 12 years, are in the 4th stage, the task of which is to acquire a sense of industry versus a sense of inferiority. The school experience indicates to children that pleasure may be derived from completing a task by perseverance. This is accomplished by using the tools of their culture. The danger at this stage is that children may despair of success and develop a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. Older children in adolescence are required to form a sense of identity rather than experience role confusion. A negative rather than

positive identity might be incorporated based defiantly on identifications and roles which have been presented to the adolescent as most undesirable or dangerous, and also most unreal (Erikson, 1959, in Monte, 1999).

Erikson has indicated that for healthy development to be attained, the person needs to experience and to incorporate into his/her identity, both negative and positive aspects of each crisis. However, the person must experience overall more positive than negative outcomes (Monte, 1999).

According to these theorists the age of the child at which separation and divorce occur would therefore affect the development of the child depending on the stage of development or task. Pryor and Rogers (2001) suggest that children who are very young at the time of separation, are more likely to experience a second transition into a step-family. Allison and Furstenberg (1989 in Pryor & Rogers, 2001) state that children under six years of age at time of separation are "at higher levels of risk for problem behaviour and distress than those who were older, although differences that were significant were few".

Behavioural approach:

Although the researcher acknowledges the importance of the Behavioural Approach, she has decided not to emphasize this area due to the limited scope of this research project. However, it is useful to bear in mind that mothers and children in the divorce situation will react in varying ways to the new circumstances in which they find themselves. Weiten (2001) states that behaviour is shaped by cultural heritage. Skinner (in Weiten, 2001) suggests that people are controlled by their environment, not by themselves, thus free will is an illusion. In the case of divorce, the environmental influence of separation, possible change of housing, employment, and other factors, may threaten the ability of the mother to attain her goal of providing adequately to raise her children according to her preconceived concept of good mothering.

Because the environmental conditions obstruct her goals and beliefs, the mother may be at risk of psychological harm.

Bandura's social learning theory states that personality is largely shaped by learning, and that children learn from observation by identification and imitation.

Behavioral studies

Social bonds are the result of a collective history and they develop steadily over time. These bonds are often informal and sporadic and their benefits are small and cumulative. There is a perception that children from single parent families have more behavioural problems than those in two-parent families. Popenoe (1996) proposes that paternal involvement is the most important childhood factor to promote prosocial behaviour and empathy. He states that divorce is understood as rejection by the child, and may result in anti-social behaviour.

In assessing prosocial (socially acceptable) behaviour and problematic behaviour, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood indicated higher levels of problems and lower prosocial scores reported for four-year-old children in single and step-parent families than those in non-stepfamilies. While girls' progress improved as they matured, boys remained more at risk for adjustment difficulties. Dizard and Gadlin (1990) observed that in female-headed single families, a decline in authority allowed for expansion of emotional bonds. Discipline previously directed towards obedience is replaced by socialization that encourages flexibility and choice. Popenoe (1996) states that children living with both biological parents showed the least behaviour disorders, children with stepfathers exhibited most delinquency, while single parented children fell in between.

Clark, Sawyer, Nguyen and Baghurst (1993) refer to a study undertaken in South Australia which found that 10 – 11 year-old male children living in

single parent families have significantly more emotional and behavioural problems than their peers living in two-parent families. These children displayed more externalizing behaviour problems. This finding is confirmed by Popenoe (1996) who refers to boys' rejection of authority, especially when it has been imposed by adult females, and their exaggerated show of masculinity and aggression.

2.6 EDUCATION / SCHOOLING

Parents of school-aged children are generally concerned about their academic achievements and social well-being. Children's willingness to attend school regularly, their attention to homework, and behavioural adjustments impact vastly on the stress levels of custodial parents. Maladjustment to the school system impacts on mothers' organization of their work schedules, as it might require finding a suitable adult to be with the child on days when he/she does not attend school, and necessitate spending additional time in meetings with school authorities. School maladjustments will also lead to disagreements between children and mothers, and anxiety in mothers regarding the child's adjustment and achievements.

2.6.1 School refusal:

Bernstein and Borchardt (1996) found that mothers of school refusers in single-parent families reported significantly more family problems on the Family Assessment Measure (FAM) compared with two-parent families. The most problematic areas reported were role performance and communication. Featherstone, Cundick and Jensen (1992) found that students from intact two-parent families had fewer absences and late attendance, higher grade point averages, and fewer negative and more positive teacher behaviour, while Bloom-Feshbach and Bloom-Feshbach (1988) state that teachers portray children from one parent families as more unruly and less likely to attend school regularly.

2.6.2 Intellectual competence and academic achievement:

Popenoe (1996) reports that father involvement is related to improved problem solving ability and enhanced academic achievement in their children. With regard to daughters, the father is one of the determinants of proficiency in mathematics and verbal ability. In a study carried out by Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991), the researchers found that only one in ten children from divorced homes had been assisted by the father with schoolwork, while one in five had undertaken some school project with the father.

Bloom-Feshbach and Bloom-Feshbach (1988) quote from a study by Hetherington, Camara and Featherman (1981) that long-term effects may be modified by post-divorce family functioning. Allowing for socioeconomic status, differences in academic performance between children in one-parent and two-parent families were small. However, children in one-parent families received lower grades and lower teacher evaluations. The researchers interpreted this as circumstances in one-parent families possibly affecting the child's ability to concentrate and use good study habits.

2.7 POST-MODERN APPROACHES

It is necessary to consider how perceptions and experiences of divorced mothers are created, in order to understand their (hi)stories. As a means of obtaining relevant data, narrative, strengths based and feminist approaches are employed in the research schedule. These approaches fall within the realm of the post-modern paradigm and are derived from a social constructivist framework.

2.7.1 Social constructivism:

"Constructivism is the doctrine that complex mental structures are neither innate nor passively derived from experience, but are actively constructed by the mind" (Mouton, 1996:46). Social/interactional constructionists argue that a physical reality exists, but that social reality, which is influenced by language and interaction, is negotiable. Social reality is changeable: there

are physical, environmental and cultural limitations. Monk and Gehart (2003:19) suggest that "... words derive their meaning from the contexts in which they are produced or constructed". The social constructivist approach suggests that language creates the means by which thought, feeling and behaviours are formed, but because of historical and traditional position, it cannot be construed as definite truth. In social constructivism findings are generated in the interaction of researcher and respondent (De Vos, 1998). The researcher should be a means through which the experience of the Other is expressed. However, critiques of the qualitative approach argue that the final product will always be that of the researcher and not of the subject. They suggest that researchers are unable to realistically capture lived experience, and the problem of developing a social science that includes the Other remains (De Vos, 1998).

2.7.2 Models pertinent to the research interview:

The narrative, strengths based, and feminist approaches, which all focus on coping mechanisms and potential of individuals guides the research interview. De Jong and Miller (1995:729) state that social workers " must respect and engage clients' ways of viewing themselves" and explore the goals that clients have for themselves". These approaches uphold the ideals of a positive and empowering perspective. These approaches will now be described in more detail.

2.7.2.1 Narrative Approach

Narrative theory allows for the individual to tell his(story) in his/her own words, but to become more empowered by noting the significance of instances where he/she has escaped from the problem saturated description of his/her life and relationships. Questions put to respondents effectively help them to externalise problems, by mapping the influence of the problem on their lives and in their relationships. Other questions may suggest that individuals map their own influence on the life of the problem. These

techniques remove the fixed problem from the problem bearer by placing them into a world of experience and of change, resulting in new opportunities to act flexibly. Tomm (1987) introduces reflexive questioning which allows families to create new patterns of cognition and behaviour on their own. An example of this type of questioning, used also by White (1990) is unexpected context-change questioning, which introduces a paradoxical confusion. Reflexivity produces an awareness in the client that he/she is both active as a performer and audience in his/her own performance, and allows for choices regarding the re-authoring of the individual.

Narrative therapy, likewise, recognizes that individuals have coped with their problems in the past, although their stories might be "problem-saturated". White and Epston's text analogy (1990) includes deconstruction and externalization of the problem. They suggest that the person redescribe the situation from a non-problematic perspective, that is, by identifying "unique outcomes" – facts that contradict the problem-saturated version of events. In the narrative approach the interviewer does not wish to point out positives to the client, but requires that the client him/herself considers the unique outcome to be significant (Morgan, 2000).

The narrative approach uses carefully chosen words to remove a sense of patient and therapist, and of pathologizing of persons. White, influenced by Foucault, considers problems to be "socially constructed issues arising from practices of power which lead persons to define their identities and lives in circumscribed ways" (Payne, 2000:39). Problem solution encourages that the person account for unique outcomes, thereby re-authoring his/her life and relationships.

2.7.2.2 Strengths Based Approach

The consequences of divorce have been explored by Wallerstein and her colleagues from a deficit perspective, (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, Wallerstein & Corbin, 1989, Wallerstein et al, 2000), and these findings continue to be most

often cited in studies of divorce, and have been most influential in determining popular beliefs regarding the consequences of divorce (Boney, 2003). Boney (2003) suggests that alternative research perspectives need to be explored to investigate positive outcomes in children of divorce, normal development in different family types, and processes that positively influence adjustment to family transitions.

Divorced women are all too well aware of the problems they have encountered during their marriages and in dealing with the divorce. The strengths based approach aims to alter the mindset of the individual by focusing on resources and abilities. Saleebey, (1992 in De Jong & Miller, 1995) states that the strengths perspective is committed to both improving the relationship between individuals and their contexts, and to increasing the resources of the user. Questions are asked in relation to persons' social context. The approach is solution focused, recognizing that individuals have taken steps, and surmounted problems themselves. Key words in the strengths based approach include resilience, empowerment, and membership. Folkman, Moskowitz, Ozer and Park (1997 in Lazarus 1999:149) suggest that "emphasizing, or making positive events happen, rather than waiting passively for them to happen, is an important strategy of coping in its own right".

Persons in trouble often consider themselves to be deficient and needy, and facilitators are required to work hard to assist the individual change his/her self-image. This perspective does not deny reality, but requires reframing in order to develop "a language and attitude regarding the nature of possibility and opportunity and the nature of the individual beneath the diagnostic label" (Saleebey, 1996).

2.7.2.3 Feminist Approach

The feminist approach is a useful tool in considering the impact of divorce on the single, divorced woman. This approach does not advocate prejudice

against men, but emphasizes the skills needed to empower women who are confused, frightened or unable to insist on having their voices heard.

Many divorced women complain that they were undermined or ignored during their marriage, and the feminist approach provides a context in which gender is always viewed as a legitimate matter of concern.

Weingarten and Bograd (1996) suggest confronting patriarchy and prejudice against women, which may become apparent in language distinctions, behaviour, diagnostic labeling or misogynist interventions. Like the narrative approach, feminism is also based on Social Constructionist Theory, which encourages the individual to both discern and identify varied perspectives. By so doing, the processes by which women's awareness have been dominated, and the gendered knowledge of men, become more obvious. The social, economic and political shaping contexts of events become apparent. Feminism recognizes the double standards that are used to devalue and pathologize women for carrying out the gender roles into which they are socialized. The feminist approach emphasizes strengths based rather than deficit perspectives, and encourages critical enquiry regarding unfair power practices (Akamatsu, Basham & Olson, 1996, in Weingarten & Bograd, 1996). The feminist approach is appropriate for understanding the circumstances of divorced women, as they may feel undermined and judged by the prevailing patriarchal perspective in which they live their lives.

Jordan and Surrey's 1986 self-in-relation theory encourages a reformulation of women's development and psychology. According to self in relation theory, "women organise their sense of identity, find existential meaning, achieve a sense of coherence and continuity and are motivated in the context of a relationship". (Jordan and Surrey, 1986:102, in Capuzzi & Gross, 2003:337). The relationship of focus is the mother-daughter dyad, for which a new model of female development was offered, redefining the mother-daughter dyad positively, and supporting conventional values of nurturance and relatedness.

Feminism and the Jewish Faith

Although Judaism has a patriarchal heritage, the Jewish woman has always been protected by the Jewish nuptial agreement (*ketubah*) which grants her certain rights and privileges during her marriage and in the event of divorce. Like feminist theory, Judaism is cognizant of gender-oriented social roles, but grants them equal importance. In this regard, Judaism supports the “feminalism” school of thought (Kaufman, 1993:xxvi) – recognizing the fundamental differentness of men and women – rather than ‘masculofeminism’ – or, equality feminism. While the former encourages the development of uniquely feminine attributes and values for both self- and social- improvement, the latter demands core gender equality and egalitarianism (Kaufman, 1993).

In the Jewish tradition and culture, the woman has been seen to be the family member who instills traditional and Jewish family values on the children. Rav Chaim Goldvicht (in Pavlov, 2000) states that the mother teaches the primary value system intuitively to her children. He sees the father’s role as giving objective information, while the mother provides the children with the intuition to know in their hearts what is right.

2.7.2.4 Commonalities of the approaches

The three approaches described above include many similarities. The strengths based and narrative approaches both incorporate language as an important aspect. The words used define an alternative way of functioning more positively, and lead to recognition of abilities and self-empowerment. White’s definition of ‘unique outcomes’ does not constitute finding positives, but rather explores alternative results to challenge the prevailing story in a manner that is likely to help the person. Feminism, too, is a deconstructionist stance which entails examining and taking for granted assumptions apart, which is quite in keeping with the narrative approach. These approaches encourage the client to lead the interview and consider the interviewer and interviewee to be equal partners in the encounter. Exploration of problem

areas focus on the manner in which difficulties have previously been overcome.

2.7.2.5 Criticism of the approaches

Critiques of the narrative approach doubt the ability of the researcher to produce accurate interpretations, and to refrain from subjective bias. Mouton (2001) suggests limitations are linked to the understanding and judgment of the researcher and differences in theoretical perspectives which are contradictory. Critics of the strengths based approach consider it to be "just positive thinking" and suggest that it "reframes deficit and misery" (Saleebey, 1996). Criticism of the feminist approach suggests that it is not a clearly defined theory, but rather a philosophy or belief system about the importance of gender (Rampage, 1998 in Capuzzi & Gross, 2003). Furthermore, there is an incorrect perception that feminist counseling is only for women by women, which serves to discourage male clients from making use of the facility. The feminist approach may be assumed by prospective consumers to be linked to the radical elements of the women's movement, and therefore avoided.

2.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter has explored the literature relevant to the study. It has examined the history and effects of divorce, various approaches relevant to conducting research, stages of development, the causes of stress and ways of dealing with stress, the effects of divorce and absence of fathers on children and the ways in which mothers cope. Chapter three will explain the methodology of the research.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3. INTRODUCTION:

This chapter deals with the research design and methodology used in the study. Sampling method, data collection, reliability, limitations of the research and research ethics are presented.

3.1 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY:

A qualitative paradigm has been chosen because the data gathered is part of the world of meaning of a particular group, and generalization of the findings may be limited (Mouton, 1996). Qualitative research focuses on an individual or small quantity of cases, examining the specific context of meanings and significance. The general coherence and meaning of the data is more important than the detailed significance of its components (Mouton, 1996).

Mouton (1996:104) describes the purpose of basic or academic research as being "to contribute to the existing body of scientific knowledge". This is in contrast to applied research whose function is to reveal how different types of interests affect the problem formulation. This study will be exploratory and the insights, views and experiences of the target group will be investigated. Mouton (1996) states that exploratory studies aim to ascertain the facts, assemble new information and to establish whether there are significant patterns in the data. This qualitative study will be conducted by means of individual in-depth interviews with the sample group of mothers. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to acquire an "insider view" of the social experiences of the respondent and to investigate other areas of research arising from the interview (De Vos, 1998:300). The researcher encourages the respondents to tell their "life histories", and urges the participant to contribute information spontaneously.

The researcher has undertaken unstructured interviews with a research schedule. De Vos (1998:299) states "the schedule is a guideline for the

interviewer and contains questions and themes that are important to the research". Once the research schedule had been formulated, the researcher checked back the questions against the aims and objectives to ensure that all questions were relevant to the research topic. The researcher first posed a general question on the topic to the interviewee, and allowed her to tell her story. The interviewer then consulted the research schedule to ensure that all areas had been covered by the respondent, and directed questions towards areas that had not been explored.

The choice of questions to be included in the research schedule were carefully selected in order that the meaning that the interviewees attach to their perceptions and coping strategies will be able to be interpreted by the researcher from the data collected. De Vos (1998:241) in describing qualitative research, states that it "involves identifying the participant's beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena." This is extremely relevant to this study, as perceptions of the subjects are to be observed in relation to their parenting role.

3.2 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PARTICULAR STYLE OF THE STUDY:

The qualitative and exploratory design allows for the uncovering of significant data that has not previously been discovered. The use of the narrative and strengths based approach to formulating questions permits flexibility and provides the opportunity for the creativity of the respondents to be expressed. The researcher hopes that this study will provide an understanding of the difficulties encountered and methods of coping that divorced single mothers employ in raising their children.

