

Three Men's Experience of Their Journey To and Through Divorce:

The Unheard Songs

By

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I declare that, Three Men's Experience of Their Journey To and Through Divorce: The Unheard Songs is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

The psychological effects on, and the experience of divorce by women and children are widely researched. However little data is available on how divorce affects men and how they experience a marriage break-up. This study aims to explore and describe the 'voices' (experiences) of divorce from three men's perspectives. The randomly selected sample for this study consisted of three participants'. Data was collected in the form of the participants own written testimonials. Out of the written testimonials themes were identified and explored by the researcher. This was done from an ecosystemic epistemological stance within the post-modern paradigm, with the symbolic use of music / popular songs to further 'enhance' the exploration and description of the research participants' experiences of divorce. A qualitative methodological design was followed, allowing 'unique' and personal 'meaning' and experience to emerge. This study's results were presented in the form of 'integrative' and descriptive text. Overall the study explicated unique descriptions of men's experiences of divorce with the creative application of music to enhance descriptions and experiences.

Key words: Men's experience of divorce, divorce, participants' voices, symbolism, music and songs, ecosystemic epistemology, social constructionism, postmodernism, qualitative research, hermeneutics approach.

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CHAPTER 1

All songs have a beginning or introduction. This part of the song needs to capture the attention of the listener without giving away everything about the song. It sets the mood and the tone for the rest of the song and is usually only instrumental.

Introduction

Consider the following scenario between a couple on the verge of divorce:

Him: Darling, I think it is time we faced facts.
Her: I agree, darling. Our marriage is not working.
Him: That is how I feel. It is sad, but I think we should get divorced. What do you think?
Her: I agree with you.
Him: No hard feelings?
Her: Of course not. I will always be your friend; you know that.
Him: Thanks. I will move out tomorrow, OK?
Her: Fine. Do not worry about me.
Him: And don't you worry about me.
Both: I will be fine! (Hugging each other tenderly) Thanks for everything. Bye!

What if all marriages that ended up in divorce could, instead, 'end' like this? Perhaps, when you read the dialogue, and you thought that life is not like that, you would be right. This dialogue is fictional. In reality, when couples separate, and later divorce, it is messy and people are emotionally hurt, which is usually felt for a long time. So let there be no mistake, divorce is painful - the pain may

even begin before the separation of the couple, which is certainly evident for at least one spouse, if not both. Separation and divorce also affect the children as well as the extended family and friends. As they become aware of the situation and have to renegotiate their roles regarding the divorced couple, they too experience pain and loss. The anguish may continue to be acute for a few years after the divorce has been finalised or, for a number of reasons, may persist chronically for many years.

The experiences and subsequent consequences of the marital breakdown affect men and women equally (Abulafia, 1990). Yet, it appears that men find it more difficult, or even unacceptable, to articulate their deepest feelings; particularly, their worries, fears, insecurities, and emotional pain (Abulafia, 1990). When a marriage goes wrong, men often flounder alone in emotional turmoil because they do not have, or utilise the same support networks of friends and family that traditionally, women do (Winn, 1986). The reaction to the breakdown of a marriage is bound to depend, to some extent, on each of the partners' particular perception of what the institution of marriage means to them, not only individually, but also as a couple. The common use of the word 'breakdown' indicates that, as viewed by society, some fundamental malfunction has occurred, some blame is to be attached, and some repair work may be necessary with regard to the people involved (Winn, 1986).

The 'death' of a marriage is a prolonged emotional crisis. According to Winn (1986), each partner experiences another, different upheaval when the couple separate and eventually divorce. In the research Winn (1986) undertook regarding divorce, she noticed that, at the very least, the circumstances of the lives of divorcing couples, as well as those close to them, change radically; and at worst, they feel that the meaning of life has been lost, and its structure shattered. According to Winn (1986), there have been many books and research articles published about women and divorce, and many more about children and divorce. Few have written books or undertaken research exclusively regarding

men and divorce and even fewer have focused purely on their experiences of divorce.

The lack of interest in men's experience of divorce is rather puzzling, because we live in a culture that is still very much dominated by males. The divorce rate has been rising for a long time indicating that more and more people, an equal number of women and men, go through divorce each year. According to the latest statistics from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2002), 177 202 marriages were registered in 2002 and 31 370 marriages ended in divorce in the same year. Hence, the question arises: why, pertaining to divorce, has more research been undertaken regarding females, rather than males? By researching and exploring the participants' experience of divorce, one could obtain a better understanding of their feelings and how they handled their divorce. In turn, this could be a starting point for further research.

Explaining the Title

The title of this study, 'Three men's experience of their journey to and through divorce: *The unheard songs*' points to the essence of this study and also sums it up. The aim of the study is to make heard the voices of men who have experienced the journey of divorce. The participants' voices emanate from written testimonials, to which I will symbolically ascribe appropriate song titles. Dickerson and Zimmerman (1996, p243) write that in relating their stories, people give 'order, coherence and meaning to events and provide a sense of history, and the future.' I will use music (songs) to highlight and symbolically represent the participants' experiences. Therefore, this study provides space for three men to share their experiences of their journey to and through divorce.

The Aim of the Study

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to create a safe space in which three participants may give their own unique, written account of what it feels like to go through a divorce. By means of an in-depth and sensitive inquiry, I hope to elicit a rich, and perhaps even 'new' understanding that may emerge from the experiences of individuals going through divorce.

Social constructionists challenge the dominant beliefs or stories that tend to dictate single accounts of reality, as they believe they form the context for the development of problems (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Such dominant belief systems often tend to pathologise those who do not fit into the ascribed or expected norms (Rapmund, 2000). Ultimately, the participants in the present study may find a space in which their voices 'may be heard', which seems to be important, since the dominant voices of women, during divorce, often seem to view men as unemotional, and without any feelings. Larger social contexts, where men are 'labelled' weak when they show emotion, clearly indicate this attitude, as mentioned above, and because this frequently occurs, it leaves little room for the emergence of unique voices and personal meanings for those men who have experienced divorce.

The aim is to give a voice to the participants, free of judgment or prejudice, by means of the analysis of the participants' stories, which will form a co-construction between the participants and me in the final outcome. Therefore, I acknowledge that each participant's written testimonial, along with the themes extracted and the songs attached by me, will be a co-construction between the participants and me, together with the various theoretical voices that I have incorporated into this study.

The Design of the Study

Most research concerning divorce is done from a positivistic and empirical point of view, and is therefore, aimed at exploring particular causes or styles of management of divorce, with the hope of being able to generalise the findings to the larger population which, for example, is evident in the studies cited in Chapter 2. The meaning that an individual attaches to his or her life story and experiences, therefore, is a somewhat unexplored area in literature, especially regarding men, and thus became the inspiration for this study.