3.3 SAMPLING:

The key reason for sampling is to obtain a valid, unbiased representation of the population. Kerlinger (In De Vos, 1998) maintains that sampling means taking any portion of a population as representative of that population. This definition does not mean that the sample is in fact representative, but it is

considered to be representative. Mouton (1996) states that the methodological criteria applicable to sampling include a clear classification of the population, methodical drawing of the sample, drawing probability rather than non-probability samples and monitoring the advantages of multi-stage versus simple random sampling. Seaberg (1998, in De Vos, 1998:191) defines a sample as "a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of our study".

The population in this study is Jewish single divorced mothers of school going aged children within the Herzlia School system. An availability sample was used. A letter was sent out to the school population in their weekly letter to parents, inviting volunteers who are single divorced mothers, who had been divorced for two or more years, and were willing to engage in a research study. As the number of respondents to the request for volunteers was limited, all those respondents who were suitable and fell within the required criteria were interviewed.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION:

The following steps were taken to obtain the sample group:

- i. The letter mentioned above was sent to all parents (see appendix I)
- ii. the respondents were screened for suitability to the study
- iii. all suitable volunteers were invited to participate in the study
- iv. respondents were contacted and appointments set up for interviews to take place
- v. each respondent was asked to sign a contract with the researcher, advising them of confidentiality and anonymity and setting out their rights to withdraw from the study (see appendix II)
- vi. a pilot study was conducted with one respondent, who was not included in the study.

De Vos (1998) reports that interviewing is the most widely used form of data collection that researchers employ to inform them about social living. Face-

to-face interviewing is used to extract and transmit information from respondent to researcher. Interviews allow us to understand the closed worlds of individuals, families and systems. The interviewer needs to develop a better understanding of the meanings conveyed by interviewees.

The face-to-face interview allows for in-depth data to be gathered. A thorough exploration of the literature available has been made in order to prepare the researcher to define concepts, assess data and construct an interview guide (De Vos, 1998). The interviewer limited her own contribution to the interview, only introducing the subject matter, and requesting the respondent to tell her relevant story. Using the narrative and strengths based approaches, the researcher guided the interviewee. De Vos (1998:300) claims that the unstructured interview best allows the interviewer to obtain "an insider view of the social phenomenon as well as to explore other avenues of research emerging from the interview". The researcher marked areas that had been covered on the research schedule, allowing her to return to areas that had not been marked and covered by the respondent, after she had finished telling her (hi)story. A copy of the research schedule is attached as appendix IV. After each interview, the researcher checked with the interviewee that she was feeling all right and was not distressed. If the interviewee had been distressed, arrangements for counseling with a school counselor would have been arranged.

The researcher arranged where possible for a private venue suitable for interviews to take place, where confidentiality was assured. She requested that the respondent sign a contract, allowing for the respondent to withdraw from the interview at any time should she feel uncomfortable. The researcher advised respondents that feedback will be available after completion of the study in the form of a written report to interviewees, and assured the respondents that their names will not be mentioned in the report, and that confidentiality will be maintained. The researcher also asked permission to tape record the interview, and explained that this procedure is necessary to

prevent misinformation or misunderstanding of data received. After each interview the researcher transcribed the recorded data and erased the taped interview. The transcribed documents were to be used for data analysis. On each transcribed document the researcher added her own notes, relating to the emotional response, body language and voice tone used by the respondent, as these features were not available from the audiotape.

3.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH:

Some of the limitations of the research will be discussed below.

3.5.1 Limitations of the sampling strategy:

The sample has been drawn from a limited and small population. Herzlia school was chosen as the population in order to minimize extraneous variables such as different ethnic, religious and socio-cultural groups. Although it is in fact impossible to rule out these factors entirely, a population of narrower proportions has been created. The criteria required, that is, of being divorced and still single, and having been divorced for more than two years, created an even more limited available population. Every effort was made to obtain the maximum number of respondents who fulfilled the specified criteria. The percentage of divorced parents is relatively low at the junior school level, and some of these divorced, single mothers chose not to volunteer for the study. Thus, the available population from which to draw the sample for the study is extremely limited. However, the sample could be seen to be representative of the target population (Mouton, 1996) as Mouton (1998) argues that qualitative research may focus on an individual or small number of cases, "in its specific context of meanings and significance". The sample is representative of one particular socio-economic and cultural group of mothers and children which precludes generalization of the results to the total population (external validity).

The investigation would have been richer had the sample group also consisted of non-custodial parents, fathers and single parents who were not

previously married, and those who have remarried. However, this was beyond the scope of this study.

3.5.2 Limitations of qualitative research:

Qualitative research has strong construct validity because the researcher immerses him/herself in the world of the subjects. However, because of the individual experience and the fact that these concepts are part of the world of meaning of the subject, their generalizability is usually limited (Mouton, 1998).

In-depth interviews are time consuming and often unnecessary material is included in the data gathered. This necessitates the researcher spending extra time transcribing the audiotapes as well as sifting through the information for relevant data. It is necessary for this extraneous material to be related, as it sets a background to the study. For example, although the study explores the experiences of single divorced mothers in raising their children, facts about the marriage and subsequent divorce emerged and were necessary in order to understand the experiences resulting from the change in status.

Although the researcher had hoped to include a focus group with the respondents, the information given was considered by the respondents to be too personal to expose in the group format. Thus, a breadth of information which might have added to the richness of the study was unable to be included.

3.5.3 Limitations of data collections methods:

Mouton (2001) states that a common problem in data collection is due to interviewer bias, or the research selectivity effect. This refers to the choices made by the researcher about which data to consider and which to ignore. The face-to-face interview undertaken in this study generated large amounts of data, which required the researcher to make choices regarding what to use

and what to discard. Many differing themes emerged from the data collected but only main themes have been included in the research.

3.5.4 Limitations of the researcher:

The researcher hoped that, by being of the same religious and cultural group as the respondents, suspicion and mistrust of the researcher would be avoided. However, this assumption could be invalid and respondents might be concerned that the researcher is acquainted with their families and friends because of the relatively small (Jewish) community concerned. This might inhibit their responses.

The findings in this study are based largely on the subjective perceptions of mothers. Their responses may be confounded by certain response sets such as social desirability or acquiescence or avoidance of speaking of issues which raise discomfort.

Every effort was made to obtain the maximum number of respondents who fulfilled the specified criteria. The sample size, particularly when contingency/unforeseen events, questions were used, reduced the generalizability of the sample. The sample is representative of one particular socio-economic and cultural group of mothers and children which precludes generalization of the results to the total population.

3.6 RELIABILITY:

In order to ensure that the research schedule was a dependable tool to obtain the required data, the researcher conducted a pilot study on one respondent who was not part of the sample group. This pilot study proved to be a very useful and worthwhile endeavour, as the researcher noted areas that created anxiety and emotional responses. From these observations and from respondents' responses to questions about her experience of the interview, the researcher adapted the schedule, and became aware of the need for flexibility in conducting the research. As the sample group is small, the data

gathered will be compared to the available literature, but will not be able to be generalized to the entire population.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS:

De Vos (1998: 24) clarifies a number of ethical issues which are discussed below.

- i. Harm to experimental subjects: In this study, the researcher has endeavoured to prevent emotional discomfort by using a strengths based approach and by initially assuring participants of their right to withdraw from the interview at any stage.
- ii. Informed consent: Interviewees were fully advised of the nature and aim of the study and the procedure to be followed. Full disclosure of the intentions of the investigation were revealed, so that respondents were able to make an informed decision to participate. In case the taping of interviews could cause anxiety for some interviewees, the need for audio recording was explained to the respondents, and their consent obtained. The researcher further advised them of their right to refuse to answer any question, and their right to withdraw from the interview at any time, should they wish to do so (Mouton, 2001).
- iii. Violation of privacy: The right of respondents to privacy and confidentiality was upheld. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and the absence of networking with the school in regard to the children's problems. They were assured that the school was only used to obtain respondents and that data gathered would not be reported to the school.
- iv. Actions and competence of the researcher: The researcher has made an extensive study of the narrative and strengths based approaches to ensure that her methods of interviewing are constructive and empowering to the subjects.
- v. Release of publication of the findings: A written copy of the general findings, protecting anonymity, will be made available to

respondents. It is hoped that the findings of the study will assist other divorced single mothers who are raising their children alone.

- vi. Restoration of subjects: Should any respondent feel upset after participation in the study, or should the interview raise feelings of anxiety with regard to the child/ren's welfare, the researcher has offered to make arrangements for school counselors to provide assistance to the respondent.
- vii. Power relations: The researcher aims, by applying the narrative approach to this study, to employ a collaborative and transparent approach to collect data from the respondents. The researcher is aware of her position of authority and made every effort to ensure that power is not abused, by conducting ethically informed research.

This is a research-based study, and the researcher will not assume the role of counselor to respondents. Should respondents become emotionally upset during or after the interviews, the researcher will refer her to the school counselor. During the interview the researcher will maintain awareness of the emotional behaviour of the respondent, and attend to her needs with sensitivity.

3.8 REFLEXIVITY:

Plummer's list of bias (1983) suggests that the interviewer should be aware of the following items that could lead to prejudice.

- a "front" being presented
- interviewee wishing to please the interviewer
- self-deception.

In the data collection stage of research, the researcher was aware that some interviewees appeared to be in denial of their circumstances, or deceiving themselves as a means of escape from facing unwanted truths. In the early stage of the interview, information given in response to questions put to the interviewee sometimes seemed to contradict data that was given later. This

could have been due to the interviewee initially not being at ease with the researcher and thus presenting a “front”.

Plummer (1983) suggests that the researcher must be aware of certain phenomena that could be shaping the outcome. These include attitudes, personality, demeanor and scientific role of the researcher. In this instance, the researcher felt that some of these aspects were not significant because she was of the same race, religion and cultural group as the respondents, as well as being of a similar age group. However, even in culturally similar circumstances, awareness of differences is essential.

Plummer also refers to the interaction between researcher and respondent.

The researcher attempted to control the physical setting where possible, but is cognizant of the fact that at times the children were in the vicinity and provided a distraction during the interview. The researcher, at times, suggested to the respondent that the interview should not take place within view and hearing of the children to prevent the children being upset, or the mother wishing to protect the children and thus withholding sensitive information.

Although a strengths based and a narrative approach were employed in the interview schedule, much of the interview focused on the problems and constraints of the respondents. However, the researcher attempted to direct the focus to the capabilities rather than the perceived shortcomings of the respondents. Non-judgmentalism along with a measure of empathy had to be kept in awareness at all times.

3.9_ SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology, and examined sampling and data collection. Research ethics and interviewer reflexivity have been reviewed.

Chapter four will address the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4 INTRODUCTION:

This chapter relates to the analysis of the data gathered, and outlines the steps taken in analyzing the data.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS:

4.1.1 Discussion of data analysis:

The data collected has been interpreted by means of inductive reasoning. According to Mouton (1996:77) "in an inductive argument, genuine supporting evidence (as expressed in the premises) can only lead to highly probable conclusions". Therefore, if all the premises are true, then the conclusion is almost certainly, but not inevitably, true. Manning (1982, in De Vos, 1998) defines analytical induction as "seeking to develop universal statements containing the essential features of a phenomenon, or those things that are always found to cause or lie behind the existence of a social occurrence". In using this approach, the researcher seeks out instances that could disprove his/her hypothesis, thus developing a conceptual framework that incorporates the subjective experiences of subjects (De Vos, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (1995, in Mouton 2001) state that the data analysis begins during the interview process and the preliminary analysis suggests that the researcher reformulates his/her questions to focus on the central ideas and themes as the interview progresses. Following the interview, the researcher undertakes a more detailed, formal analysis, where additional themes and concepts are noted. The analysed data is compared within categories to identify variations and to discover themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, in De Vos, 1998). The themes and concepts are then integrated into the researcher's own interpretation of the data (Mouton, 2001). The data was analysed according to Tesch's approach (in De Vos, 1998).

4.1.2 Tesch's approach to data analysis:

Tesch (1990, in De Vos, 1998) recommends that the researcher read through all the scripts carefully, making notes as they come to mind. She then peruses any one script carefully, noting the underlying meaning in the data. After repeating this step for a number of respondents' scripts, the researcher makes a list of all the topics noted. Topics with similar themes are organized in columns depicting major topics, unique topics and others. The topics are then abbreviated into codes, and returning to the scripts, these codes are noted next to the relevant text. The use of coloured pencils to note differing themes will assist later in collating the information. Using this organizing scheme, the researcher then continues scrutinizing the remaining scripts, noting any new categories that emerge, and coding them in the same fashion. The researcher then uses descriptive wording to categorize the topics, grouping related topics together. Related categories are linked by lines drawn between them. After abbreviating each category, the researcher alphabetizes the codes. The data relating to each category is accumulated in one place and a preliminary analysis is performed. Recoding takes place, if necessary. This approach raises certain limitations regarding research design, sampling, data, collection tools, analysis and the researcher. These limitations will be explored more fully in this chapter under limitations of the study.

4.2 DETAILS OF DATA OBTAINED FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS:

The number of respondents in this study was ten. Their ages ranged from 31 years to 51 years, with the majority being in their forties. The respondents each had between one and five children, with a total of 25 children between them. Of these children, 16 are presently within the Herzlia school system. Seven of the 25 children do not live with their mothers: three are grown-up and live independently, and four live with their fathers. None of those living with their fathers attend Herzlia school. Two of the children living with their fathers chose their residence because of unsatisfactory relationships with their

mothers. One child was demanded by his father as part of the divorce settlement and spends holidays with his mother and sisters.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Years Divorced	Age	Profession	No. of Children	Children at Herzlia
4.5	31	Secretary	1	1
3	36	Bus. consultant	2	2
7	40	Art director	1	1
10	41	Human Resource	3	2
8	41	Teacher	3	3
6	42	Teacher	2	1
5	43	Recruitment Consultant	2	1
8	44	Fundraiser	3	3
6	46	Tour guide	5	1
4	51	Retired	2	1

4.3 THEMES ESTABLISHED FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Five major themes emerged from the data gathered. These were Stress, Support, Coping, Role of the father, and Benefits of divorce. These themes will be discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 THEME ONE: STRESS

In terms of stress, five themes emerged: financial stress, stress of being the primary care giver, further losses, role models for children and support itself as a stressor.

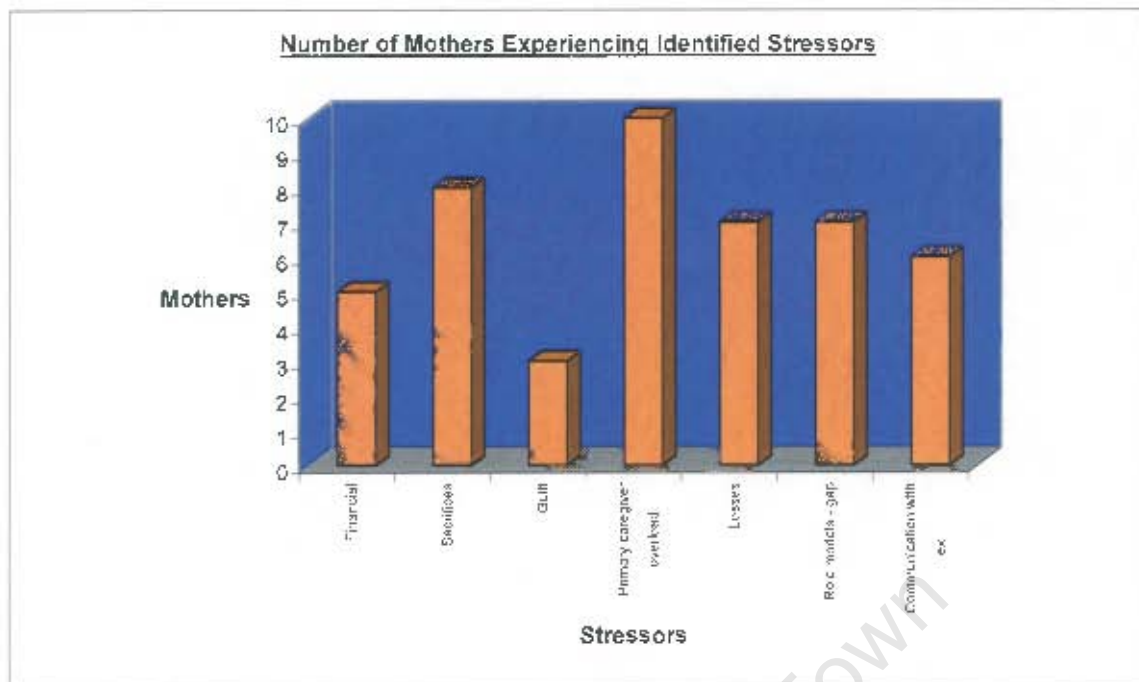


Figure 1.