The question of how people experience divorce became of primary interest while I was working at the Office of the Family Advocate in Pretoria during the second year of my psychology masters degree. I observed that some males seemed to be of the opinion that men, as well as fathers are treated and judged unfairly during their divorce. Some males seem to have a preconceived idea that advocates and judges discriminate against them, especially regarding custody. Another interesting observation was that, on an emotional level, the males seemed to struggle to articulate their feelings and thoughts in a clear and meaningful way, while, in comparison, the females could answer personal and emotional questions with much more ease and clarity. With this in mind, I began to think more specifically about how males experienced divorce.

My observations are highlighted and discussed in Chapter 2 under the heading of Problems, Concerns and Consequences for Divorcing Men. The literature, or lack thereof, pertaining to men, further fuelled my curiosity concerning men's perceptions and experiences of divorce.

To fully allow for the personal stories, and therefore, personal perceptions and experiences, to emerge, this present undertaking will be approached from a social constructionist perspective, which is a theoretical stance in Psychology that falls under the philosophical umbrella of postmodernism, to be discussed in

Chapter 3. This perspective is particularly interested 'in accounts that honour and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and [also looks at] how these accounts can be respected within a particular system' (Doan, 1997, p.131).

As opposed to a quantitative study that would quantify the results, this study, which explores the experiences of the participants themselves, adheres to a qualitative research approach. This methodology allows for an inquiry into the personal stories and meanings of men during their divorce, and is less concerned with generalising the findings to a larger population (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). By allowing the participants to give a written account of their divorce, as well as discuss it with me, I could, by my interactions with the participants, contribute to a co-construction of meaning, since I may bring to the conversation parts of my own reality in terms of their narrative. I will reconstruct their stories in terms of themes that carry psychological meaning after the participants' stories have been collected, and discussed with them. Themes, based on their presence in all three stories, will be discussed and related to the literature.

Although I recognise that the lens through which I view this study will be coloured by my own account of reality, I nonetheless, acknowledge the importance of allowing each participant to remain the expert on his own story.

The 'Purposeful sampling' method will be used in order to select three experience-rich cases for the purposes of this study. The three participants will be male in gender and be divorced. Their willingness to share their experiences of the divorce process is essential. The method of inquiry will be in the form of written testimonials from the participants, who will write their stories in chronological order, starting from the time they met their former partner and ending after the finalisation of the divorce. The participants will need to decide what they see as necessary information, because the focus falls on how they experienced and perceived their own divorce.

Hermeneutic analysis will form the main approach for the analysis of data. The aim of hermeneutics is 'to discover the meaning and to achieve understanding' (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p.266), or to make sense of 'that which is not yet understood' (Addison, 1992, p.110). Therefore, I will use the hermeneutic approach only to discover meaning and understanding as regards the three selected participants, individually. Although the hermeneutic analysis does not consist of any set of prescribed techniques (Addison, 1992), a process, adapted from Addison (1992), Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), as well as Wilson and Hutchinson (1991), will be followed.

Chapter Outline

The contents of the dissertation will be as follows:

Chapter 2 will embody a discussion of the Ecosystemic approach in order to describe the context of how I will approach the topic of divorce. Thereafter, an investigation of the impact of the extended family and the friends of the divorced couple will be conducted. The life-cycle perspective, where the focus will fall on the identification of the different phases of marriage, and problems that can occur during those phases, will follow. A closer look at the phases and stages of separation and divorce will be taken, whereafter the chapter concludes with an overview of problems, concerns and consequences that divorced men experience.

Chapter 3 will entail a discussion of the epistemological stance and research design of this study as well as the research method followed.

Chapter 4 will consist of the voices of the participants. An edited version of the participants' written testimonials will be contained in this chapter, for which the

rationale is in keeping with the confidentiality requested by the participants at the outset of this undertaking.

Chapter 5 will entail the reconstruction of the stories in terms of the themes identified by the researcher following careful analysis of the stories written by the participants.

Chapter 6 will be the concluding chapter for this study which consists of a brief overview and evaluation of the study, along with recommendations for the application of the study's 'findings' in clinical practice, and in future research projects.

Conclusion

The next chapter will explore and review the literature on previous research undertaken regarding the subject of divorce, where the focus will fall on men and divorce.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING THEORY AND LITERATURE

This part of the 'song' concerns the content, the topic or the theme of the song, for example, is it a song about love, hurt, family etc? In addition, the topic is explored in this part and sometimes reference is made to other writers' experiences of the topic.

Introduction

In this chapter, the theories and literature most appropriate to the study of divorce will be explored. The ecosystemic approach will form the epistemology in terms of which divorce will be studied. The involvement of family and friends in the divorce, as well as the life-cycle perspective of marriage will be reviewed. The phases and stages of separation and divorce will be highlighted as well as some of the problems, concerns and consequences of divorce for men. This chapter will be concluded by a brief review of the use of music and symbolism in psychology, since it will be applied during the exploration of the participants' written testimonials.

A Theoretical View of Divorce

Divorce involves psychological and legal processes, which affect two people, both as part of a larger system as well as individual subsystems. In an estimated 50% of all divorces, the children also become involved in this process. The impact does not stop there. Parents and grandparents, friends and

acquaintances, classmates and workmates, even neighbours, feel the effects. On the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), marital separation earns 65 points and divorce 73, surpassed only by the death of a spouse at 100 points. Thus, it is clear that divorce has a traumatic and painful effect on those who endure it.

Indeed, divorce is a type of mourning during which the individuals come to terms with loss: of a happier and more harmonious time; and also of a strong and protective family unit. Some people who divorce also lose contact time with their children, their homes, their neighbours, friends, and in-laws. In addition, less tangibly, some lose status, privilege, social conformity, predictability, and stability. People going through the divorce process will be situated at various stages of this mourning process, some will deny what is happening, some will experience rage, others will despair and be suicidal, or, numb and detached. All will have feelings of failure and varying amounts of self-blame.

The aim of this chapter is to give a theoretical understanding of how the individual functions as a member of a system, smaller sub-systems and larger supra-systems, set in the context of divorce. The ecosystemic approach epistemology will lend guidance to this study, because one cannot look at the individual in isolation during the divorce process. An epistemology refers to a particular way of thinking, which determines how we know and understand the world around us (Bateson, 1979; Tomm, 1984). I note that the age of the resources and literature available, presents one of the limitations of the present chapter.

As I obtained literature on the topic of divorce, it became clear that not much research on men, in general, and, more specifically, divorce has been carried out since the early nineties. There appears to be a 10 to 12 year gap in divorce research since the nineteen eighties and which has only begun to come back into the spotlight during the past few years; which is in itself, rather an interesting

research topic. I will set out the content of this chapter by reviewing the development of the ecosystemic approach and its relevance to this study while continuing to review the relevant literature concerning divorce.