4.3.1.1 Financial stress:

Rated by all respondents as the largest stress encountered, the amount received from ex-husbands for child maintenance can be divided into three groups:

1. Two respondents received no financial support at all from ex-husband; both are businesswomen and are able to support themselves.
2. Two respondents receive financial support inconsistently from ex-husband or family members; they struggle financially.
3. Six receive maintenance regularly from ex-husband, but in varying amounts. Some received generous settlements while another receives only R500 per month for all 3 children.

Financial survival as a result of divorce was described by most mothers as "a struggle". Even when financial support was forthcoming from the ex-husband and he was willing to contribute extra financial support – e.g. financing the renovations to the mother's house – mothers reported that he then feels a sense of entitlement and has a hold over his ex-wife and children.

As a result of this financial stress, most mothers have had to seek extra employment. Three respondents work overtime whenever the opportunity arises, while two mothers reported holding down extra jobs.

Furthermore, working mothers reported having had to make a series of sacrifices, both parental and personal. In terms of parenting, respondents reported a decrease in the amount of time spent with children, and an inability to take time off work to attend – or assist with – children’s school activities. On a personal level, career enhancement has ironically been sacrificed: the safety and security of a nine-to-five job and a regular monthly salary taking precedence over higher-powered positions, which – although more lucrative – prove too demanding and time-consuming an option for divorced mothers. Accommodation presented yet a third area of forfeit, wherein respondents reported having had to downscale from multiple-roomed houses to small apartments in “the cheapest areas possible”.

One impact of the abovementioned post-divorce financial stress was a feeling of guilt, shared by respondents:

“Guilt that I can’t give them everything they want; that they can’t do all these extra murals like all the other kids can.”

Important to note, however, is that one respondent did not consider her financial stress to be a consequence of her divorce, stating: “I battled financially when I was married, and I’m battling now that I’m single. Nothing has changed.” All mothers did, however, express an overwhelming sense of responsibility to their children – financial and otherwise – discussed in full below.

4.3.1.2 Primary caregiver overload:

Role-taking

Unanimously, respondents reported that divorce has forced them to adopt multiple roles. Namely, the custodial mother has had to take on the

responsibilities of the now-absent ex-husband. Those respondents who were – in marriage – primarily homemakers, have had to become financial providers as well; those who provided financially in marriage have had to take on their ex-husband's household chores. Compounding the problem is the abovementioned financial stress: many respondents reported having to dispense with the services of domestic help enjoyed during marriage, creating further roles to be filled by mothers. The stress such role-taking generates is evident below:

"Having to work all day and then come home to do housework, supervise kids, cook, etcetera is extremely stressful".

In this regard, many respondents reported having had to educate themselves so as to adapt to their new responsibilities. While some reported having to learn to do the household chores and cooking, others described their efforts to assume the traditional roles of the ex-husband. Resultantly, respondents reported a sense of both parental pressure and guilt. In terms of pressure, virtually all mothers expressed the following sentiment: "I am their sole provider, I have to be there for them. I cannot allow myself to fall apart, I cannot allow myself to break down. I cannot allow myself to get sick or anything, because if I am not there to work, what will happen to these kids?"

With regards to guilt:

"I still haven't got over the idea that I left their father and so I have to give them everything to make up for what they could have had".

Lack of time

Due to the above-mentioned role-taking, effective time management was considered a major obstacle, often requiring that mothers sacrifice one area of their lives so as to satisfy another. Examples include foregoing time with children to work longer hours for financial benefit, or foregoing personal activities to effectively manage the children.

Age-related issues of children

The abovementioned stress of role taking and the resultant lack of time appears to fluctuate in relation to the age of the children. As expressed by one mother:

"It's very age related, the children react in a different way depending on what age they are".

Accepting the help of younger children can be stressful:

"You can try and involve them in what you're doing but as they are small, you don't want them to be doing everything. You don't want to push them to grow up too fast... You can try and make them do things, but whereas in the past you would have done it slowly and had the time to let them make mistakes, now you rush them or take over yourself."

As the children develop, their assistance becomes valuable but their demands grow, resulting in different pressures on respondents: school projects cost more and they require transportation in different directions. On the other hand, "Everyone's big now, so I don't need a babysitter".

Children's health and education

Without a husband to share in decision-making, respondents reported difficulties in managing children's well-being, health and education. The following excerpt highlights the stress of handling such issues alone, both financially – as health issues generally require additional finance – and emotionally:

"He (son) had blood poisoning ... I had to go to the doctor and it was more than R1000. When I contacted his father, I received not only no money, but no questions, not even: how is my child?"

Similar frustration was experienced by respondents with regard to the father's approach to children's schoolwork. Many indicated that fathers show little concern for children's behavioral problems at school, and that homework is frequently ignored when sent with children to the father on the weekends.

4.3.1.3 Other losses:

With the dissolution of marriage, both partners incur the loss of a once-loved partner. Over and above this primary loss of a confidante and best friend, further losses are considered extremely stressful for both mother and children. The first area of loss recurrent in the narratives was the loss of a loved family member, often soon after the divorce. Such losses were reported to be multi-dimensional: the loss itself often encompasses both the loss of the loved person and that of the support they used to provide, while the means of loss expanded to include death, degenerative diseases, and inevitably disintegrating relationships.

Indeed, divorce frequently leads to a change in the relationship with the family of the ex-husband: seven respondents reported that post-divorce, their parents-in-law severed all ties with them. Although most of these relationships were re-established after the crisis period of divorce had passed, previously tight bonds were never regained.

A third area of loss occurs when divorce encroaches on the relationships between the divorcees and the friends they shared when married. The loss of friends at a time when support is so crucial proves stressful:

"I lost a lot of friends. That I think was the hardest part, not the divorce."

Finally, some women lost their accommodation of many years. While some reported moving to entirely new cities, others described the loss of simply moving from house to flat:

"I had to give up my garden, and they (children) had to give up their pets."

Interestingly, while most respondents found these multiple losses unfortunate and distressing, one mother offered a contrasting view:

"I think it is good everything happened at once. My philosophy was deal with it now, get it out of your system and then it will subside a bit".

4.3.1.4 Gap in role models for children:

Recurrently, the women raising children expressed concern at the lack of suitable male role models for children raised in female-dominated environments. Ex-husbands widely failed to serve this function: of those fathers who are in regular contact with children, six mothers cited the inappropriateness of their value systems, which include abuse, drug use, refusal to pay maintenance and breaking of promises. For mothers whose ex-husbands have no contact with the children the problem is defined as follows:

"Now there's no male figure, that's the difficult part, it really is... I think my son misses boy stuff now and then. It's that type of interaction I think that he is missing, because he sees it with his friends' dads".

In this regard, a particular anxiety for one mother is noteworthy: the son's only male role model currently in a stable relationship is a homosexual uncle, which causes the mother concern for her son's gender role socialization.

4.3.1.5 Dependency as a stress:

While most mothers expressed need and gratitude for support, a number voiced some reservations about the consequences of accepting support. For some respondents, accepting help from a supportive other tacitly requires that the respondent further accept the supporter's interference, judgment and expectation of a role in decision-making. This was reported to induce clashes in parenting styles and issues of control.

Furthermore, respondents reported that as a result of divorce, family and friends are often vengeful on the respondent's behalf, and their well-meaning efforts to extract all they can from the ex-husband tend to generate further strain:

"At the time of the divorce, I left without anything... My family were angry because they said I am entitled to half of everything, but my sanity was more important to me than material things".

4.3.1.6 Other stressors:

Miscellaneous stressors experienced by respondents included physical security, accommodation, communication with ex-husband, and loneliness. Regarding physical security, respondents reported the lack of a man in the house induced neurotic responses to noise. Secondly, respondents described transitions in accommodation to be stressful, particularly with regard to the children's sense of stability. Thirdly, communication with the ex-husband was found by all respondents to be very stressful, a theme to be discussed in greater detail below. Finally, some expressed the notion that being without adult companionship and involvement – romantic and otherwise – is stressful. Such loneliness, it was reported, renders the need for support from others more urgent.

4.3.2 THEME TWO: SUPPORT

To effectively manage the above stressors, mothers require support from various sources, thematically categorized as financial, emotional, practical and social support.

4.3.2.1 Financial support:

Financial support (an area also noted earlier) is usually received in the form of children's maintenance payments from the ex-husband. Six mothers received regular maintenance from their ex-spouses, but amounts varied greatly. Additional contributors included siblings of the mother, and the ex-spouse's parents.

While some mothers have had difficulty in obtaining any additional support from fathers – even in cases of children's medical emergencies, – others found their ex-husbands more willing to contribute after the crisis period of divorce.

4.3.2.2 Psychological/Emotional support:

Respondents named the following as positive sources of psychological and emotional support: respondent's family, new romantic partners, professionals (psychologists, social workers, lawyers) and friends.

Respondent's family

Five respondents claimed that they could unequivocally count on their mothers for support, while those that could not qualified this by way of the mother being deceased, medically ill or living a distance away. While some siblings were considered to be highly supportive, others were reported to be living elsewhere, emotionally distant, preoccupied with their own lives, or ultimately unhelpful.

Respondent's new partner

Four respondents reported having a new man in their lives, three of whom consider this partner to be emotionally and psychologically supportive:

"He's a great support; he manages to talk me through things and makes me identify my feelings."

Professionals

While most mothers have received professional help since their divorce, the responses to this help were varied:

Helpful experience: "I see a therapist and she's been really helpful. She pointed out that my daughter is a personality type and I must stop blaming myself that the divorce set her on this course ..."

Unhelpful experience: "I went to see a psychologist, but I think it was a waste of time."

Most respondents indicated that they had used, and some continue to use, anti-depressants and anxiety reducing medications.

Friends

Many respondents indicated that good friends are an even better source of emotional support than family members, particularly when that friend had endured similar experiences and could offer concrete advice with hindsight:

“One friend was a huge source of support, as she herself had been through a divorce, and thus explained – for example – how the school could be a support to me and what I should ask for”.

Friends were also reported to provide psychological support to respondents by inviting the children over to play, thus allowing their mother “a bit of time for myself which I really appreciate”. However, some respondents report that time constraints have required that they distance themselves from friends; while others consider accepting assistance from friends a blow to pride. For most respondents, then, the obstacle in this regard is neither availability nor quality of support, but rather acceptance thereof.

Other

Three miscellaneous sources of psychological support occurred notably frequently. Firstly, three mothers referred to the help sought – and assistance received – from G-d. Secondly, over and above a necessity for financial survival, five respondents reported that their work sustains them:

“I actually get my energy from work. If I have too much time with the children I find it really hard, it’s very difficult”.

Finally, domestic workers were reported to provide as much emotional support as they did practical – the third category of support for discussion.

4.3.2.3 Practical support:

The primary sources of practical support – as reported by respondents – included the respondent’s hired help, family, friends, new partner and/or employment.

Hired help

Nine of the ten mothers have some form of domestic help, allowing most to work during the day without requiring daycare services. These mothers describe the practical support of such help to be “huge”, and the exception proves the rule: the one mother respondent lacking in domestic help reported constant exhaustion, as her free time is spent washing, cleaning and cooking. Other forms of hired help include au pairs – employed by three mothers on a part-time basis – who assist in lifting and homework supervision.

Respondent's family

Most practical help is dispensed by the respondents' mothers. Three mothers described their mothers as taking over vital roles, such as lifting, babysitting, bathing, feeding, and putting the children to bed when the mother is not available. However, in some cases, other commitments or relationship problems render grandmothers unwilling to adopt such a role:

“My mother WILL NOT look after my daughter. She doesn't have a good relationship with her.”

Support from other family members – including siblings and children from previous unions – was reported to be less forthcoming than that of mothers, as most have their own families to attend to. Even when available, however, mothers reported that “as good as family support is, it's not the same as having a husband and a maid around.”

Friends and new partner

Although friends of the mother generally offer less practical support than they do emotional, they nevertheless play an important role, especially regarding child-minding. Of those four respondents with new partners, only one reportedly offered practical support to the respondent, by looking after her children when an emergency required that she travel.

Employment

Having a work environment that is supportive and flexible helps some mothers by allowing them to attend school functions, doctor's appointments, and other engagements.

4.3.2.4 Community support:

Recurring thematic sources of social/community support included the support of Capetonians in general, that of the Jewish community, that of the Herzlia school system and the other mothers at school.

Social networking in Cape Town

Three respondents expressed dissatisfaction with "Capetonians":

"For me, socially, Cape Town is an absolute nightmare"

However, all respondents reportedly appreciate and enjoy the beauty of Cape Town's natural resources and the free entertainment it offers.

Jewish Community (Religious Community)

The Jewish Community of Cape Town prides itself on being caring and supportive of its members. In this regard, one respondent found the wife of her Rabbi particularly approachable and available when she needed support, while another reported that it was her Rabbi who in fact assisted her in getting her divorce. However, some respondents in this study expressed disillusionment:

"We didn't go to synagogue for four weeks and not one person from synagogue phoned to say: 'Are you OK?'"

The Jewish community further consists of the members of the religious congregations and other organizations, such as the Jewish Community Services which functions to assist Jewish people in distress. Positive and negative sentiments were both expressed in this regard:

Positive experience: "In the beginning stages they all rallied to help, but...you have to stand on your own two feet".

Negative experience: "I don't think they (Jewish Community) are supportive of anyone or anything..."

Herzlia School System

Again, opinions about the support offered by Herzlia school varied among respondents. A number reported that school educators or psychologists had been in contact with them about the children's academic or behavioral problems. While mothers appreciated this input, they considered the efforts of Herzlia to have provided support for their children, rather than themselves. Even then, the support was not always satisfactory:

"When I've asked the school for support (in telling me how to help my child to behave), the teachers said they didn't know what I must do, and that's a very poor answer, because I don't know, and that's why I went to them. What does the school do to motivate him besides giving him detention everyday?"

Parent Body of Herzlia school

The school parent population forms a further facet of the Jewish community. Seven respondents felt that Herzlia mothers form a poor system of support:

"The mothers at the school are very much like the Capetonians, snobbish, not interested and its me, me, me."

Contrastingly, some respondents report otherwise:

"The school community has been very, very supportive, the mothers there have been fantastic.. they would say: 'Are you working? We can take (your son) along'... So there is a good support base among the mothers..."

4.3.2.5 Support for children:

Consensus among respondents was that support for their children provided support for themselves.

A number of respondents indicated that despite the absence of a good relationship between ex-spouses, when it came to raising the children the parents would work together to serve the best interests of the children.

Other common contributors within the family included the children's grandparents, particularly maternal grandmothers. Only three respondents, however, regarded their own siblings to be close and available supports to their children. Finally, while three respondents complained of sibling rivalry, five mentioned that their children are protective and supportive of each other.

Domestic workers were often reported to have "raised" the children, and provided them with a rich base of emotional as well as practical support.

Friends of the respondent also proved helpful, particularly in one extreme case where the respondent's ex-partner adopted a paternal role towards the child:

"Whenever (my son) looks like he needs to have a proper family, 'Deputy Dad' is there".

Professional support for children appears the most contentious issue of support. In some cases, the school suggested psychological support for children but respondents disagreed. In others, respondents did not perceive their children to have found therapy either supportive or helpful: "He has been to a psychologist. He went once, and he would never go back."

For all respondents, to varying degrees, replies to the question 'Who are your children's main support?' revealed the same sentiment:

"Me, me and me !!!"

4.3 .3 THEME THREE: COPING

In terms of coping methods, three predominant themes emerged from the data, namely: respondents' post-divorce parenting style, respondents' general activities and the respondents' personal worldview/locus of control.

4.3.3.1 Respondents' parenting styles:

As sole custodians and caregivers, the respondents reported that they have had to construct and draw from defined parenting styles so as to cope alone. Chief characteristics of these parenting styles were organization and family values.

Organization

Organized parenting was repeatedly reported as crucial to post-divorce coping:

"I have had to become extremely organized. Everything is very neat and in its place, otherwise I am completely thrown out."

Generally, the mothers considered structure and routine to be beneficial to both their own coping abilities and the children's upbringing. Specific examples from respondents included waking up early to prepare the children's breakfast and lunchboxes so as to reduce the "morning chaos", and limiting the number of times children are allowed to phone them at work, "otherwise it becomes uncontrollable".

Family Values

The respondents reported having instilled and drawn from predominantly three types of family values in order to cope: authoritarian, open honesty and disengagement.

Authoritarian Approach

Almost unanimously, the mothers relied on their authority as primary caregivers to manage and cope with stressors in parenting. At its most extreme, this authority was called upon first and foremost in relation to the children:

"My house is not a democracy, it's a dictatorship and I am the dictator". And
"I think I'm much stricter as well. You have to be, because basically you take on two roles".

In this regard, the mothers described the necessity that their parenting style be "strict", "authoritarian", "control junk[ies]" with "no problem saying no and setting boundaries". However, their authority as sole caregivers was also enlisted in order to cope with the frequent interferences of well-meaning relatives:

"You want to decide if the child can do this or that, you don't want a whole debate or committee decision...I don't have to share my decision making with anyone".

Authoritative Approach

Generally balanced with the above authority, respondents further described the role of openness in the parent-child relationship as crucial to family coping. Mutual love and respect were considered important rules, as were the provision of healthy but flexible family boundaries, talking through problems, sharing feelings, explaining parental decisions, allowing children – where appropriate – to "argue their side" and *reciprocal* honesty. For example, one respondent refused to lie to her children about their financial situation: she denied her daughter a desired object, explaining: "I haven't got the money for that".

Disengagement

In the minority were those respondents whose previous attempts to cope with certain family stressors had failed, triggering the coping mechanism of a somewhat disengaged parenting style in that specific area of the child's life:

"I have now backed off entirely. If he (son) needs to fail standard seven, then he needs to fails standard seven. I am not going to drive myself up the pole".

Family Roles

To cope with daily stressors, many mothers reported relying on their children to contribute towards, for example, household chores. In this regard, many respondents reported an acute awareness and protection of acceptable family roles, for example:

"I don't think that they (the children) should be my parents, they are only children and they are my responsibility".

4.3.3.2 General activities:

All respondents reported that engaging in pleasurable activities – both with and without the children – constituted coping strategies. Activities with the children included making use of Cape Town's natural facilities – surfing, walking, picnics, exhibitions –, school functions – sports events, fetes –, staying home – baking, gardening, "doing creative things" –, going out for meals and holidaying.

Alternate activities were reported to allow a "time-out" for mothers from their children and daily responsibilities, which enhanced coping abilities. In terms of exercise, such de-stressing activities included gym, yoga and mountain walks. In terms of escapism, mothers reported naps on the couch and reading to be equally relaxing. The importance of such time-out in terms of coping is illustrated in the following excerpt:

"The children must go to their father on his weekend. I've put my foot down. Because for thirty days of the month they are with me 24/7. If I don't get those 2 days off I start feeling like I don't have a soul, never mind a life".

For all respondents, the major obstacles in drawing on general activities and time-out to effectively de-stress were time management and cost.

4.3.3.3 Worldview/Locus of control:

Thematically prevalent throughout the interviews were the various respondents' individual coping styles. While some assumed full responsibility for the stressors they faced and for their ability to cope with them – demonstrating internal loci of control – others attributed their surrounding stressors and coping abilities to sources external – external loci of control.

Internal Loci of Control

Respondents demonstrating internal loci of control cite the reasoning that "It's all on my shoulders. I have no-one else to fall back on. I'm the one who has to make the decisions." Reporting on their coping abilities (crisis period

through to the present), these respondents spoke of an “inner strength” on which they could fall back, personal “survival skills” and generally optimistic worldviews.

This internal coping style was reported as both potentially helpful and harmful in turns:

Helpful: “I find that if you show (the JSC) that you are making an effort and try to help yourself, and you’re not knocking on their door saying help me financially, they’re great.”

Harmful: “I don’t like to ask for help for myself... I hate asking anyone for help”

External Loci of Control

Respondents demonstrating this coping style tended to attribute both their stressors and the success of their coping efforts to external sources, suggesting a powerlessness on their own behalf. One respondent attributed her survival/coping to “the grace of G-d and the bank”, another to fate: “whatever happens, will happen”. Of childrearing, a third respondent explained:

“They are going to turn out how they are going to turn out. I can just pray that they are happy and that they are safe. What else can I do?”

4.3.4 THEME FOUR: INFLUENCE OF FATHER:

The following theme examines the influence of the ex-spouse on both respondent and children. Under specific scrutiny are (i) the levels of contact between ex-spouse, respondent and children, and (ii) the duties of ex-spouse towards his ex-wife and children and the extent to which these are fulfilled.

4.3.4.1 Father’s role: Contact and communication:

The following subdivisions examine the role of the father in the lives of both respondent and children, with specific reference to contact. Four categories predominate: divorce of wife and children; divorce of wife, not children; communication between ex-spouses; and contact with ex-husband’s family.

Divorce of wife & children

Four fathers have relinquished all contact with their children post-divorce. Of these, one father had initially seen his children only upon his wife's insistence. Although some of these fathers are kept abreast of their children's well being by their own mothers – who are in contact with their ex-wives –, this is perceived to have done little to tweak their interest in their children:

“My son gets a birthday present from Canada once a year. I don't know if it comes from his dad or grandparents, but it is signed Dad in his grandmother's handwriting, but he thinks it is from his father, and that's good enough. He doesn't phone, he doesn't write”.

Divorce of wife, not children

Four fathers maintain regular contact with their children, including weekly or bi-monthly weekend visits. Of these, one father also sees his son during the week. Two fathers see their children irregularly: one bi-annually, and the other every 18 months to two years.

Where fathers have been reluctant to contact their children, the majority of respondents have attempted forcing said contact. In most cases this met with little success: the contact was discontinued after a short period. In some cases, however, the mother does not consider father-child contact to be beneficial to the children:

“He phones the children and says that it is not his fault they are not with him, because I kidnapped them, and then my daughter comes crying to me, saying she can't handle this.”

Interestingly, one mother reported that as the children grow older, they have chosen to spend less time with their available father. The reason cited is that the father has a girlfriend with whom he spends all weekend, and the children do not wish to be with her.

Communication between ex-spouses

Four respondents reported no contact with their ex-husbands, while three reported a good relationship in matters concerning the children. Regarding

the former, communication tends to take place through a third party, for example, a lawyer. Of the latter, one mother explains:

"He will communicate with me only when it is to do with the children, and then we have a very good relationship, an open relationship, a supportive relationship, we really both still feel equally committed to raising the kids".

The communication between parents during the crisis stage following the divorce was extremely difficult for all respondents. Of the five who now have contact with their ex-husband, one respondent predicts that communication "will get tougher as the kids get older". However, the remaining four felt it had improved since the initial two years:

"It's taken me two years to be able to look at him and just say, 'You know what, you're you, and I'm me and off you go, it's fine, I forgive you.' Now we can actually sit together at a school function and it's fine".

Ex-Husbands' families

Although three mothers and their children have no contact with the ex-husband, the majority of respondents (70%) reported maintenance of contact with his family. Interestingly, these seven mothers were not necessarily the same ones who maintained contact with their ex-husbands.

4.3.4.2 Father's responsibility to respondent and children:

In this segment, the post-divorce financial, emotional and practical responsibilities of the father to his ex-wife and children – and the extent to which they are fulfilled – will be examined.

Financial responsibilities

Two mothers receive absolutely no assistance from their ex-spouse at all, while a further two receive minimal amounts irregularly, and only after much nagging. The six mothers who reported that the father regularly and willingly pays the children's maintenance, added that he is reluctant to pay for anything else, including medical emergencies:

"He is responsible for their medical bills, but because I had taken her to the doctor without his consent, he refused to pay".

It was reported, in some cases, that fathers who had financial resources available buys unnecessary luxuries for the child, while respondents struggle to purchase the very necessities he is *unwilling* to contribute towards.

Emotional responsibilities

Parenting style

Most mothers reported that they prefer to be open and honest with their children about their shortcomings as both people and as a family. By contrast, they contend that the children's fathers would rather make false promises to their children than lose face.

Unreliability

Three mothers indicated that their ex-husband's unreliability causes them anxiety. They find that they often have to be available on the weekend when the children are supposed to be with their fathers, as the fathers often change the arrangements at the last minute.

Children of father's new partner

In three cases, ex-husbands have found new romantic partners – two of whom have introduced other children into the fathers' lives. The relevant mothers are concerned that fathers may not have treated a delicate situation with the sensitivity children may require. Furthermore, respondents worry that on visits, children must compete for – and often sacrifice – quality father-child time.

Abandonment and rejection

Respondents voiced concerns regarding the effects of the fathers' neglect of their children:

"They will come back from staying at their grandparents on holiday where they see him every day, and then he won't even phone them. It's an emotional roller coaster for them."

Practical responsibilities

School work

While five fathers reportedly take interest in how their children are managing at school, only two participate actively in homework activities. Two fathers do not allow their children to do homework on visits, despite the mothers' appeals.

Divergent disciplinary styles

Since the divorce, disciplinary styles of ex-spouses are reported to have grown highly divergent, with a much increased leniency on the part of the father. This appears to be the case regardless of whether or not the parental unit had – in marriage – disciplined the children in a united style and manner:

"When we were married we parented in the same way, we were both quite strict, but since the divorce, he kind of lost sight of it, so when he has [his son] for weekends, it's a party from beginning to end with sleepovers of 15 children, bringing him home two hours later than he should, they don't eat properly. It's so bad. Now he wants to be seen as the 'cool dad'".

4.3.5 THEME FIVE: BENEFITS OF DIVORCE

According to respondents, mothers and children shared similar benefits as a result of divorce. For this reason, they will be discussed together, grouped into the thematic categories of distance from father, mother not undermined, relief, independence/resilience and environment. The few benefits enjoyed specifically by mothers or children will be discussed separately afterwards.

Worth noting prior to the following discussion, however, are the interesting perspectives of two respondents on the conceptualization of 'benefits of divorce':

"I don't like the word 'benefit'... Divorce is the best of a situation that you would not ideally want. I don't believe that getting divorced is beneficial for anyone".

"As nice as autonomy is, I think parenting should be a two-person job".

4.3.5.1 Physical distance from ex-spouse:

Some respondents reported that the distance from ex-husband, as provided by divorce, was beneficial for both mother and child. In terms of benefit to mothers, the ex-husband's presence and support during marriage was generally described as negative, and thus distance from him has allowed them to "relax". Regarding children, the sentiment of one respondent was widely shared:

"The benefit is that my children were not exposed to (my ex-husband's) lifestyle. If I had remained in the marriage, they would have been exposed to unreal life circumstances".

However, other respondents found that fathers' living in different cities/countries was detrimental to their children's welfare. These mothers would have liked the fathers to play a more active part in the children's upbringing, as four of the six long distance fathers had little or no contact with their children.

4.3.5.2 Relief:

More than half of the respondents felt that they suffered more stress while married than in divorce. Of divorce, one respondent described "huge relief", while another stated: "I am very happy, in fact more than happy. Getting divorced is one of the best things I ever did." Only one mother reported relief on the part of her children as a result of the divorce.

4.3.5.3 Environment:

Thirdly, many mothers stressed the benefit of an improved, peaceful home environment – away from the "ugly antagonism in the home during marriage" – for both themselves and their children.

4.3.5.4 Respondent not undermined:

Most respondents described that during marriage, their husbands had undermined them in both their personal and parental capacity.

Personal benefits

On a personal level, one respondent explained:

"My ex-husband kept on belittling me. It was a case of 'you're not good at this, you need me'. My beliefs were smothered, undermined".

For these respondents, "the benefit has been not being put down: no-one is overriding me". Resultantly, respondents explain, they have regained a sense of "sanity" and personal identity:

"My life since divorce has changed for the better because I essentially reclaimed myself, I took ownership of myself again. And I think that I had lost that (in marriage)."

"[Post-divorce,] you develop. You are your own person again. You're not subjugating what you are, and you're not a couple, you are an individual again".

Parental benefits

Divorce was reported to have afforded respondents increased parental authority and respect:

"My ex-husband was an absolute master at getting the kids to do what he wanted, despite what I said... Now, I can do it my way, without contradiction."

For one respondent, this newfound autonomy affords a similar benefit: the children are not able to play one parent off against the other.

Benefits to children

Respondents agreed that as a result of their increased personal and parental authority, their children had developed a newfound, beneficial respect for such authority. Specifically, children are perceived to be more "stable", having developed "an understanding of the meaning of the word 'no'" and a respect for rules that may not be broken.

Many respondents further added that the post-divorce opportunity to reclaim a personal identity may well have made them into "better mothers". One respondent described that the suppression of being undermined in marriage

made her a very irritable parent, thwarting her “motherly potential”. For another, post-divorce development was considered to have made her a “better person”, and thus a “better mother”. A third respondent, however, argues the contrary: “I don’t think you can say that divorce makes you a better or worse mother”.

4.3.5.5 Independence/Resilience:

A fourth thematic benefit shared by the majority of respondents was that of a necessary post-divorce independence and resilience. Having to deal with whatever comes their way, respondents described the result as “liberating”: “there’s not going to be someone letting you down”. A further benefit, described by one respondent, is that her children have now demonstrated a newfound faith in her general competence and capabilities.

Six of the mothers further described the development of a post-divorce independence/resilience in their children. Specifically, so as to help their mothers, the children have had to learn new practical skills: feeding the pets, looking after themselves, cooking and cleaning. Two respondents explain how their children have had to develop their social skills: learning to deal with (parental) conflict, and with the children they encounter when staying with their father. As a result: “they’re much more independent than other children, which is a great advantage”.

In terms of resilience, mothers are glad that the divorce has taught their children that “life isn’t perfect. They are under no illusions, they are aware of a reality check”.



Figure 2.

4.3.5.6 Benefits specific to single parent mothers:

Organization

Two respondents considered the organization required of a single parent to be beneficial, in that they have honed skills of planning and specificity.

Financial independence

Despite the major financial stress they face, two respondents still considered their newfound financial independence a benefit of the divorce:

"It's earning my own money and spending it, and not actually having to answer to anyone at all."

4.3.5.7 Benefits specific to children:

Financial awareness:

Respondents considered their children's post-divorce respect for the value of money to be a beneficial lesson in responsibility and accountability, in that:

"They have to think before they spend their money. They are now being challenged to do chores for money where – in another environment – they would have just received pocket money."

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter has described the analysis of the data and presented the findings of the data analysis in themes. The following chapter will discuss the findings raised in this chapter.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5. INTRODUCTION:

In this chapter the major findings that have emerged from this study are discussed in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two. The data analysis presented the findings in the form of five themes. This format will be continued in the discussion of findings. As discussed in chapter two above, the strengths based and narrative approaches were employed in the data gathering phase of the research. These constructivist approaches were chosen to assist the respondents in viewing their present situations from a position of empowerment rather than one of failure. While the interviews in some cases elicited positive responses, especially in relation to the benefits of the divorce, many of the persistent issues remained. The positive focus of the research schedule did not change the facts pertaining to the divorce and the events following it. However, these approaches allowed the respondents to view the events from a position of power.

5.1 THEME ONE: STRESS

5.1.1 Crisis period

The crisis period following divorce (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989) was described by respondents as “a nightmare, horrific” and “extremely difficult” even for those who initiated the divorce. The relationship between the parents generally remains strained and hostile for a number of years (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989), even in respect of the children. Prior to divorce, parents are generally aware that there are problems in the marriage, which they try to repair. Whether a joint decision is made to separate or one party leaves unexpectedly, the adjustment to the situation is a process that develops over time (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). As stated by Bohanan, 1970 (in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1994), divorce is a process, not an event.

A respondent who described her ex-spouse as denying her many necessities in the initial period following the divorce (and thereby also denying his

children whom he adored), continued that more than four years on her husband will now give the children whatever they require to make them happy. She attributed his previous behaviour to anger and revenge at her for leaving him, and to his absolute distress at losing his family.

5.1.2 Role-taking

The two most stressful aspects of divorce for most respondents were financial coping and time management. All divorced mothers had financial concerns, including those who had received a generous divorce settlement or were in well-paid employment. This financial stress – outlined in the works of Dizard and Gadlin (1990), Pryor and Rodgers (2001) and Kurz (1995) – relates to present coping as well as future events, such as educating children through university. Working mothers concurred with Whitehead (1998), expressing concern that they lacked sufficient time or energy to carry out all their roles adequately. As one respondent explained, if she had more money, she would accept fewer work offers, and spend more time with her child.

According to Kurz (1995), adopting the role of primary care giver and financial provider for the family stretches the mother's capacity for bearing stress.

The divorce impacted on the respondents' self-esteem and self-worth both positively and negatively, as suggested by Parkinson (1987). On the one hand the respondents were happy that they were no longer being undermined or humiliated by their ex-partners (Whitehead, 1998), but in many instances they bore a great deal of guilt about having separated the children from their fathers, especially those mothers who instigated the divorce. Mothers expressed this guilt as having a need to give the children whatever they can to make up for what the children would have had (materially) if they had stayed in the marriage. The conclusions of Arditti and Maddenderick (1995) concurs with the findings that mothers' guilt and loss is balanced by attributions of more fulfilling lives for themselves after divorce.