The Ecosystemic Approach

It is important to note that the ecosystemic approach assumes that any attempt to put forward a view of humankind will be regarded as just one possible construction of 'reality' (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997). Therefore, what follows in this study is, in part, the writer's own view, incorporating relevant literature and dialogues with others. For this reason, it cannot be reflected as a fixed reality. There is a further assumption that you, the reader, will also enter into a dialogue with the ideas that are presented in this study, and that new ideas will be co-constructed in this process (Boer & Moore, 1994; Fourie, 1996).

The ecosystemic approach is an integration of three different fields of study: the systems theory, ecology and cybernetics, which fit together because they possess overlapping assumptions and, also, their epistemologies are compatible. This approach is relevant to this research since it was developed in the context of family therapy, and furthermore, it represents a 'set' of principles whereby any facet of human functioning can be observed and described.

The term ecosystemic implies that this approach presupposes a manner of viewing human functioning where the focus falls on systems, and where ecological and cybernetic principles provide the point of departure (Meyer, et. al., 1997). According to Keeney (1984) ecology can be regarded as the fundamental assumption that all things in nature are related to one another in a complex yet systematic manner. An ecosystemic epistemology in psychology assumes that the emphasis is on discovering the communication networks in systems and subsystems and the transactions that occur within a particular context. The

application of this assumption to the present study is relevant because the research is set in the context of divorce and the impact the communication networks in the system and subsystems have on a specific member of the system. With humans, the communication networks occur in the form of both verbal and non-verbal language which is the most important means of communicating meaning and ideas among people (Anderson & Goolishian 1988; Fourie, 1998). In general, the ecosystem approach has to do with the ecology of ideas in systems (Bateson, 1972; 1979).

Von Bertalanffy's (1950; 1974) general system theory played a particularly important role as far as psychology is concerned in the movement away from reductionism towards a holistic view. According to the general system theory, systems consist of smaller elements or subsystems but, in turn, are also part of larger supra-systems. These notions are clearly evident in the ecosystemic approach and imply, for example, that the individual constitutes a subsystem of a larger family system, and that the family is itself part of the supra-system of the community, extended family or friends. According to Fourie (1998), systems therefore, form a hierarchy of related systems, and human functioning is studied in terms of the interactional patterns within and between systems.

The individual does, however, occupy the central position within the system and he or she in turn, comprises certain subsystems, some of which have been identified, and include physiological, intrapersonal, verbal, non-verbal (Jasnoski, 1984), bodily, cognitive and spiritual dimensions (Hancock, 1985). Jasnoski (1984) provides the following structural framework for presenting the individual as a subsystem within larger systems, and as a system with certain subsystems of its own that can be seen in Figure 2.1.

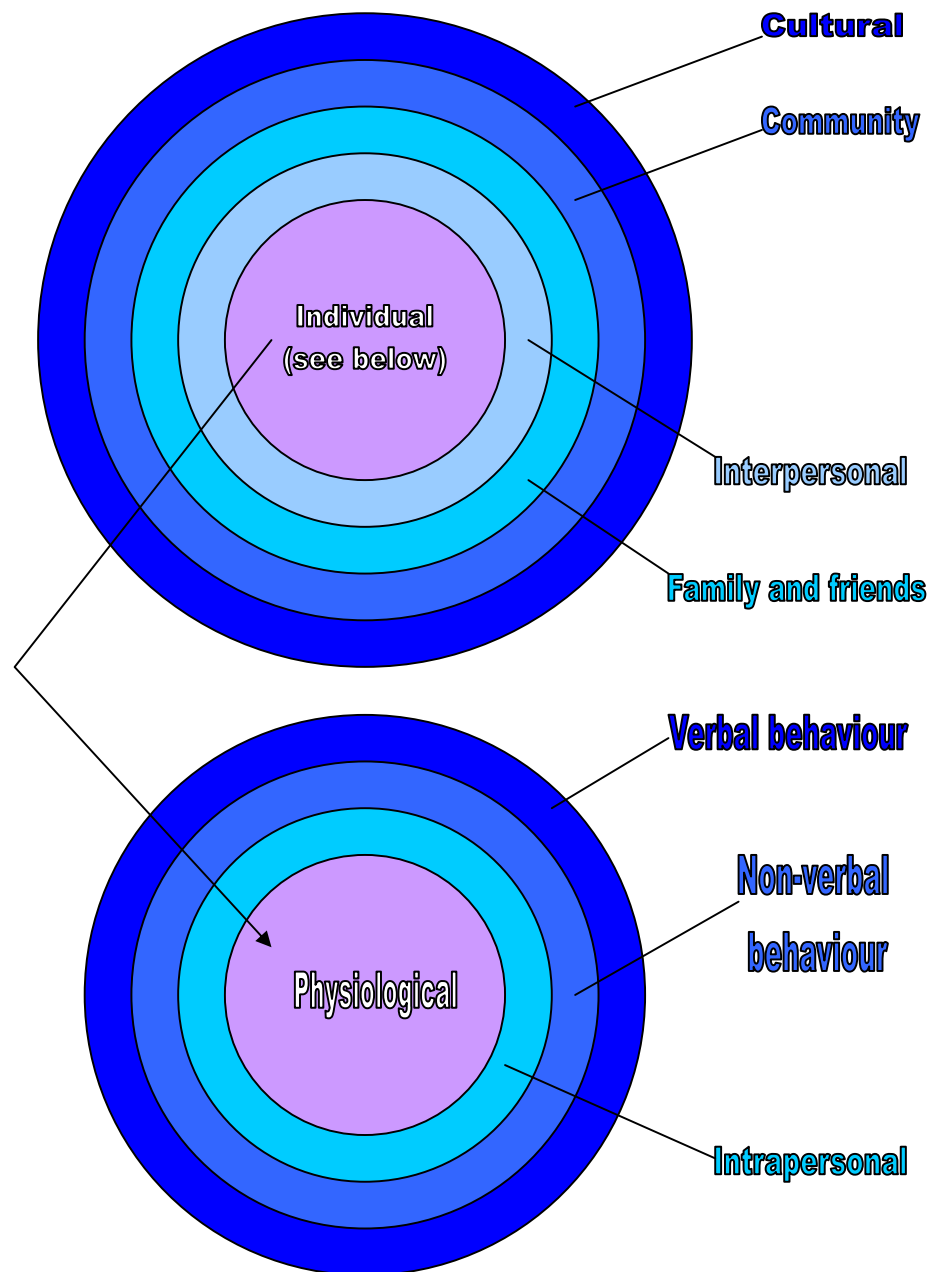


Figure 2.1 The human ecosystem:
Human life – Extra-individual factors.
Human life – Intra-individual factors.

As seen in this diagram, it is clear that although the individual remains central in the ecosystem, he or she is also viewed as interacting with others – the family, friends, and the community – both culturally and as part of the physical environment. Systems are also regarded as synergistic, which means that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. Information about separate parts of a system cannot, therefore, simply be added together in order to say something about the whole. Indeed, the focus is on interactions within and between systems, and on the patterns of the interactions (Jasnoski, 1984). Therefore, assuming those human ecosystems interact with one another on all levels and that the boundaries between systems, are semi-permeable, information will be allowed to flow across the boundaries between systems making it possible for systems to influence one another. When a given level of functioning, such as the family, is examined, it is therefore necessary not to lose sight of the larger whole and the complexity of interactional patterns between systems. The researcher can, metaphorically speaking, use a pair of binoculars to focus on either that which is near or far, but it is essential to remain aware that the whole is far more than just the sum total of the different levels of functioning (Meyer, et. al., 1997).

The idea that a person assigns meaning to everything he or she comes into contact with, and that this meaning represents ‘reality’ for that person, holds an important place in the ecosystemic approach and in the present study. This ‘reality’ is valid for the person concerned, although someone else might construe that ‘reality’ to be different. The approach therefore recognises different ‘realities’ that exist side by side. However, it is also possible that people can construct a ‘reality’ together, for instance when they agree or reach consensus. So, for example, we agree that divorce is a legal separation between two legally married people. Yet some people may find divorce a meaningful and positive learning experience, while others may find it a traumatising, unfair and devastating experience. Keep in mind that the ecosystemic approach also relates to a constructivist epistemology, leading to a marked emphasis on the idea that the

meaning a person attaches to a topic or an experience is determined by the person, and not by the topic or experience (Dell, 1985). According to the ecosystemic approach, the network of meaning is the manner in which a system views the world. The person will reflect his or her needs, wishes, goals, values and priorities; but this in turn will also represent the same needs, wishes, goals, values and priorities of the larger system of which the person is a part. According to Cecchin (1987), families sometimes create 'realities' that can survive in a particular family context for generations in the form of 'beliefs' or 'myths'. For example, a 'belief' or 'myth' that the males in a family must go through a divorce and start abusing alcohol, may exist. The functioning of the family members is then shaped around these myths.

Maturana (1980), and later Efran and Lukens (1985), place a particular emphasis on the self-determination of systems, which means that independent, external agents do not directly influence systems. The organisation and structure of the system will determine the functioning of the system. Maturana (1980), and later Johnson (1993) and Fourie (1996), distinguish between the organisation and the structure of a system. Organisation is what defines the system as a unified entity. In the case of a family, for example, its organisation would be two people in a relationship who had children together, which defines it as a family. The organisation therefore determines that a family is a system with two parents with children. A system is described as a 'closed' organisation, because a system cannot continue to exist if its organisation is relinquished.

The particular composition and configuration of its components are known as the structure, and this may differ from family to family. Thus, a family with divorced parents and a family with its parents still married are both viewed as families. In this example, the organisations of the families are the same but their structures will differ. Therefore the structure will determine the functioning of the system and cannot be influenced from the outside. Because systems cannot be directly influenced from the outside, they are regarded as informationally closed, and

because structure determines their specific actions, they are regarded as structurally determined. In families, structural change takes place all the time, it is important to note that, at a given moment, the structure of a system determines the actions of the system, and its reaction to perturbations from the outside.

Systems are also regarded as autonomous because their meaning structures determine their own actions. Although a system can be perturbed by a second system, which can influence it only in a manner that the first permits (Meyer, et al., 1997). If a system loses its autonomy and can no longer determine its own actions, it is no longer able to operate as a system. Accordingly, systems strive to retain their autonomy. A system may even hold onto patterns that an observer may see as a symptom of dysfunction in a desperate attempt to retain its autonomy (Fourie, 1996), which means that no system can be directly, or linearly, influenced by another system and that any changes in the system are determined by its structure.

Another principle that guides the ecosystemic approach and has not yet been mentioned, is cybernetics, which proposes that the interactions within and between systems should be seen in terms of patterns that connect them (Bateson, 1972, 1979). It is also proposed that these interactions take place by means of circular feedback loops, which means that information is thus fed back to the system by interaction with other systems or subsystems. These feedback loops are apparent in the form of positive and negative feedback. When feedback gives rise to change in the system, it is known as positive feedback, whereas negative feedback results when no change occurs,

Positive and negative feedback are therefore associated with stability and change in the system. Negative feedback stabilises the system by minimising any perturbations and maintains the system in as stable or unchanged a state as possible, while positive feedback sets in motion changes in the system. Positive and negative feedback work in a complementary manner to protect the integrity

of the system, while allowing a certain amount of flexibility (Jasnoski, 1984). Feedback loops are also recursive, according to Dell (1985), with relationships having a multidirectional impact. A widely held systemic view among family therapists is that causality is curvilinear rather than linear: What 'A' does (or feels) affects 'B', 'C', and 'D', and their reactions, in turn, affect 'A', and each other (Bower & Hilgard 1981; Minuchin, 1974). In other words, what affects one person, ultimately affects all the family members, whether the event is divorce or marriage, and rebounds to affect that person yet again.

The processes of stabilisation and growth cause a dynamic movement within the system, but the two processes balance one another in a manner that results in a dynamic equilibrium, or balance, being maintained in the system, which suggests that a homeostatic principle, derived from the general systems theory, is brought into play. According to this principle, the energy within the system is distributed among the parts of the system so that a condition of equilibrium is reached (Simon, Stierlin & Wynne, 1985). In the case of a divorce where the father, for example, leaves the family, the family system experiences a powerful perturbation. Following this, the way in which the mother and children interact, which comprises emotional, cognitive and behavioural elements, may present an entirely new equilibrium. Different families, of course, reach this new kind of equilibrium in different ways, and precisely how they form new interactional family patterns, is unpredictable.

The ecosystemic approach has shown us the importance of viewing an individual not only as a single person but rather, also as a member of a family system. However, since the noted systems also include subsystems and larger supra-systems, in the case of divorce, there could be an immense impact on the individual and the family system. I will now discuss the subsystems of extended family and friends that often impact on the process of divorce.

Extended Family and Friends

The divorced person is faced with adjusting to the loss of the most significant interpersonal relationships of his / her life. The adjustment is very complex, because it involves more than just the relationship with the separated or divorced partner. Relationships with family, extended family, in-laws and friends will also have to be renegotiated and redefined during and after separation and divorce (Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Some research over the years has documented the reaction of friends and relatives to a divorce (Goode, 1956; Spanier & Thompson, 1983; Weiss, 1975). The research suggests that family and friends exhibit differing levels of approval regarding divorce. Parents whose daughters have divorced have indicated greater 'approval' than parents whose sons have divorced. Roughly a third of men and women divorcing have noted disapproval by their parents (Goode, 1956; Spanier & Thompson, 1983). Goode (1956) suggested that the approval or disapproval of friends was based on accurate insider knowledge of the dissolving marital relationship. He suspected that friends knew more about the relationship than the parents of those divorcing. The accuracy of the friends' perceptions has been substantiated by correlations between the friends' disapproval and the dimensions of marital quality (Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Family and friends have been found to be a stable support for the divorced person. They provide concrete help with household tasks, financial assistance, and emotional support (Spanier & Thompson, 1984). In-laws provided the least assistance, consistently, and they also demonstrated the strongest disapproval of divorce (Anspach, 1976).