5.1.3 Age of children

Findings revealed that the age of the children impacted on the experiences of the mother, and the manner in which the children dealt with the divorce. One mother felt that as her child has grown up without a father, he did not have the anxieties of other children who were mentally cognizant when their parents separated. Mahler's stage theory suggests that the young child requires a father figure to separate healthily from the mother. Pryor and Rogers (2001) suggest that children under six at the time of separation are at higher levels of risk for problem behaviour. Another respondent in this study stated that her four-year-old child is being bullied at school and the school has approached her regarding behavioural and emotional problems in her son. This type of behaviour is referred to by the abovementioned authors.

In relation to the findings, very young children were reported to require assistance with all chores, which was extremely time consuming for the mother. However, the alternative – namely, allowing the children to help – was of equal concern for the mothers: their lack of time or patience required to allow their young children to make –and “learn from – their own [inevitable] mistakes”. These findings concur with elements of Erikson's Human Development Theory, describing the need for persons to experience – and incorporate – both negative and positive aspects of each stage of development in order to achieve a sense of self worth (Monte, 1999).

5.1.4 Academic and behavioural stressors

An emergent theme indicated that the majority of mothers had been approached by the school because of behavioural and poor academic performance of their children. Likewise, the Avon Longitudinal Study and Popenoe (1996) reported similar findings of behaviour disorders in children of single mothers.

5.1.5 Loss and bereavement

The loss of other family members at the time of – or soon after – the divorce, was described as devastating by the majority of respondents. According to Bowlby (1969) and Bloom-Fesbach and Bloom-Fesbach (1988), such additional loss – often the death of a parent – is particularly difficult as the anxiety response first incurred in separation from the maternal-object, as described by Mahler, is repeated whenever there are separations from significant others. This is further intensified if the deceased played a major supporting role (Bowlby, 1969). Divorce itself is a major loss, rating second only to the death of a spouse on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Rahe and Holmes, 1967).

Similarly, the finding of post-divorce loss of close friends – further “object relations” (Bowlby, 1969; Bloom-Fesbach & Bloom-Fesbach, 1988) – was reported to be particularly detrimental to the mother, as good friends often become sounding boards for decision-making. The majority of mothers had enjoyed close relationships with their mothers-in-law during the marriage, and this additional loss was particularly hurtful and difficult, although understood by the respondents. Fortunately, with the passing of time, these relationships were somewhat re-established, although on different levels of intimacy.

5.1.6 Role models

Another theme indicated that most mothers were concerned that their children did not have a good male role model after the divorce. This worry related specifically to male children, as predicted by Popenoe (1996). Furthermore, this finding echoed the sentiments of Barnes (2004), in that mothers whose children remained in contact with their fathers expressed concern for the father’s suitability as a role model. Of chief concern for the mothers were their ex-husbands’ inappropriate values and behaviours. Here, to consult the literature, their worries appear legitimate: quality of paternal

involvement may well determine the child's later prosocial behaviour and empathy (Popenoe, 1996).

For those respondents whose children had no contact with their fathers, the problem simply compounds: on the one hand, the children could be seen to be entirely lacking in a paternal role model; on the other, the father – by his very absence – is functioning as a poor role model. Respondents in these dilemmas generally encouraged other family members or friends to fill this role, as suggested by Pearson (1993) and McMaster (1981) when they propose that family roles may shift. Mothers expressed the perception that the lack of role models for their children is of special concern to them as this is one area where they are unable to fill the role.

5.2 THEME TWO: SUPPORT:

This study found that financial support is the largest support needed by single divorced mothers. As expressed by Kurz (1995), those mothers who do receive maintenance from the father (the majority of respondents) find the amount insufficient to cover the children's needs. This necessitates the mother working full days, which she considers to be detrimental to the needs of the children. The research supports Whitehead (1998), as respondents expressed concern that they could not attend school events, volunteer to lift children, and were dependent on others for help in raising their children. This finding concurs with Whitehead (1998), who suggests that that divorce is a cause of economic disadvantage.

Four of the working mothers indicated that had they remained in their chosen occupations during the marriage – instead of having remained at home and looking after the children – they would have been in a position to earn more at this stage. However, having been out of the market place for some time, they were now not sufficiently qualified or experienced to earn well-paying salaries. These findings substantiate those of Kurz (1995): at the time of marriage, societal values broadly discouraged mothers in the workplace. At

the time of divorce, such values had since undergone a transformation, placing those in the position of these respondents at somewhat of a disadvantage in the workplace.

As predicted by the literature, the main provider of emotional support was generally the mothers of respondents, also found by Braude and La Grange (1993). Findings illustrate, however, that one major source of emotional support – domestic workers – were not represented in the literature. A possible explanation for this may be contextual: the services of a domestic worker – who often remains in the employers' family for many decades – is quite unique to the South African experience.

Practical support was most often provided by mothers, family members, friends and hired help. While mothers of respondents assisted by looking after children while their daughters were working, friends helped by looking after the children occasionally (Braude, 1993), allowing the mother a break to attend to her own personal matters. Mothers' practical support was provided more routinely and often than that of friends. Domestic workers, once again, provided "a huge" amount of support, allowing mothers to work knowing that the children would not come home to an empty house, and in attending to domestic chores.

However, the findings indicated that support is not without its own stress, which correlates with the findings of Combrinck-Graham (1998). Namely, the mothers perceived that when support is given by other family members, there are conditions attached (Kurz, 1995). For example, those family members providing the mother with support in caring for children expect to have a say in the decisions made regarding the disciplining and raising of children. Interestingly, this parallels the research of Combrinck-Graham (1998), who arrived at similar findings in studying familial support networks in poor families.

The researcher identified another area of stress induced by support, namely the hiring of extra help. Enlisting the support of domestic workers, au pairs, counselors, babysitters and caretakers all add to the financial burden of the respondents.

5.2.1 Jewish community as support

The majority of respondents did not find members of Cape Town's Jewish community supportive of them. They described Capetonians as snobbish and cliquey; mothers of children at Herzlia school as unfriendly and self-serving; and synagogue communities as uncaring. Likewise, regarding relationships with community ministers, Rabbis were generally found to be disinterested in the plight of divorced mothers. These findings are substantiated by Braude (1993). However, many of the respondents did not attend services regularly and were not well known to their Rabbis. The general consensus, however, was that the Jewish and religious communities should show more concern for single parent families.

In the present study, three respondents indicated that their children were coping fine and did not require support, while seven mothers had received communication from the school regarding children's behavioural or academic abilities. Five of these mothers considered the school intervention favourably while one did not, and another was not in agreement with the school's findings. This finding thus correlates with those of Braude (1993), where a small majority of mothers perceived school support to be positive. However, respondents found that the school system had not adjusted letters and assignments to express acceptance of varied family structures, as also noted by Braude (1993).

5.2.2 Self support

All mothers considered themselves to be the greatest source of support to their children, as they filled the roles of both parents in providing emotional, practical and some, if not all, of the financial support required by the children

(Braude & La Grange, 1993). The quality of this support may well be determined by where each respondent lies on Erikson's (1968, cited in Monte, 1999) generativity-stagnation continuum. Namely, the mothers in this study would be in the stage of adulthood, and in the 7th stage of development in which the task is to acquire a sense of generativity versus a sense of stagnation. The fundamental characteristic of the ego at this stage is "its ability to transcend the immediate self-related interests of the person in favour of a view of generations to come" (Erikson, 1968, in Monte, 1999:399). Thus, the extent to which divorced mothers are able to support their children may relate significantly to the manner in which they have resolved this particular developmental conflict.

5.3 THEME THREE: COPING:

5.3.1 Support

The entire theme of support, above, can be linked to this theme of coping, as all areas that are a support to the mother assist her in coping. The findings of this study agree with Barnes' (2004) statement that support systems are the most important resources for divorced mothers. The importance of the support of respondents' mothers, immediate family, friends, hired help and communities – in terms of respondents' coping abilities – have been discussed above. More controversial, however, is the utility and effectiveness of medication and/or professional counseling in divorced mothers' coping, to be discussed below.

5.3.1.1 Medication and/or professionals

Four respondents relied – at some stage – on medication as a means of coping. Of these, only one reported unsatisfactory results in terms of their efficacy in enhancing coping abilities. This finding concurs with the work of Kurz (1995).

The majority of respondents reported that they had sought psychiatric or psychological counseling. While Kurz (1995) found that all those in her study

who had received counseling found it beneficial, this study indicated that one respondent did not find it useful, but she acknowledged that this might have been due to “not having found the right person”.

5.3.2 Parenting style

The majority of respondents indicated that they employed an authoritative parenting style, which is indicated by the literature to be the most adaptive style of parenting (Louw & Edwards, 1997). These mothers expressed a need for organization to ward off chaos. They also indicated that they set firm boundaries regarding homework, bedtime, eating routines and schedules which were firmly adhered to. Concurring with the literature of Whitehead (1988), parenting styles played an important role in the way respondents coped. However, the findings of this study illustrate the adoption of a parenting style that lies in direct contrast to the permissive style predicted by Whitehead (1988). Respondents’ relief at having autonomy and no longer being undermined – accompanied by the need to play all roles in the family – appeared to have resulted in the adaptive coping mechanism of an authoritarian parenting style.

While being organized, respondents considered themselves flexible, loving and available to their children. Mothers emphasized the importance of an open, honest parenting style as a form of coping mechanism: they spoke to their children, discussed options, gave genuine explanations and offered choices. Machida and Holloway (1990) and Hetherington, et al (1978 in Barnes, 2004) all indicate that these characteristics assist the child in adapting to the new structure. However, a recurring sentiment among respondents was that such a parenting style was frequently threatened and even compromised by the behaviour and/or parenting of the ex-husband, another theme in itself. For example, one mother explained that when her ex-husband broke promises and let the children down, it was she who had to make excuses for him, so as to protect the children. Although this father has had no contact with his children for more than eighteen months, the mother is still

protecting him, and – in so doing – forgoing her post-divorce coping mechanism of open, honest parenting. In another instance, a mother, otherwise committed to open honesty, withheld the truth about her ex-husband's drug addiction from her children.

The executive sub-system of the family changes after divorce (Combrinck-Graham, 1989), and in this study, one mother indicated that she was afraid to discipline her child in case she "became suicidal again". The family substructure – as described by Minuchin (1981, in Capuzzi & Gross, 2003) and McMaster (1981) – has become enmeshed, with the mother relinquishing her role as parent to engage in appeasing her daughter's demands. In the same family, the middle child has adopted the role of communicator between the parents who do not speak to each other, and the parental role in disciplining her younger sibling, while the oldest child showed fears of growing up.

5.3.3 Locus of control

Linked closely to the parenting styles of the mothers is their appraisal of their situations – that is, the locus of control exercised by the respondent will influence her parenting style and appraisal of both surrounding stressors and personal coping abilities.

Only three of the respondents were considered by the researcher to have external loci of control. Of these, two had been left by their ex-spouse, while one had initiated the divorce. The findings in relation to these respondents support the ideas of Machida and Holloway (1990), namely that external loci of control may prove less effective and successful than internal ones, particularly regarding matters of family and parenting. To illustrate, those respondents with external loci of control all still experienced a negative relationship with their ex-husbands, and all have children with emotional and/or behavioural problems. According to Machida and Holloway (1990) mothers who display external loci of control tend to avoid situations that may be uncomfortable, as evident in the example given above where the

respondent was afraid that disciplining her daughter would refuel her suicidal ideation. This problem is often the result of a mother's lack of conviction of her own effectiveness (Pryor & Rogers, 2001), characteristic of those displaying external loci of control.

Of the seven respondents who portrayed internal loci of control, four had characteristically initiated the divorce. These mothers appeared to be more secure in both themselves and their maternal roles.

5.4 THEME FOUR: ROLE OF FATHER:

5.4.1 Contact with ex-spouse

None of the mothers indicated that they and the children's father were still good friends. The most accommodating relationships described indicated that parents could communicate openly and positively "and have good chats" only about the needs of the children.

Some parents whose contact is still acrimonious do not speak to each other but communicate via the email or lawyers. Yet others have no contact at all. This study indicated that when the mother had a poor relationship with her ex-husband, the children were not keen to visit him, and although reportedly "they love him because he is their dad, they show little respect towards him and do not agree with his values". This study concurs with the findings of Peck and Manocherian, (1989) that the post divorce relationship between parents is the most important factor in the child's adjustment.

The findings in this study indicated that four mothers had good relationships with their husbands at this time regarding their children, while four had acrimonious dealings and two had no contact at all. Judged on school performance and behaviour at school and home, all of the mothers who had good relationships with their ex-partners perceived their children to be well adjusted, while all of the mothers whose relationships with their ex-husband was acrimonious described at least one of their children as having behavioural

and/or academic problems. The two mothers with no contact with their ex-spouses described their children as well-adjusted. However, the researcher noted that mothers may have differing opinions of well-adjusted behaviour. For example, one child in the study has been diagnosed with ADHD, which the mother does not consider to be a behavioural problem, and to which she connects all academic difficulties. This mother considers her relationship with her ex-husband to be good. Luepnitz, (1982, in Carter & McGoldrick, 1989) found that ongoing conflict was the only predictor of poor adjustment in children.

5.4.2 Contact visits with children

Some mothers expressed concern over their children spending time with fathers who did not provide disciplined and nurturing care. Respondents worried that their ex-husbands might leave the children to their own devices, allowing them – for example – to visit shopping malls without adequate supervision. One respondent complained that the easiest way for the father to gain popularity with his son, was to make the weekend one long party, and she then had to deal with a tired and uncooperative teenager on his return. Concern regarding the role of the father is also expressed by Pryor and Rodgers (2001) and Barnes (2004).

5.4.3 Support

5.4.3.1 Financial Support

It is expected that the father will support his child/ren by paying maintenance. However, the findings of this research supported evidence that not all fathers financially support their children -adequately, -timeously or even –at all (Whitehead, 1998). Other issues arising from fathers' financial support suggest that fathers sometimes overindulge their children, some do not provide for basic needs of the children but provide luxuries to win their children's affections. These actions are particularly upsetting to mothers who are struggling to survive financially. Pryor and Rodgers (2001) refer to the

quality of single fatherhood, asserting that fathers should provide discipline, guidance and financial support.

5.4.3.2 Emotional support

As discussed above, the relationship between the parents plays an important role in the positive adjustment of the children to the divorce (Peck & Manocherian, 1989). A highly discordant relationship is more harmful than the total absence of the father (Whitehead, 1998). Although the majority of respondents indicated that they do not have good relationships with their ex-spouses, they wanted their children to have contact with their fathers as they felt this was in the children's best interests. However, one mother noted that after visiting their father, the children were always disappointed by the lack of contact following the visit, and that she then had to nurse them back to emotional stability. This type of behaviour by fathers results in insecure, anxious and ambivalent attachment (Bowlby, 1969 and Ainsworth et al 1978). Other mothers, whose ex-partners had no contact with them or their children, expressed sadness for the children who they perceived felt abandoned and rejected.

5.4.3.3 Practical support

Most mothers considered the fathers' lack of interest in the children's schoolwork to be detrimental to the children. Only two mothers indicated that the father was active in assisting the children with homework and school projects. This statistic compares favourably with that of Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991). However, the majority of mothers in this study expressed dissatisfaction that fathers were not willing to supervise homework during their weekends with their children.

5.5 THEME FIVE: BENEFITS:

5.5.1 Mothers' new identity

The progress of the mothers from the difficult last stages of marriage could be compared to the stages in Mahler's stage theory (in Monte, 1999) and Erikson's human development theory (1968, in Monte, 1999), in which the mother first encounters difficulty in her marriage, separates and divorces from her husband, and then learns to become independent, self-reliant and self-sufficient. Although the road to successful single parenting is not straightforward – as in moving through Erikson's stages of development – the mother will perceive that she has not met some tasks, for example, finding an *affiliative* partner (Monte, 1999:399). However, in order to feel positive about herself and her new situation, she will need to have more successful experiences than failures. Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory may explain the loss of the object relation being re-experienced at each separation incurred in life.

In the present study, the findings contradicted Barnes (1994), who states that divorce produces mothers who are more punitive, bad tempered and unpredictable. Most respondents perceived that they were better individuals after the divorce, less irritable and thus better mothers. Further, contradicting Whitehead (1988), they felt that they were able to set rules consistently, and that their children showed more respect for their authority.