According to Ahrons and Rodgers (1987), divorce is a reorganisation, not only of the nuclear family, but also of the extended family and friendships. Although the networks of family and friends are affected by the separation and divorce, they

also, in turn, have an effect on the separating couple or family. Given the 'couples' orientation of society, old friendship networks are usually focused around the marital pair. Some of these friends may attempt to continue to involve the separating persons in their social networks. The issue where one of the separating spouses invites the other to a social gathering is a frequently expressed concern. The decision involves an interesting interplay of individual feelings and societal norms. Friends are concerned about hurting the divorcee's feelings or choosing sides when excluding or including one of them, yet it is not socially appropriate to invite them both. Occasionally, friends will try to alternate invitations or will invite both, hoping that the spouses themselves will decide which one will attend.

Including a recently separated or divorced person in a 'coupled' social event of old friends, may feel awkward for all. Inevitably conversations invoking some of the separated couple's history result in embarrassing situations. One often hears estranged spouses expressing the sentiment that it is in such times that you learn 'who your real friends are'. Of course, one partner's 'real friend' in such cases is the other's 'traitor', which can have a tremendous impact on the social network and the friend's relationships with their partners. This is one more situation in which the competing needs of the spouses result in loss for one or the other.

It is during the time of separation and divorce that people need the support of friends, yet it is also the time that friends may simply find it too difficult to provide the much needed support. The 'breakdown' of a friend's marriage can threaten one's perception of one's own marriage. It is a clear statement that marriages may not last forever. Although most of us know intellectually that our marriage has a 50-50 chance of surviving until the death of one partner, we tend not to accept that fact on an affected level (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

A second factor that makes it difficult to support friends is similar to 'guilt by association' (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Sometimes, a friend feels very threatened when the spouse maintains a friendship with a separated person, as if the spouse will learn some things that the other does not want him or her to learn, i.e., that to survive independently is possible. Indeed, it has been reported that 'divorce disintegrates friendship networks', and that there is a possibility that the married learn from the separated that it is possible to survive separation, which may give them the courage necessary to leave a bad marriage (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

On the other hand, friends of one or the other of the separated spouses may make an effort to include them in new sets of acquaintances where the old history is less powerful and a new one can be created; family members rarely help in this way (Spanier & Thompson, 1984). By introducing the divorced person to a prospective date, the friends promote the development of new relationships with the other sex, which could assist and support the separated to begin to take some initiative of their own, and start building new friendship networks that have no history at all with the marriage relationship. It is not known whether these friends promote the idea of remarriage.

Divorced men and women typically maintain their belief in marriage, but have not indicated the extent to which friends and family support and express that belief (Huddleston & Hawkings, 1986). The longer the marriage, the more difficult this process appears to be, simply because stable, established networks have difficulty incorporating new members, especially those who are unattached (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

Relationships with extended family also undergo changes during this time. Not only are the separated unsure about how they should relate to in-laws, but the in-law family is also confused. Except in the most amicable separation, there tends to be side-taking when divorce occurs. It is also quite common and

understandable that, during the course of the failing marriage and separation, many individuals turn to their families to share their feelings. If 'secrets' or 'stories' about the bad deeds of the other spouse are shared with family, it is then difficult for those family members not to take sides. Usually, they are only aware of one person's account of the episode or story, which may result in a biased opinion. Furthermore, for many families, loyalty is an important value. As with friends, it is then difficult to continue to relate to both spouses once separation has occurred.

A number of studies that have described parents and extended families' reactions to divorce, have been conducted (Ahrons & Bowman, 1981; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Gladstone, 1988; Johnson, 1983, 1988; Johnson & Vinick, 1982; Kahana & Kahana, 1980; Matthews & Sprey, 1984). The range of reactions reported by parents and relatives included concern, anger, disappointment, frustration, sadness, fear of added financial and childcare responsibilities, and in some cases, relief. Clinical reports have also indicated that parents experience feelings of resentment following the provision of emotional and tangible assistance to their divorced adult children, as well as feelings of failure and helplessness (Brown, 1982). However, most relationships tend to continue along bloodlines and the relationships with the in-laws are less likely to continue, the severance of which can be very traumatic for all concerned (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

Thus far, I have discussed the individual in relation to his or her family as a system and the significant sub- and supra-systems that influence it. In order to obtain an even fuller picture of the individual and family system, and its functioning during divorce, it is important to look at some of the literature as regards to the stages that the family goes through over a period of time. Reviewing the life cycle of families could assist one to identify possible difficulties that may lead to divorce or other problems in the family system.

Life-cycle Perspective

The stages of the family life cycle begin with the merging of two people into a new couple unit upon marriage while each partner maintains some individuality and separate identity (Carter and McGoldrick, 1988). This initial stage calls for mutual adjustment, even if the couple has cohabited for months or even years, prior to marriage. At that juncture, a new agreement needs to occur that recognises evolving responsibilities and more formalised relations with others as a unit rather than as two individuals who are romantically involved with each other.

Rhodes (1977), like Carter and McGoldrick (1988), sees early parenting as a second stage, beginning with the arrival of the first child and ending when the youngest child enters school. For most new parents, the shift from the relative flexibility of couplehood to the 24-hour-a-day responsibility of parenthood brings new challenges and new potential areas for conflict together with new joys. As the number of children increases, the couple may relax some of their earlier rules for and expectations of their children, yet may nevertheless find each child's uniqueness at times disconcerting and demanding. Parental expectations may also give rise to manipulation by children.

Carter and McGoldrick's (1988) third stage parallels the pre-adolescent and adolescent school years, when family members restructure their relationships in the light of the new non-family ties the children form and the changing roles of the parents. Adolescence, well known as a time of rapid changes, physically and emotionally, can evoke crises within the family constellation as the 'teenagers become more involved in peer networks and the parents must determine how far and in which direction to shift from the earlier more dominating parental authority role' (Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987).

Using a multistage perspective, Storaasli and Markman (1990) did a longitudinal study of problems occurring in early marriage, beginning when the subject couples were engaged or planning their (first) marriage. The data they obtained over several years revealed some variations in the most intense problems. In pre-marriage, as well as during the first two stages of marriage, money ranked the highest as a problem area for the participant couples. Jealousy, on the other hand, moved from second place before marriage to the seventh or eighth after marriage, when the relationship was on firm legal grounds. The shifts in problem intensity in a variety of critical areas can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Rank Order of Problem Intensity at Three Stages of Relationship (N = 40)

	Pre-marriage	Early Marriage	Early Parenting
Money	1	1	1
Jealousy	2	7	8
Relatives	3	4	4
Friends	4	5	7
Communication	5	2	3
Sex	6	3	2
Religion	7	10	9
Children	8	6	6

Source: Adapted from Storaasli and Markman (date, p86-87).

Other specific problems cited by Storaasli and Markman (1990) revolved around recreation and alcohol/drugs. Each area has the potential to create stress in the couple's relationship simply because each member has brought to it divergent constellations of experiences and values, which may overlap for the two, but must converge to some degree if the relationship is to continue with reasonable harmony and a shared rhythm.

Carter and McGoldrick's (1988) fifth stage, in which the children begin to move away from home and the family unit, may bring even greater difficulties to the

parents, especially if younger family members adopt values and life paths at variance with those of their parents. The separation-individuation efforts of the adolescents are mirrored to some extent by the parents' efforts to metamorphose into a stage as a couple alone together once again, but with 20 or more years of experience, a shared family history, and presumably greater maturity. It is at this point that many couples that have stayed together 'for the sake of the children' decide to separate. Those who remain together must enrich their relationship, value their shared life story, find new common interests and bonds, and incorporate a changed relationship with their young adult children (and possibly the children's spouses' children, and in-laws), and perhaps with their own aging parents, or, again, the prospect of divorce will increase. Long-term satisfying marriages are characterised by these and other essential ingredients like mutual trust, shared values, love and affection, and commitment to marriage and their spouses (Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992; Kaslow, Hansson, & Lindblad, 1994). It should be remembered that the husband and wife are also concurrently having to adapt to their own personal and separate individual changes in psychosocial and physical development, which may be occurring at different tempos and with varying success, or lack of same.

Rhodes (1977) views the final stage (i.e., Carter & McGoldrick's (1988) sixth stage) as moving from retirement to death, with yet another alteration in the marital and multigenerational bonds as family ties are strengthened or weakened, or as role reversal occurs should one or both of the parents become dependent on the child, or children, due to ill health, financial need, lack of emotional resourcefulness, or absence of a friendship network. In terms of Erikson's (1950) perspective, this is the time of ego integrity versus despair, and can be a period of satisfaction with life that has been productive and fulfilling.

Awareness of individual and family life-cycle perspectives, as well as the dynamics of the family system, is imperative for any professional who attempts to assist or research one or both spouses and / or the children experiencing divorce

(Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987). With a better understanding of the life-cycle perspective it is now time to narrow my gaze to a single period of the existence of a couple and their families. The focus will now be moved to the period of separation and divorce, which will provide a greater understanding of what could be expected from the research participants with regards to their own experience of separation and divorce.

Phases in Separation and Stages of Divorce

In many marriages, the problems leading toward ultimate separation or divorce stir in someone's thoughts year by year, often without conscious awareness on the part of either spouse, which has been called a 'devitalised marriage' and may be characterised by 'a pretence to oneself and others of having interests in common, as well as pretence that the bond existing between the couple is alive and viable' (Crosby, 1990, p. 324). It might also be viewed as a 'cumulative divorce'; a 'slow brewing and long-term gestation of conflict wherein the decision to divorce arises out of long series of stresses' (Crosby, 1990, p. 325).

Shapiro (1984) postulated 33 steps on the road to divorce, the first of which he labelled 'unhappiness or boredom' which may be unilateral or bilateral. One spouse, or both, may confide the nagging discomfort to a close, empathetic friend or family member. Incidents occur and resentment smoulders; interests diverge and little conversation is made beyond banal questions and comments. The formerly loving partners move onto different wavelengths and no longer find common elements in their lives. .

Moving ahead a few steps in Shapiro's sequence, one or both may seek pleasure in a new relationship. Perhaps they argue vehemently, but having heard similar loud voices in their families of origin, they believe that they are communicating effectively and normally, when in fact, they are moving apart.

Gottman (1994), a psychologist who has written extensively on marriage and divorce, has indicated that when divorce happens, it is almost anticlimactic; the emotional divorcing had been going on long before the actual legal divorce was undertaken (Bernard, 1994). The fact of the matter is that whoever initiates the divorce and for whatever reason, there are some very real consequences once the decision is taken to divorce.

Patterns of Coping

McCubbin and Patterson (1983) identified the family crisis coping process as involving two distinct phases – *adjustment* and *adaptation*. They further divided the adaptation phase into two accommodation levels. In each of these phases specific processes take place which determine the level of reorganisation following a crisis. Families and individuals encounter many stressors in their individual lives and in the family career. It is only when the family is unable to adjust to a stressor that the family is seen as being in crisis. The context of the rest of their lives, other strains and hardships, and the resources that they bring to bear to deal with the entire situation explain the way a family defines the event. On the basis of this complex appraisal process, the family brings one or more coping strategies to bear.

Thus, in the McCubbin and Patterson (1983) framework, the event of marital separation would be labelled a stressor. How the family defines and copes with the separation, would determine whether it becomes a crisis. One common coping strategy is avoidance. Acting as if 'nothing has happened' may delay the necessary realignment of roles and relationships, but it is likely to provide a stable adjustment. Denial is another common mechanism, which is most frequently used in the early stages of separation or during the pre-separation period. As a common unconscious defence mechanism, denial permits the individual to pretend that all is well with his or her world, even in the wake of disaster.

A second strategy for dealing with stressors is to eliminate them. Elimination of marital separation would require reconciliation of the couple, which, for some couples, reduces the stress and prevents a crisis from occurring at that particular time. While it may eliminate one set of stressors, that of the separation itself, it does not eliminate the stressor of the marriage that led to the decision to separate.

Yet a third strategy described by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) is assimilation. Essentially this strategy implies that the family and marital system have the resources to move relatively quickly to a stable reorganisation, incorporating their new situation into the existing structure. The intense and pervasive character of a separation experience is unlikely to be handled with such ease. Although there are some couples that appear to move very quickly through the separation transition into legal divorce and even remarriage, it is likely that they are just not aware of the stress, conflict, and negotiation in which they have been engaging. In most cases, assimilation is a protracted process that takes place over several months, or even years, while the family adjusts to being a divorced family.

Individuals and couples may have attempted more than one of these strategies, often all of them, before finally recognising that they face a genuine crisis. Marital separation is such a radical experience that it is unlikely that any of these initial strategies will effectively bring the family system to the level of reorganisation required to meet the demands of its members.

The Limits of Patterns

Separation is a multidimensional process. It is but one set of transitions in the total process of moving from family organisation in marriage to family reorganisation in divorce and remarriage. Families may retreat to earlier patterns of behaviour that seemed more satisfactory. Or, they may, at times, seem to be in a circular pattern, moving from one coping style to another, making little

progress. At other times, overlapping or multiple styles of coping appear, perhaps because a given approach only deals with a part of the problem or because there is a desperate attempt to try anything that appears to give some promise of escaping the current crisis.