5.5.2 Resilience of children

A majority of mothers expressed the opinion that their children had become resilient and independent since the divorce. They had learnt practical skills to help their mother, respect for the value of money, and new social skills. These mothers considered this early adaptation to new circumstances to be beneficial to the children. However, Erikson's human development theory (1968, in Monte, 1999) may consider this to be a disadvantage as undertaking age inappropriate tasks too early, may result in task failure, and feeling of inadequacy and despair.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER:

In conclusion, the data collected in this study supports the available literature findings that divorce results in many stresses for mothers, with financial stress being the largest problem. Support from family, friends, schools, professionals and hired help are resources most relied on by working mothers. The role of the father in providing financial support in the form of maintenance for the children is of immense assistance, but is unfortunately not always provided regularly and timeously. Acrimony between parents hinders children's adjustment to divorce, while amicable relationships between them creates an atmosphere in which children can thrive. This study provides strong evidence that the father plays an important role in his children's lives whether he is actively involved or not. In this respect, the absent father models rejection and abandonment to his children.

Mothers' coping is dependant on their financial income, their support systems and their own perceptions of their abilities. This study indicated that the mothers' loci of control orientation affected their stress levels and coping abilities. The findings indicated that divorce was not a permanently debilitating experience, that respondents are resilient, and will overcome most obstacles in their efforts to raise healthy children. Mothers indicated benefits of divorce to be the reclaiming of the self, self-development, increased self-esteem and the progression to being better people and thus better mothers.

The strengths based approach to the research allowed the mothers to relate their (hi)stories from a positive perspective with the emphasis on coping despite the stresses they encountered. Their stories highlighted their resilience in the face of adversity, which emphasized their own strengths to the respondents. The narrative approach encouraged the respondents to tell their own stories, taking ownership of their circumstances and acknowledging their ability to cope with their situations. The feminist approach allowed the respondents to reclaim their individual power and autonomy.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter discussed the findings which derive from the data collected in this study. These findings have been substantiated with literature and research discussed in chapter two. The following chapter will discuss the researcher's conclusions and recommendations based on the findings in this chapter.

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CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER:

This final chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the data collected in this study, and offers the researcher's recommendations based on the information collected from the respondents.

6.1 FINDINGS:

Divorce imposed severe stress and constraints on the lives of single mothers who incorporated the roles of financial provider, nurturer and housekeeper. Financial stress and a lack of time to fulfil all their roles were of major concern. Attempting to be both mother and father to their children left some women feeling resentful towards their ex- partners who in some cases have abandoned their children. Coping strategies include relying heavily on support systems.

The loss of the marriage was perceived to be a failure of a major relationship. When coupled with further losses and bereavements, such as the death of a parent or sibling, the stress on the mother was magnified. Each loss incurred may have been internalised as the separation in the initial attachment to the mother object, resulting in anxiety. Multiple losses resulted in increased anxiety. Having to deal with multiple anxieties led daily to overload in mothers coping abilities.

The responsibility of single-handedly having to raise children without the loving support of a marital partner is described by respondents - using the same word as Kurz, (1995) -, as "overwhelming".

The experiences incurred during the marriage and the divorce process impacted on the mothers' feelings of self-worth and personal identity. The relationships established over time with the ex-partners played a significant

role in the mothers' coping abilities. Mothers' perceptions of uncooperative, uninvolved fathers are filtered through to children.

Despite the drawbacks to single parenting, divorced mothers have shown incredible resilience, drawing on all available resources for support.

The main benefits of the divorce have been the regaining of the self-image, autonomy, and not being undermined. However, as expressed by one mother:

"As nice as the autonomy is, I think parenting should be a two person job".

6.2 CONCLUSIONS:

The findings in relation to the aims and objectives of this study will now be discussed:

6.2.1 Experiences and perceptions:

Respondents considered that the divorce process and subsequent events, had led to self-growth and self-improvement. The divorce process resulted in introspection and an examination of the needs and expectations of the self as well as exploration of the most important needs of the children. Mothers described themselves as becoming self-empowered and capable, and thus more responsive, caring mothers. During the marriage, many respondents had felt undermined and humiliated and had lost their self-confidence regarding raising their children. The divorce and subsequent independence had increased their confidence in setting boundaries for their children, and in becoming more authoritative parents. They had experienced improved relationships with their children, as negative role modeling in the home by the father was no longer evident.

The initial crisis period following divorce (approximately two to three years) was considered to be the most stressful period as both spouses harboured much anger and often despair. The mothers found that this time was

extremely difficult, but that after the initial adjustment, life settled into some form of routine and became more manageable. Mothers perceived that children suffered in different ways, depending on their ages at the time of the divorce. Respondents perceived that their children felt abandoned and rejected by their uninvolved fathers, and were concerned about the lack of positive role models, especially for male children.

Financial stress and time constraints were the most often reported stressors. Attempts to earn sufficient income to support their families meant that mothers had to spend more time away from their children, thus leaving less time to spend in the traditional role of nurturer and carer. Respondents perceived that being the breadwinner detracted from the ability to provide emotional support to the children. The need to earn more money resulted in mothers holding down extra jobs, or working longer hours, thus decreasing time spent with children, and the ability to attend school meetings or outings. Respondents reported that they provide as many luxuries for their children as possible, often denying themselves necessities.

The Jewish Community of Cape Town was not perceived as being supportive of single, divorced mothers. Jewish Community Services was perceived to provide the most accessible assistance, including counselling and practical support. Single mothers seldom perceived synagogues and their Rabbis and communities to provide spiritual or emotional support. Herzlia school was perceived to provide support for the children through counsellors and advising parents of behavioural and emotional problems. The majority of the mothers at the school are not divorced, and were not perceived to offer any form of support to the respondents.

6.2.2 Challenges:

The largest challenge to mothers was perceived as financial constraints.

Relationships with the father and his extended family also provided anxiety to respondents, especially in the crisis and adjustment phases, but even thereafter, in many cases, communication between ex-spouses was acrimonious or non-existent.

Secondary losses of friendships and family bereavements arising after the divorce resulted in an overwhelming sense of despair.

Support was perceived as having its own stress attached, as those providing support often expected some say in the way things are done. This perceived interference may have reduced the newfound autonomy and reintroduced the same stresses that had been discarded along with the marriage.

6.2.3 Constraints and coping mechanisms:

The inability to count on fathers' to provide financial support was the biggest constraint to functioning adequately. Particularly in times of added stress, for example, following a medical emergency with a child, mothers were put under extreme financial stress. Fathers were often not prepared to pay towards these extra financial costs, and some did not support the mothers' emotionally at this time either. Mothers were sometimes forced to beg their ex-husbands for financial assistance.

Many of the children required professional assistance regarding school work, behavioural and/or emotional problems. Whether these needs were specifically due to the divorce is uncertain. However, in some cases of aggressive behaviour and psychological problems regarding role taking and normal age appropriate development, there appeared to be a strong likelihood that these anxieties may have been related to the divorce of the parents.

Support systems were reported to be the most important resources available to mothers. Financial support was sometimes provided by the ex-husband or

maternal or paternal family members. Emotional support was received from mothers, friends, professionals and domestic workers. Practical support was provided mainly by respondents' mothers, siblings, friends and hired help. School was supportive of the children, but did not always provide answers satisfactory to mothers.

Most mothers had relied on some form of anti-depressant medication at some time since the divorce. Psychologists had provided beneficial insights to most mothers, and to some of the children.

The Cape Town environment was regarded as "a wonderful place" for single parents to raise children as it offers many free or inexpensive activities, such as beaches, mountains and beautiful walks.

6.2.4 Benefits:

Mothers perceived benefits of the divorce as being the freedom from detrimental, humiliating, belittling or undermining relationships. Mothers reported that as a result of the divorce their self-esteem and self-worth has improved. Mothers perceived that they had found an inner resource and sense of self to assist them in coping with the stresses of the divorce and child rearing.

Respondents perceived that both they and their children had learned to appreciate the value of money and had learned new skills.

Most mothers felt that their relationship with their children had improved, as there was no conflicting parenting styles, and children had learned to respond positively to their mothers' more authoritative parenting styles.

Mothers perceived that their new homes offered them and their children a peaceful, harmonious environment.

As indicated in the literature (Pryor & Rogers, 2001) when fathers are involved in their children's lives, children showed high levels of well being in cognitive competence, empathy and internal locus of control. In this circumstance, the positive influence reduced stress on the mother, who was spared the time and emotional energy of being called into school to discuss behavioural and academic problems.

Most respondents did not perceive their ex-husbands to be appropriate role models. If the father was not available, mothers attempted to find other men to fulfil this role in a positive manner.

6.3 RESEARCHER'S ASSUMPTIONS:

Findings in relation to the researcher's assumptions in chapter one follow:

The financial situation of the mother has impacted on the resources she has been able to provide for her family. However, mothers felt that they provided firstly for their children and then for themselves, so that if anyone was deprived of luxury items or necessities, it was themselves rather than their children.

Mothers with internal loci of control were able to conceptualize their strengths and constraints and to act accordingly. Important skills were incorporated, such as organization and adhering to routine, in order to function adequately.

Support systems are the mothers' strongest resources and were essential to coping.

The absence of fathers played an important part in the families' functioning. Mothers acknowledged that the lack of the father in the home required that they undertake his role as provider in all spheres of child rearing. Mothers appeared determined to separate their roles from those of their children,

insisting that the children not play the role of the absent father. However, in some families, one child had assumed the role of caretaker of her siblings.

Mothers indicated that they were careful to hide certain undesirable truths about their ex-partner from their children, thereby deviating from their new pattern of communicating openly and truthfully with their children.

The quality of the relationship between the parents was found to be a most significant factor in the behavioural and emotional development of the children, as well as in the manner in which the mothers cope. A good relationship between the parents resulted in their children being well adjusted and stable. The children of those parents with absolutely no contact were reported by their mothers to be emotionally and academically stable while those whose parents had acrimonious relationships were reported to have problems. However, children of parents with no contact were reportedly angry with their fathers.

All mothers were critical of their ex-husbands role modelling to their children, and were concerned about adequate supervision when children spent time with their fathers. Some mothers exhibited concern that the fathers' behaviour was not appropriate, and they sought out other role models, especially for their sons.

6.4 EMERGENT THEMES:

The following themes emerged strongly in the study:

The mothers' loci of control played an important part of her coping style. Whether respondents attributed circumstances to within (internal loci of control) or outside of the self (external loci of control), they found the means to continue in their pursuit of resources. Those who appraised the situation internally relied on themselves to seek out the necessary resources and assumed full responsibility for the results, while those with external loci of

control also accessed the necessary resources, but attributed the process of attainment to other sources.

The age of the children at the time of the divorce impacted on their coping abilities. Those who were adolescents at the time of the divorce had most difficulty in adjusting to the separation of their parents, while coping with the normal uncertainties of the identity crisis stage of development. Mothers with young children felt they adjusted more easily.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS:

A number of recommendations have arisen from the data collected and could make a contribution to the wellbeing of the divorced single mother and her family.

Recommendations particular to counseling organisations could include:

1. Fathers need to be encouraged to be actively involved in raising their children after divorce. It would be beneficial if all parents attended counselling regarding the effects of divorce on children, where the effects of harmonious parental interaction could be explained and attempts made to change dysfunctional beliefs regarding parenting.
2. Cognitive therapy can be used in counselling divorced women to direct their loci of control from external to internal. The shift to an internal locus of control could help in forming positive convictions about their children's competence with resultant beneficial effects on the children's self-esteem.
3. Group therapy to be readily available to divorced, single mothers to work through their problems, normalize experiences, develop friendships and social interests. Included in group therapy could be skills for educating individuals to cope with life after divorce.

4. Single, divorced mothers who are private, insular and do not share their problems with their friends, can be encouraged to seek counselling or "open-up" to a trusted friend. Sharing confidences with like-minded individuals helps to normalize events and to put problems in perspective. Others in similar positions may have experienced similar problems and be able to offer appropriate advice.

In addition to the abovementioned recommendations, the following recommendations relate particularly to the Jewish community:

1. The Jewish community needs to be more pro-active in offering support to divorced single mothers. Synagogues, Rabbis and congregations should be more aware of the circumstances of all their members, and offer friendship, programs, and solidarity to divorced, single mothers and their children.
2. Married couples in the Jewish community need to be educated and informed about the circumstances of divorced single mothers and their children and should be encouraged to invite them to participate in their social activities.

The following recommendations pertain particularly to schools:

1. Schools to be more aware of the financial cost of school projects and budgetary limitations of divorced single mothers. A ceiling amount to be spent on projects can be recommended for all parents.
2. Schools to be made more sensitive to the words used to describe the family unit, thus acknowledging different family structures of learners.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Final recommendations for future research are:

1. The father's experiences and perceptions in relation to their responsibilities to children who are in the mother's custody.
2. Children's experiences and perceptions of growing up in a divorced home in the Jewish community.
3. Repeat this study with different cultural groups or with mixed cultural groups, and at different stages of divorce proceedings, for example, just after divorce and ten years after divorce.

6.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER:

This chapter has presented the main conclusions drawn from this research study, showing how they relate to the research aims and objectives. Recommendations have been made based on the findings of this study.

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Statistical release PO307

APPENDIX I



Figure 3 (a).

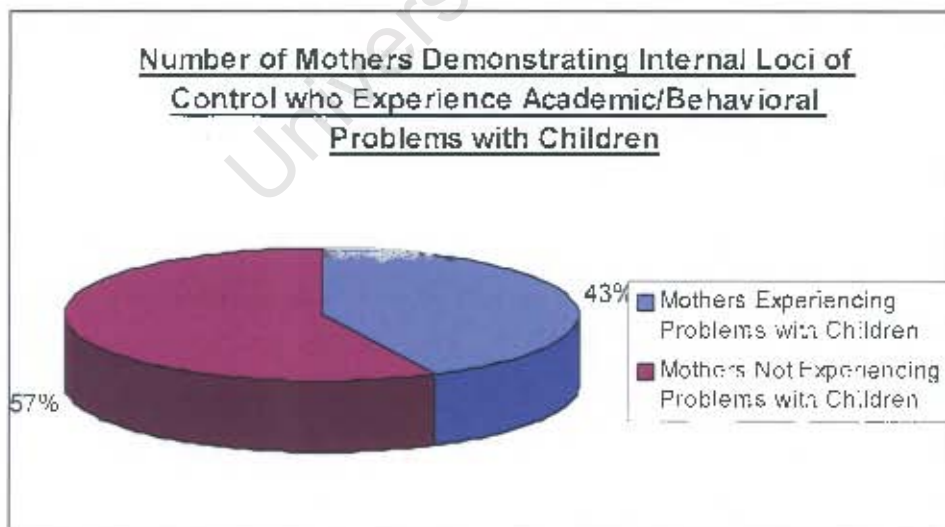


Figure 3 (b).

APPENDIX II



Figure 4 (a).

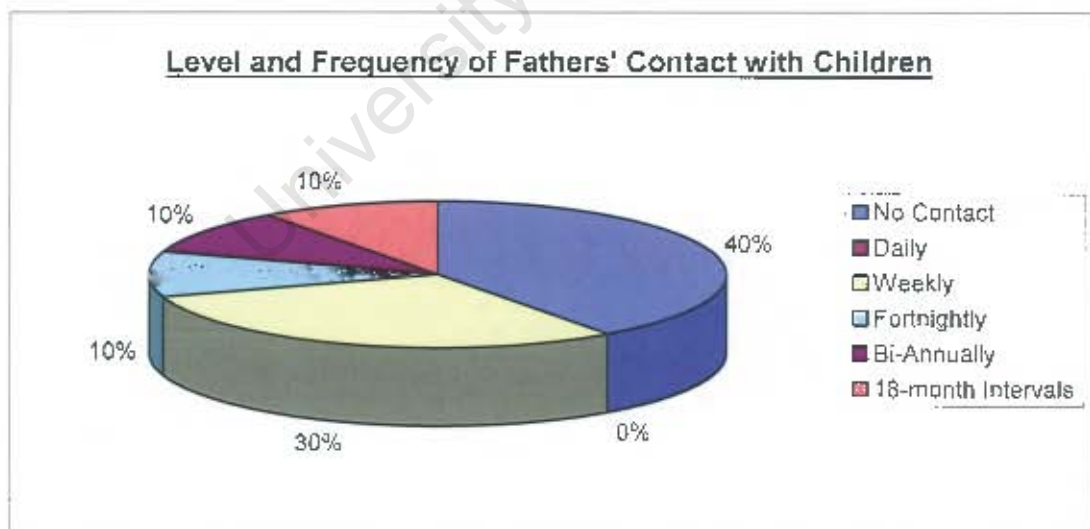


Figure 4 (b).

APPENDIX III: LETTER OF REQUEST FOR RESPONDENTS

Dear Parent,

I am currently engaged in research for a Master's degree in clinical social work under the supervision of the Department of Social Development at the University of Cape Town. The subject of my research is The experience of being a divorced mother in relation to raising children. I would be extremely grateful if divorced mothers who have not remarried, and have been single for more than two years, who are willing to be part of this study would please contact me.

All those who contact me are guaranteed strictest confidentiality. The material included in my research report will **NOT** contain names, and details will be altered to preserve privacy. The school is in no way connected with the study, and will have no access to my data.