In addition, the separation process must be examined within the context of social structure, family structure, personal life space, and the individual life-course of each family member. The emotional responses of each of the spouses interact with the societal context to provide the foundation of the separation process, which provides the basis for patterns that define future interactions and transactions of the family system. As a major shift in the career of the family involved, the separation process requires that individual family members cope with the attendant anxieties and stressors at each phase of the transition. Based on each individual's life-course history, different coping strategies will be employed, which will, in turn, result in different patterns of divorced family functioning. The particular set of coping strategies used during the separation process will have profound effects on how the family continues to function after divorce.

The Phases of Separation according to Ahrons and Rogers (1987)

A. Pre-Separation

The act of physical separation is preceded by a gradual emotional separation. This movement toward separation is rarely a mutual effort. More likely it begins when one of the spouses decides that the marital distress or dissatisfaction is not likely to disappear or change.

The idea of separation as a resolution to marital distress is a thought that crosses most married persons' minds during the course of their marriage. When that occasional thought of separation as a way of coping with marital distress

becomes a more concrete, acceptable form of coping, energies become more directed towards separation than towards coping with the distress within the context of the marriage. Because, for the majority of couples, separation is a drastic solution to a marital crisis, they usually exhaust their customary repertoire of coping strategies before settling on separation as the resolution.

Even though there are personal dissatisfactions, public roles tend to be played as if there is nothing wrong. Relationships with family, friends, and the several social organisations with which they carry on social transactions, allow only for minimal indications of problems in marital relationships. Couples who are experiencing marital distress, even contemplating separation, continue to assume their usual relationship roles when they appear in public. Rituals, like holding hands when walking in public, may continue right up until actual separation. At one level, these rituals permit the couple to cope with their anxieties by appearing 'normal' in public. Revelation that there is something more than the 'normal' marital difficulty is a serious act that changes the character of their social relationships.

Ahrons and Rodgers (1987), state that one can see a clear pattern of the 'leaver' and the 'left.' Initiators, or leavers, identify their predominant emotion as guilt. They feel responsible for the break-up and for inflicting pain on the other. The assenters, or the left, most usually feel anger and often want to punish the spouse. The seeds of these emotions are planted in the pre-separation transition, but are more likely to come to fruition later, thus infusing the further transitions of separation and divorce with many conflicts originating from them.

B. Early Separation

This early stage of separation plunges the individual into an intense state of emotional and social anomie – literally, 'normlessness'. Old roles have disappeared, but new ones have not yet developed. Anomie occurs in several forms: there may be no definition of a particular situation available, or, there may

be competing or conflicting definitions of the situation which require the individual to make a choice, and finally, the definition of a situation may be unclear. No clear-cut rules for the separation exist. Who moves out? How often should the partners continue to see each other? When should you tell the family and friends? These types of questions, seemingly trivial in our everyday life, plague the newly separated.

In addition to the lack of rules regarding behaviour, this period is also characterised by highly ambivalent feelings. The continuing bonds of attachment between former spouses cause much of the emotional distress found in the early phases of separation. Cohen and Savaya (1997), explain that the persistence of these attachment bonds between spouses is responsible for the lingering feelings of loneliness and depression that characterise the separation process for most people. The fact that one may choose to leave one's partner does not negate the longing for the comfort of the other's presence or their daily interactions, which is quite a surprise to many who fantasised only relief and positive feelings when their spouse had finally gone. They become confused and upset when their feelings fluctuate between love and hate, anger and sadness, euphoria and depression. In spite of strong negative emotions, the old habitual attachment persists. Absent spouses are 'missed'. Partners feel 'lonely'. Interpersonal situations and physical settings activate these feelings of attachment.

Added to the lack of behavioural guidelines and ambivalent feelings, is the ambiguity of the separation itself. Most spouses separate without deciding whether the separation is a temporary or permanent one. Sometimes they decide together what they will tell friends and family, but frequently there is too much anger and anxiety surrounding the separation to make joint decisions. When physical separation occurs without some discussion of the tasks of separating, the early separation phase is more likely to be a time of potential crisis for the family. Not only do few clear role definitions exist for those who are separated,

but these individuals must also decide whether to continue to treat the separated situation as temporary or to begin to act as if the relationship has, indeed, ended. Norms regarding fidelity in marriage are still quite powerful, despite the prevalence of extramarital affairs.

Establishing any kind of relationship with a new partner, no matter how 'platonic', invokes those norms. From role theory we know that the less familiar we are with the expectations of a new role, the more difficult the transition to that role will be (Burr, 1973). The role of the newly separated person, although currently experienced by large numbers of people in our society, is still uncharted. When we add the lack of adequate role expectations to the ambiguity of the family status, the result is a living situation lacking in structure or definition. This combination of emotional ambivalence and social ambiguity poses a real condition of crisis for both the individual and family system.

Family and friends may help out, but the strongest support may come from new relationships (McLanahan et al., 1981). However, for families without adequate means of coping, crises do occur. In these families, an individual parent or child may develop serious physical or emotional problems. A parent may start drinking heavily, an adolescent may abuse drugs or fall pregnant, or an overtaxed parent may lose control and resort to child abuse.

C. Mid-separation Phase

Characteristic of the mid-separation period is the impact of the hard realities of separation. As in early separation, the emotional distress is still felt. This period, however, is compounded by the daily management tasks of living in two separate households. The initial attempts at reorganisation often reveal the importance of the absent spouse. The system is now faced with a deficit in structure. An individual, who has occupied a position in the system with attendant role responsibilities, has left the system. This process of realignment passes through

a series of transitional periods in which there is much testing and experimentation. For example, attempts to arrange child-care, may lead to anger and conflict.

Given the amount of role overload currently experienced by two-parent families in which both parents are employed outside the home, it is no surprise that in separation, the tasks are overwhelming for one parent. Research relating to the effects of marital disruption on children has indicated that role overload for separated mothers constitutes a major stress that frequently results in temporary emotional distress in children (Hetherington et al., 1978, 1979). During this time of adjustment it is often difficult, if not impossible, for parents to divert their attention from their own immediate needs to the emotional needs of children. It consumes almost total energy to 'survive' the day, to deal with the immediate tasks of daily living, leaving little energy available for meeting the emotional needs of children.

Out-of-home fathers find it very difficult to share the child-care responsibilities when they have neither the facilities nor the skills necessary to handle them appropriately. If they have not shared the cooking responsibilities in the married family, it becomes very difficult to know how to care for the children during their visits. It is not uncommon to see tables of fathers and children at local fast-food establishments on weekends. Mothers can also be resentful of fathers 'who get to take the children out for good times' while they bear the burden of daily responsibilities and economic problems.

Immediate solutions to deal with the most urgent pressures of economic requirements, daily schedules, emotional needs, social contacts, and the like, become the focus of this phase. Although there must eventually be some agreement regarding the management of these demands, many spouses endure prolonged periods of conflict while attempting to resolve these issues. Agreements in mid-separation are for the most part tentative and experimental.