I anticipate that I will need up to one and a half hours of your time for a personal individual interview.

I hope that this research will raise awareness of the issues related to raising children in a single parent family. I would be most grateful for your participation in this research study.

Please contact me on 021 794 6658 or 082 565 3702 or email me at nurek@icon.co.za.

With many thanks,
Yours sincerely
Judy Nurek

APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH SCHEDULE

Please tell me how you have managed in raising your children since your divorce?

These areas are to be explored more fully as the respondent tells her story:

1. Accommodation:

How have you managed your accommodation since your divorce?

2. Occupation:

How have you managed your working hours since your divorce?

How has your occupation changed since you have become a single parent? (prevent promotion, job performance etc)

3. Finances

How are you managing financially?

4. Introducing the children to the divorce

Tell me more about how you have dealt with unanticipated problems with the children?

5. Contact with Father of children

What role does father play in helping or constraining your raising of the children?

[What is your experience of contact with your ex-husband?

What does that say about what you want for your life?

In what way does the father assume responsibility for the children?

Tell me about the children's relationship with their father?

What role does the father's family play in the children's lives?]

6. Support systems

Tell me more about the support systems in your life?

In what ways has your relationship with your extended family changed since the divorce? – extended family, ex husband,

In what ways has your relationship with your community changed: - school, social community = clubs, religious support, schools, friends.

7. Problem areas

What do you see as the greatest obstacles you have encountered since becoming a single parent?

In what way have these problems impacted on the children?

What have you done to overcome these problems?

8. Coping

In what ways do you think that you have benefited since the divorce?

In which ways has your life changed for the better since the divorce?

9. Schooling

In what ways have you noticed a change in the child's attitude to his school work since the divorce?

What unexpected results have there been in the child's schooling?

In what ways has your contact with the school changed since the divorce?

Tell me about the child's relationship with his father in regard to his schooling?

10. Stress

What kind of stress are you experiencing?

In what ways is the stress you have now different to that you experienced when you were married?

What are you doing to cope with the stress?

In what ways have you dealt with any adversities?

In what ways does being alone affect you?

11. Child care

What arrangements have you made for the children while you are at work?

What is your understanding of the problems the child faces because of your single status?

12. Relationship with Child

What benefits have the children experienced from the divorce?

What unexpected strengths have you noticed in the children?

How do you help your child to manage his feelings and behaviours?

Tell me a little about how your relationship with your child changed since the divorce?

What do you think is your child's attitude towards you?

What activities do you enjoy with your child?

In what ways do you think your divorce has made you a better mother?

13. General

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the experience of being a single divorced parent?

Thank you very much for this interview.

Are you feeling OK? Do you think you would like to speak to someone about any feelings that have been raised here? Do you know who? Explore.

APPENDIX V: RESPONDENTS' INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

Identifying details

Name

Address

Tel no.

Level of education

Age

Occupation

Religious denomination

Self

Ex Husband

Names and ages of children

Which are at Herzlia school

Are you the custodial parent?

Introduction

This is a research interview I am doing for my Masters degree in Social Work. The subject is Experiences of divorced, single mothers in raising children. Thank you for volunteering to be part of this study. I have here a contract I would like to explain to you and ask you to sign. This is the contract.

While we are speaking, you may become aware of some areas you would like to explore further. If this should happen, I think it would be a good idea to make contact with someone, and we can discuss it after the interview.

Please feel free to stop the interview at any time should you need time to collect your thoughts and feelings, and please let me know if you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to stop the interview at any time should you wish to do so.

Thank you.

APPENDIX VI: CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study into the experiences of single, divorced mothers in raising their children.

I wish to advise you a little more about my research so that you are aware of the nature and aim of my study before we begin the interview.

I am a student in the Social Development program at UCT, and this research forms part of the requirements towards the Masters Degree in Clinical Social Work that I am presently completing.

I wish to assure you of the confidentiality of our interview. Although I have recruited participants through the Herzlia School system, all information will be kept confidential. Names of participants will not be revealed to the school or anyone else. The report of the study will be written under the auspices and supervision of the University of Cape Town, but all information will be considered confidential and anonymous, and the manner in which information will be integrated into the report will not compromise this anonymity or confidentiality in any way.

I anticipate that the interview will take approximately 1 hour. If at any time you feel that you wish to stop the interview, you may do so. In conducting the interview, I would like to tape record the information, so as to give a true reflection of the discussion. Should you wish that this not occur, you are free to indicate this to me. The tape recording will be destroyed once the study is complete.

I hope that this study will be informative and raise awareness of the difficulties mothers face in raising their children alone, and also raise awareness of the strengths and coping mechanisms of single mothers.

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my study.

Yours sincerely

Judy Nurek
BSc(Honours) Clinical Practice in Social Work

APPENDIX VII: TRANSCRIPTION OF ONE INTERVIEW

Interviewer's notes: Met Sn in restaurant as she did not want to talk in front on kids, and is very short of time. Interview lasted 1 hr(very down to earth, concrete type of person, earthy, no pretences, honest.)

Themes noted:

Role model for son

Dislike of ex's values, ex = depressive, dark, moody, stingy – not giving

No extended family support

No community support but good friends as support, and domestic worker.)

Interview:

R: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. I would like you to please read and sign this consent form which allows you to withdraw from this study at any time should you wish to. Thanks you.. Should you feel uncomfortable at any time, please let me know. Thanks. Will it be all right with you if I tape record this interview, so that I have a more accurate account later than just my memory? Thanks. Are you ready to begin?

R: Tell me about your accommodation since the divorce?

S: I sold my house, I went away, I went farming for 2 years in the Karoo, because I always wanted to be on a farm, and then I came back and I bought another house.

R: Did you get your house as a settlement in the d.

S: Well, I got the house but with a bond on it, In 2003 I came back, In 2000 I left for the farm.

R: What have you done about accom since you are back?

S: I rented for 6 months and then I bought the house we are in now. So I rebought . The oldest son has moved out, he has his own home and the 2 younger ones are with me.

R: Did you work as well when you were married?

S: Yes, I have never not worked, I'm, a recruitment agent at an agency. But I became a farmer when I moved to the Karoo. I had my own recruitment company before I left, and sold that, and then came back, and now I'm working for an agency.

R: How did the d impact on your working?

The divorce was messy, it was long, it was drawn out and I actually took my eye off the ball because I spent most of the time in and out of court. And with my small business, and so with me not being there for a lot of the time we lost a lot of the business, and I actually couldn't cope with it all and the

home and everything else. It's also one of the reasons why I just wanted to give it all up and go away.

R: What did your kids think about going away?

S: They loved it, no they loved it. We still talk about it all the time, and I probably will end up back on a farm if I had my own way. It was a good experience and in fact when we took my kids, I put them into a first language Afrikaans school, cos when you're in the Karoo you don't have much of a choice. And I didn't put them into boarding school cos I wanted them with me, cos part of why I wanted to be on the farm was because I have always worked, I've never spent much time with my kids. I've never been at home for them when they come home from school, that kind of stuff. And that's what we did there. So I travelled, every day, 150km twice a day, about 2 hours out of my day.

R: And now you are working for somebody. How is that different to when you had your own company?

S: very much. It's difficult because you work under somebody else's rules, so I work 8 to 5. When I had my own business when I needed to go to the kids school plays, not that she minds, but I don't have that freedom anymore, I'm 8 – 5 behind the desk.

R: On the other hand, are there benefits to not being the boss?

S: Yes, sure, the benefits are a regular monthly cheque, but the disadvantages are that I can't increase my income. You don't have good or bad months. It's always pretty much the same.

R: Which could be seen as an advantage or disadvantage?

S: Yes, either way. But there's definitely security on the one hand, on the other hand if you want to increase your earnings it's difficult. Ya.

R: And how has it affected your children?

S: We're kind of back to where I was before I went away. I've got the same lady working for me who has been with me for 16 years. She's outlasted my husband. (laughter). She didn't go to the Karoo with us, she stayed here, but when I came back, she came back. We've been together almost 19 years. So she's at home all day and the kids are in lift schemes. I take them to school, and the lift scheme brings them home and she's there in the afternoons and I get home at about 6 o'clock at night. Then I walk the dogs, try to be with the kids for a while, I look after the house, try to do the garden and the maintenance and all those things, and then I collapse. And after a day of interviewing people I'm actually brain-dead. I can't even string a coherent sentence together anymore.

R: You seem to be managing pretty well.

S: It's a very long day, it's very tiring.

R: What time do you get up?

S: Six am, I'm up at 6, I leave home at 7, and I get back at 6. I take the kids to school, the one in the one direction, then we pick up 2 other kids, and then we go to Herzlia. In the afternoons, they are both in lift schemes. I can't bring back, so the kids that I lift to school, their parents bring mine back home.

R: Wow, that is a long day. And, how has being a single mother stifled your career?

S: It hasn't.

R: How do you manage financially?

S: With difficulty. My ex-h pays minimal maintenance for the children, by several court orders, so I rely mainly on my income from work.

R: Do you have to keep the kids short of things to make ends meet?

S: I am struggling to make ends meet. I work in a commissioned based environment but with very low commission, so that commission is basically their clothing, or their entertainment or their airtime or the stuff that they need. No, it is actually very difficult, it really is.

R: How did you introduce the children to the divorce?

S: I sat the 3 of them down and told them.

R: Did they have an idea it was going to happen?

S: My oldest son certainly did, he is from my first marriage, and he wasn't unhappy about it at all. The other 2 were very young, about 7 and 5. Even the little ones were not unhappy about it either.

R: Do they see their father?

S: Yes, oh yes, regularly, I insist on it.

R: And how did they deal with it when you told them?

S: I can remember sitting down with them in the garden and we just told them. My ex was already interested in someone else so he wasn't around much anyway so we just sat them down. He didn't want to commit or to recommit to the marriage so we just decided to go our own ways. And I think I'm very open and honest, I mean, when my kids ask me questions I answer them. So we just told them. It was hard. I don't remember tears or drama or stuff like that, because they were pretty much always with me anyway, not that it wasn't difficult for them, but I don't remember any drama.

R: Were there any school problems afterwards?

S: No. none at all, in fact, I am very lucky. My oldest is very bright, he flew

thro school and my youngest is the same, the middle one (girl) has to work hard. She works hard but does well. The youngest boy is always in the top 3 in his class, and he still is. So that's a good sign. I always said I would watch their school work to see if they were struggling, but they're not.

R: And did you notice any behavioural problems?

S: No, and the schools haven't mentioned any either.

R: What role does the f play in their lives?

S: He has his own sets of rules for disciplining them. We just had a situation now where my daughter is pushing the limits with him. Its difficult to say, look, children love their daddys because they are daddys. But she at 14 sees a lot in him that she doesn't really like, and I know that sounds awful, but these are her own comments, and she doesn't want to spend much time with him. He is incredibly me-me, everything is me, what I want to do, where I want to go, so if they go there for weekends, for example, he will take them and do what he wants to do, and if its nothing, then its nothing. So she pushed the boundaries on the weekend, and she asked me to fetch her, and I said no. I said those are his rules, and you must abide by whatever rules he's made, and if he wants to punish you for being rude, well, then, I would do the same, so you've got to stay where you are. So, I think it wasn't always easy in the beginning, but we've sorted it out now.

R: I understand the beginning stages are difficult. How long do you think it took for the 2 of you to have a working relationship again?

S: Honestly,, about 3 years. Those first 3 years were horrendous, absolutely horrendous. He refused to pay for a lot of things, For instance if the child was sick, and I mean sick, my kids and I are not hypochondriacs, but my daughter injured her arm badly and he wouldn't take her to the dr, this was sort of post-divorce, and yet he is responsible for their medical bills. But he just refuses, he gets info off the internet and tries to work around that, and then by the time her arm had blown-up I had then taken her to a doctor and she had actually cracked one of her bones, and because I took her to the dr, and not he, he refused to pay the bill. So, those sort of things, I still struggle with, when it comes to money issues, I struggle, and I don't do selfishness well, so if anything, that's what the arguments were about.

R: How do the children respond to those issues?

S; They just know it. They just say to each other, don't ask dad, he won't. or M on the weekend asked for R10, he gave it to her, but she will have to give it back. So they know what he is like, they see it, they hear it, they know it. It's the same with school shoes, school uniforms, he just refuses, not interested. That was while we were married even, you ain't seen anything like it, so in the end you figure out well, you're doing most of it yourself anyway, why do you have the misery with it.

R: What is their contact with their father?

S: Alternative weekends they go to him together. It's a bit of an issue at the moment cos they are choosing not to go now that they're also older, they'd rather be with me at home. We live in the same area, but I've put my foot down, because for 30 days of the month they are with me, 24/7, if I don't

get those 2 days off I start feeling like I don't have a soul never mind life. So I insist that they go but he's away, or has meetings or goes away with his girlfriend and then he changes the plans a lot, and then they are with me, because otherwise they've got nowhere to go. My daughter will phone and say dad is going away, I've got nowhere to go, what do I do, and I say you come home, and so I change my plans.

R: And how does he assume responsibility for them?

S: He likes to get involved with religion,

R: Taking them to shul?

S: No, he doesn't go to shul much, just High Holy days, I take them to shul. He wants M to do her batmitzvah and she's not interested, she doesn't have to do it so I didn't force her to, and the younger one is going thro the process at the moment but very reluctantly.

R: So you're planning a barmitzvah now. Will your ex pay for it?

S: Well, he'll have to. I mean, I hear, and I've seen, and I've been to the parties and I have no clue of how we are actually going to get around this so that's one way he does get involved. He also gets involved with the school. M has only been at Herzlia this year, its her first year at middle school, and previously she was at a govmt school.

Her first month there was very difficult for her, making new friends and the religion, getting it all into routine, but she settled in well, but he was phoning the school all the time, she actually asked him to stop.

R: In what way is he involved in their school work?

S: Not much. If its holidays, then he says they should study when they are with me. I've asked him to help out when it comes to science and maths, you know, boy projects, technical stuff and what have you. But he will insist they do pretty much 90% of it themselves. And then he'll put in a bit at the end. But he definitely does show an interest in their school work. Not on a weekly, monthly, daily basis but he gets a copy of all their reports, that sort of stuff. He does talk to the kids about their schoolwork.

R: How are the kids about their relationship with him?

S: to tell you the truth , they've always been a bit ambivalent about it, but now they have a voice, they are mature enough to say, you know what, I'd rather stay at home, or I'd rather go to a friend than go to my dad, because he spends most of his time with his girlfriend and although she has a lovely house, and a pool, which is an attraction, they don't want to be with her all the time. So they'll say to him, Are we going to x, and if he says yes, they'll say Well, can we rather stay with mom. And he's starting to say OK, but I'm starting to say, Its not OK. I want him to change his plans, but he won't, I actually need the time out. I never go out during the week, or in the evenings. I do that when I am alone, I'll meet my girlfriends, go out for lunch whatever.

R: What about school holidays?

S: He doesn't really take them for school holidays, um, he'll take them a couple of days here, or a couple of days there, Although its supposed to be a 50/50 split, he will take them when he's around, or when it suits him, I suppose.

R: And what are your support systems?

S: I actually did have my mom here, but she went up to Jhb because she's getting old now and she's gone to stay with my sister. When I went to the farm I took her with me so she was there with the children. Obviously, in terms of hard times, and advice from your mom and that kind of thing, she was there for me, and I can still speak to her now.

R: How did she help you?

S: Her attitude was these are your kids, I've had mine, so she never did much babysitting, but I had my domestic wkr, Q, we are very close. She's probably the best support system, she is. And she's very close to the children, she raised them, my eldest is 22, she had him on her back when he was 4. and she's raised the little ones. My kids have a lot of respect for her and treat her very well. She rules the roost. Like now when I'm not there, she'll make sure they are fed, their homework is done, she's that kind of woman. She does the housework, cooking, cleaning and laundry.

R: What about extended family?

S: My brother passed away 2 years ago now, he was very sick. We were very close so that was a great loss to me. My family has always been split up, half of them lived in Jhb and the other half in Durban, and then I came to CT, and my mom and sister came to CT, so my kids didn't really know my brother that well. My father died about 5 years ago, he always lived in Jhb. I was never raised with my father. I've got an older sister who came to stay with us for some time, and she comes to CT every now and then, and my kids are very close to her, so I'd say she was my best support for a period of time, not for an extended period. None of them have actually lived close enough to pop in and go and visit, so there's not been that type of support, no.

R: How do you offload when things get too much?

S: I've got a very good circle of friends. I've got a very, very small, tight circle of mature women and I'm going to visit one tonight. So I try and see them.

R: Are these married or divorced women?

S: Both actually. One has never married and has a child, my work colleagues, I'm very friendly with one of the women I work with, she is married, no children. So some are married some aren't, some have kids some don't/

R: And how do your married friends treat you?

S: They will always invite me out. And they are good to my kids, I am very

lucky. My kids are all well behaved, my friends like them. I always get complimented about their manners and its always a pleasure to have them. We go for Shabbat to my married friends, who have kids and spend chagim with friends, in fact, my friends make sure I'm not left out.

R: Has the Jewish Community been a support?

S: I belong to the Green Point Reform community. The thing is my rabbi was actually rabbi B, and Mrs B and when Rabbi P came along, he got very close to my ex-h. And then he distanced himself from me, I never got to know Rabbi P. And it was only when he started calling me about my daughter doing her batmitzvah and my son doing his barmitzvah and, you know, and and and, and you know I really must do this for E(ex) I actually had a conversation with him and finally put him in the picture, because I was obviously seen as the woman who took the kids away, and ran off and went farming for no reason. So I've never been close to him, no , I've never discussed my life with Rabbi P, I wouldn't even dream of it, no offence to the man, I just don't know him. If Rabbi B was here I probably would have been crying on his doorstep every day. I did go and see Mrs B tho when I was having a tough time. And I felt happier talking to her than I did to Rabbi P.

R: Are you part of any other Jewish community?

S: No, I mean I'm involved in Herzlia but my commitments to work mean that I can only help out in the evenings. So I'm not really involved with that whole crowd. I've been living in Milnerton for 15 years, and I know the M mom's pretty well but I don't really fit into a lot of their ways of living, and who they are, and what's important to them and you know, I'm quite a different type of person.

R: Tell me, what have been the greatest obstacles you have encountered since you have been divorced?

S: Money. Money. Its all relative. We live in a small house in M. I drive a Citi Golf, it really is money issues. So when I say money I'm not talking about to get my nails or hair done, Its money to get thro the months, that's the hardest thing. Because that's my security, cos there's no-one to go to to say, Dear, I need ... The car's broken ... Just signing the stationery order for 2 kids for next year, will wipe me out for a couple of months, because I pay for everything.

R: How have these financial problems impacted on the children?

S: Well, I would say, that pretty much if I have any money it goes to them. My daughter also needs a social life, she needs to go to the movies. I don't allow her to buy expensive clothes and things like that, but if I have R100 I'd rather take her and her brother out and get a dvd or a video or they can go to Canal Walk or that kind of thing. They know that we don't live the life that many of their friends do, so I think it has affected them, but they are not without because they get first.

R: You are without.

S: I am quite a lot.

R: How do you feel about that?

S: No, I don't resent it... ya, I do, maybe I do. I do. I do. But then I still think I must figure out how to make more money. I still think that it is my problem.

R: And the matter of the children being your responsibility ?

S: You know, I just feel that I can only do so much. I don't have anyone to ask for advice. I just do everything on a very practical level. And as I say, if my kids want to know stuff, I tell them. I'm quite a strict disciplinarian, I'm quite old fashioned, so bed time is bed time, study time is study time, no tv while you study. Those sorts of rules. My kids must be polite and respect people and they don't run around time. So I think it's a lot, it's a lot to keep that up all the time.

R: And have you found a way to make more money?

S: I've got an idea that I'm trying to work on, to make me independent again, and to try and increase my own income, but its just taking a very, very long time. It's a long slow process. I'm looking all the time for ways. I don't know that it is going to happen, PG that it does.

R: Do you see any benefits to yourself from the d ?

S: Benefit would probably be around being happy. Not worrying about what you are going to go home to. Decisions are mine, responsibilities are mine, I don't have to ask anybody for anything, I don't have to hear it (ex-h) say NO and deal with all those frustrations. So we go home, we've got a happy home, where there's music coming out of every room, there's lots of cats and dogs, a lovely garden, so, no, I think that I am happy on my own. I would probably say that is the only benefit because we used to live in a 7-bedroomed house, and now everything has been downscaled a lot. The holidays we used to go on, we don't do that sort of thing anymore.

R: Do you think your husband could afford to give the children more if he wanted to?

S: Oh yes, definitely. But he has never wanted to share. Its bizarre. His mother doesn't understand it. I'm very fond on his mother. She also lives in Jhb, but when she is here, she comes in Dec for 2/3 weeks, then I always invite her over, so she and I have tea, and we chat, and she talks to the kids, I mean, my kids will see her obviously with their dad but um I like to see her.

R: Do you have contact between her visits to CT? Phone calls, emails?

S: No, no, nothing , she doesn't do anything like that. When we were married she would come down more often, she would bring them gifts, or clothing. But now she doesn't bring them anything. So there isn't that sort of support from his family. Sibs? He has a younger brother, and a sister who is a couple of years younger than him, but they both live over seas.

R: Did you notice any difference in the children's school work after the d?

S: NO, fortunately not, Because I knew that if it was going to come out that is where it would. And their behaviour also was fine.

R: What kind of stress are you experiencing now?

S: Long working hours, traffic, and money. Financially.

R: And how are those different to when you were married?

S: My ex h worked, so he paid the bond and I paid the groceries. It was never like he took care of everything, everything was a 50-50. If I do this, you do that.

R: What do you think would have happened if you never worked?

S: Well, it was never an option. I had to work because I had a son who was obviously my life when E came around, and he wouldn't pay for his school fees, or anything to do with him. Not restaurants, he wouldn't go out if he had to pay for O. But that was once we were married. He never treated O as part of the family, while we were courting he did, but not once we were married. Then it was my responsibility, so I've always worked to support him.

R: How have you coped with your stressors and adversities?

S: Going out to work was one way. I am on a mild anti-depressant. I went for counselling with him, but it was a disaster, a 2 year nightmare. My ex is a behavioural scientist so they would just have a go at each other and I'd sit and watch. It was ridiculous.

R: What do you do for yourself to get rid of frustration?

S: I walk, with the dogs, I garden, I go to the beach, I read, nothing really.

R: Nothing physical like gym?

S: No, I was doing yoga, but I stopped, I might be starting boxing lessons. But everything is expensive. With all due respect, Judy, I can't afford it. I can't afford to go to these sessions and have a personal trainer, and do this and do that. I don't have the time, I'm too tired at night, I don't wake up at 4 in the morning, I'm not one of those. And they guy across the road, he is starting boxing ring, and he has asked me to go and join, but the guy wants R600 per month. So that puts it out of the question. There are many things I would like to do but. I like music and I listen to loud music when I want to and I'll have a good party when I need it. I don't dink much and when I do its not very much, just social. What else do I do? Not very much actually. I've got a sounding board in my friends.

R: Do your children face any problems because of you being single?

S: Just around wanting stuff that they can't have. But not in a very negative way, I don't have temper tantrums, I don't have drama, its just: can I have x, No, you can't. That is in fact a benefit to them, because not everything is handed out, everything they get they respect, my daughter where's a lot of my clothes, she's big enough, and she looks after it. And if I actually do buy her a pair of jeans at Truworths that cost me like R300, she lives in them. She loves them. She appreciates it. When she gets a gift of money for her birthday perhaps, she is very excited, but she blows it. She got a very nice

b/day present from my oldest son, and it was more money than she had ever had, she bought nice stuff, but then it was gone, and she regretted it afterwards.

R: Is your older son close to the other 2?

S: They are very close. O is their idol. He comes to us often, the other night he was fixing stuff for me. He is engaged, and they love his fiancé. He does a lot for us, he's the one who brings all the gadgets and the memory sticks for Y, and all the games, and he's very generous. He is a wonderful role model for my younger children,. He doesn't do drugs or drink, and he's always on at them to look after themselves, and their bodies, and their lives. He takes them out a lot too. It is a relief for me that he is a great role model. I am very sorry to say but he is a better role model than their own father because he shares with them, and he's rough with them, and he picks them up and throws them around, which my ex would never do. He bought my son a paintball gun and taught him how to play so whenever he goes to paintball he takes Y with him. When O goes to fetch M from school, everyone knows his coming, cos he's gorgeous, he's 6'6" . and he's an ex model. He's my pride and joy, well, they all are, but O is special, because he had to put up with E.

R: What unexpected strengths. Re children.

S: I think there feet are firmly on the ground about life, about people, about honesty. I think they are very practical. They have lots of friends. M is very selective about her friends, she picks the same kinds of friends I would. She doesn't go for the loud, in your face, popular kids that wear the best, she actually goes for the quieter, nicer kids. SO I think they've learnt a lot of good values.

R: How do you help them to manage their feelings and behaviours?

S: We talk about everything. I know my kids so well. I know when M has got a problem, if its just an adolescent type problem or Ys quiet, we talk, and we talk and we talk. I don't demand that they tell me what is going on, but I might just pick it up and then I'll say something and then it will come out.

R: Have they ever had counselling?

S: No.

R: Has your relationship with any of them changed since the d?

S: I think we are closer because there is no animosity in the home, there is no negativity. There was a lot of that before. Its like a normal home now. Unfortunately there's no man in it. But its just a happy home, we bake and we cook and we have friends over. My kids prefer to have friends at me than to sleep out. So there's always 6/7 kids at the house some weekends, and I love it. My older son was the same, there were always lots of bodies in his room in the mornings, breakfast for 20 kids. E hated it, we all had to be quiet when he came home, we had to switch everything off, music, tv, close the curtains and be very quiet.

R: Did you notice a difference in the children after the d because they were liberated from the tension?

S: Yes, because we actually lost a lot of friends because of E, our adult friends, because they just refused to come over because of the atmosphere. So gradually, they started inviting more friends over. But when people come in now, they say this is a warm home. It's a happy home. Its friendly and its cosy and its full of stuff.

R: So how do you feel about what you have created?

S: Very. Very happy. That's very positive. It is a sense of liberation. I am happy with my family around me, I am happy with my little garden. I don't mind if the music is on, the tv is on, I don't mind. When its quiet time or I'm doing something then it goes off, but its all equal and fair. The kids have a right, and they also help me a lot in the house. With their dogs, they have to feed them, clean the garden, they have to do certain things, because I can't do everything. There are very definite rules and strong boundaries. My kids don't cross the line with me, they cross the line with E tho. They don't really respect him the way they respect me. They do respect him for being Dad, but not what they hear and see. I don't have the issues he has. I'm very lucky. We all get on well. There isn't much sibling rivalry. She's a typical girl, shut up and get out of my room, don't listen to my phone conversations. He's a typical boy, has he head to the wall. But for the rest, no, they sit together, do h/wk together, Y is very clever and he helps her with her maths even though he is 2 yrs younger. But if her friends are there, then he must disappear. You know, its all perfectly normal.

R: What activities do you and the kids enjoy doing together?

S: M and I did yoga together in winter. We go to the beach together and we do a lot of stuff around the house together. I'm quite a home body so its not so much about going out to do stuff, its more about what are we going to do here today. So we bake a lot. Unless I do this boxing thing, in which case all 3 of us will do it, we don't do much outside. Y is quite academic – he isn't really into sport much, I bought him a bicycle for xmas last year, so he and his mates ride bicycles together. He's always over the wall to various neighbours. Lots of friend in the neighbourhood. I should actually take them out more. (wistfully).

R: Why do you think that?

S: In terms of what you are saying, activities, what do we do together, I know for eg that they love to go to the Gardens in town, and so that could be something we could do on a Sunday morning and have breakfast. Buying baigels and then going to eat them on the beach. WE go to friends a lot together. But the 3 of us pretty much always end up being together. And I've got a nephew in CT also now and he's a couple of years older than M so he's often in the garden with them and making stuff.

R: What do you think your kids think of you?

S: I think they like me a lot. M said a lovely thing to me the other day. Because she's conscious of her body, and I always say to her: I'm sorry babe, those are my hips, or that's my tummy. And the other day she said to me Mom, am I going to have your body when I'm your age.? And I said, well probably, don't know, and she said, Well, that;s fine. She loves the way I dress, she loves that I don't wear my

pants under my boobs and where elastic waists. She likes me. We have a lot of fun together. Her friends say I am cool, because I don't mind if they do certain things. I don't allow swearing and boys and stuff like that but just the fun that we have.

R: In what ways do you think your d has made you a better mother?

S: Its given me the freedom to make decisions about things I feel strongly about without being corrected. In other words, if I think this world is a great place and I'm a positive person, and don't judge others, I can be like that and I don't have someone saying No, its not like that, and be careful of that. There was so much negativity in my marriage, and I was always undermined, and I almost had no confidence left. I was very undermined. By things that were done, things that were said, embarrassing situations, humiliating situations, and just be pretty much confused all the time, and now I have focus, I know where I am going to every day, I know I have a roof over my head, its my responsibility and I have a purpose and I get up every morning whether I want to or not, because I have that responsibility. So I think its made me stronger in terms of those sorts of things.

R: Do you find you are lonely?

S: Ya, ya. I do. I have had one or 2 dates. M wants me to get a boyfriend. Dad's always got girlfriends why don't you have a boyfriend? Well. You know. First of all there are not that many single men in CT that I have met, either they are gay, or have a string of ex wives, or are 95, I don't know. I don't actually socialize that much to see all available men. So I think I am pretty lonely, and again, I say never say never but I can't see myself rushing out, marrying a man and living in his home. I think I would like to have a relationship and go out to dinner-dance. It's a fact I don't have a date on a Saturday night, and that's sad. And I must say, that sometimes if I go out with my friends or I go to families and birthday parties and houseparties and what have you, I'm tired of being on my own. And as open and welcoming as they are, no-one leaves me out, I'm still on my own. I'm still not dancing with my partner or my husband, and they are all wrapped up in each other. So from that point of view I think, yes, I am lonely, I've only started thinking quite seriously about it in the last year or so, for the first 2 or 3 years I was just so happy to be on my own it didn't worry me at all, and now as I say, I kind of look at guys but from a distance.

R: And security issues at home, does that affect you, being alone at night?

S: it does. My son has put trellidoors right around my house cos I did have that problem, I had a glass sliding door that didn't lock and I came home one day to find these trellidoors right round the house, which was fabulous, and I've just put one inside, dividing the bedrooms from the living area. And I've got 3 dogs and fence around my house, but it does. I always fear I will wake up and find somebody inside the house, because what do you do? There's nobody to call. Just me, so oh dear, what am I going to do now? So, ya, it does worry me. But I don't think there is much more that I can do than I have already done. My house is pretty secure.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add?

S: I see so many screwed up kids, and I know so many couples with really sad children, and I think that you can do it on your own. Its incredibly hard,

its very draining, it's a selfless job that I am doing at the moment, but I don't hold it against them, I have no grudges against them. I think that I have been open and honest, I don't go out, I don't jawl, I don't bring men home, and I think that's why they are ok. Because I would put them first. I say to M what if I bring a man home and you don't like him, will you tell me? Because you might be aware of something that I'm not, and she said Yes, I will tell you. But if I tell you mom, what will you do about it. And I said, Then I will probably tell him to go. But it depends why you don't like him. But they know they are my first priority. But I do think it is also now time for me to get a bit of that part of my life back. I don't intend being on my own forever, I would HATE to be on my own forever. S I must get out more, and have a bit more of a life for myself.

R: But then you do have time constraints.

S: Well I can only do it every second weekend when they are away, if I am lucky. I don't have much time. Time and money are the 2 most needed commodities in divorced women's lives. Besides the responsibilities of earning money and bringing up kids, there is also the responsibility of maintaining your home and your animals, and from the sewage to whatever. When I was married I took care of all the bills anyway. All I got out of my marriage was 2 beautiful kids, that's all. Its taken me 2 years to be able to look at him and just say, You know what, you're you, and I'm me, and off you go, its fine, I forgive you, its taken me a long time to be able to do that because of nothing.

R: Did you find the first 2 – 3 years after the d the toughest stage?

S: Yes, because now we can actually attend a function at the school and sit next to each other and Hi and Bye and I'm fine with it, but it doesn't mean I respect him or like him and I'm very happy to watch him get into his sports car, and I get into my little car and I'm very happy. My life is harder since I left, but I am very happy that I made the decision to leave. I have got no regrets. He forced my hand anyway, but once I had decided I just wanted to move on fast. I don't think about it too much. Its not the first time we had had problems, and it was 4 years in the coming. 4 horrible years, probably the worst years of my life. My children were very young, and he (ex) used to lie on the bed and cry with her, tell her how terrible life is. He is a depressive.

R: Has he sought help?

S: I think he did then, yes. I think he was on prozac for a long time. He would close the doors, close the curtains, everything had to be all quiet, no noise, and he would just sleep and when he wasn't sleeping he would be at his computer in his office.

R: You have told me a lot about your experiences in raising your children. Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish off.?

S: No, that's all I can think of at present, and I have to go back to work now.

R: Are you feeling OK now?

S: Yes, thanks, I am fine.

R: Well, thank you for your time and for the very informative information you have given me. It was a pleasure to meet with you.

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