Frequently, relatives, friends, and community support services are sought out for assistance with immediate problems. Much effort will be expended during this time in trying to achieve some level of integration into the system.

For many spouses there is a need to 'try once again' after being apart for a while. The daily stresses of adjusting to living separately only compound the situation, thus highlighting the positive aspects of the marriage and making it appear more acceptable. For many couples, children's pleas for 'daddy to come home' may be more guilt producing or painful than a spouse can cope with, and an attempt may be made to unite the family again.

Although most spouses consider reconciliation when the stresses of separation become too difficult, many will not reach the point of actually reuniting. To one of them, reconciliation may seem even more disorganised than continuing to deal with the process of separation.

For many couples, reconciliation is not a mutual decision; rather, a decision is sometimes made by one spouse out of guilt when it appears that the other spouse cannot cope effectively. In some instances, reconciliation initiated by a guilty spouse can increase the stress of the other and thus retard their reorganising into a separate household. False hope is then generated regarding the meaning of the reconciliation, and they may cease trying to cope with a separation not of their choosing. For other couples, separation and reconciliation form a repetitive circular pattern that may continue for years. The stress in families during these intermittent periods of separation and reconciliation resembles the stress experienced by wives of military personnel missing in action and by corporate wives (Boss, 1977, 1980a). Like these families, the family in separation is in a state of flux, and family members may be in doubt about the new family roles and boundaries. In the most common divorced family form, the mother and children remain as one unit, while the father moves out and functions as a separate unit.

D. Late Separation Phase

During this period, the family begins to reorganise once they become more aware of some of their needs, as a separate family. Gradually, old patterns give way to new ones. While in the earlier phases there may have been confusion about how to feel or what to do; this begins to happen less frequently during the late separation period. Invoking the memory of the absent spouse or frequently getting in touch with the spouse for help or advice is replaced by addressing the situation with a new approach. All of these new approaches are not satisfactory, of course. Again, this is not only a time of much trial and error, but also of identifying equally or even more satisfactory ways of meeting a particular need.

The power struggles of the marriage are likely to become even more exaggerated in separation and divorce, especially regarding matters relating to the children when the decisions are often so loaded with conflict that the power struggle will continue with little or no resolution. The conflict, fuelled by the normal anger that attends separation, is likely to extend into areas of the relationship where other resentments reside. While families experience power struggles during all periods of their careers, the interdependency of parents and their parental rights, render decision-making, power, and authority issues much more complex during childrearing than during any other family career period.

At the same time, the absent family member faces his or her own set of challenges, which, in some ways, can be even more stressful. Without the luxury of several family members upon whom to lean for assistance, the loss of services heretofore taken for granted, may be overwhelming. A missing button on a favourite jacket, discovered while dressing for an important appointment, can represent a genuine crisis. In a study done by R. H. Rodgers (1986) on divorced men regarding 'surviving singleness', it was found that these men relate episode upon episode of difficulties to meeting the basic needs of day-to-day living. Their

deficits in these skills presented powerful evidence of the dependence that family members have upon one another – mostly, gender related.

If the relationships are somewhat harmonious in the earlier phases, it is not uncommon for the 'out of home' father to return periodically to continue to do some of the tasks he had always done. In exchange for these services, his wife might offer him a meal, let him use the washing machine, or even continue to do his weekly wash. But in this later phase, it is more difficult to continue to share these tasks. Each has begun the process of reorganising into a separate lifestyle, and the 'togetherness' that the sharing of tasks represents does not fit. One or the other of the two may have a new partner who objects; the sharing may begin to feel too unequal or too intrusive; and the beginning of the controversial process of legal divorce may result in too much conflict.

As each individual takes on new tasks not performed before, new skills must be developed. It does not take long to learn that one family member, alone, cannot assume all of the vacated responsibilities. The established fabric of interdependency must be unravelled, at least partially, and rewoven. Once more, the process is to some extent one of trial and error – and, frequently, of success. Individuals discover unknown abilities and new satisfactions in accomplishments of activities never before attempted. The repertoires of family members may be substantially expanded during the process of family reorganisation of the division of labour.

Finally, transactional relationships with other social groups in the community require reordering upon separation, which begins in the earlier phases but does not really take root until this later phase of separation. The changes required, range from such simple things as filling in change of address cards for business to dealing with school and government officials, establishing independent credit records with businesses, and so on.

Closely linked to the phases of separation is the Dialectic model of stages in the divorce process. Knowledge about the stages of divorce will assist me to gain a better understanding of what the research participants might have experienced and how unresolved issues from the separation phase could cross over into the divorce process.

Dialectic Model of Stages in the Divorce Process

Some researchers say that some marriages start out more vulnerable to divorce and dissolution than others. In a review of research, White (1990) found several such variables:

- Second marriages (especially where there are children);
- Divorce of the parents of one or both partners;
- Premarital cohabitation;
- Premarital childbearing;
- Younger at marriage;
- Childlessness;
- Race (higher frequency among blacks than whites); and
- Low marital happiness.

Gottman (1994), working from a social psycho-physiological perspective, has found that he could predict with approximately 95% certainty what the eventual fate of a marriage was likely to be. Some of the key factors he considers in making his predictions are:

- Relative distance and isolation;
- Problem-solving ability regarding conflicts;
- Affect;
- Pervasiveness of discord and rebound;

- The couple's view of their marital history; and
- Diffuse physiological arousal (related to autonomic nervous system reactions).

'The idea is that dysfunctional marital interaction consists of inflexibility and a constriction of alternatives' (Gottman, 1994). From the data gathered, Gottman (1994) maintains that he can predict whether the couples in his study are on a high- or low-risk pathway to marital dissolution.

Bohannon (1970) has labelled this period of disillusionment and drifting apart, the emotional divorce in his six-stage model of the divorce process, which Kaslow (1987) has adapted, greatly revised, and expanded into a seven-phase process in her work on divorce since 1981. The model lists the disappointments and experiences in the pre-divorce, divorce, and post-divorce phases as well as the numerous other feelings that are apt to surface during the divorce process.

The Dialectic Model integrates theories of human growth and development, mate selection, marital disillusionment and dissolution, and family systems. The constructed term, dialectic, combines the concepts eclectic (selective) and dialectic (seeking a synthesis that continues to evolve as new data emerge) to encompass numerous theories of behaviour dynamics, family dynamics, and humanistic-existential ideas (Kaslow, 1981; Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987).

The stages do not necessarily occur in an invariant sequence, nor do all individuals go through every stage. Rather, the stage conceptualisation provides a broad framework that helps to sensitise therapists and patient alike, and perhaps attorneys and judges, to the core issues, behaviour and feelings during the different phases of divorce.

Pre-divorce Phase

Stage 1: The Emotional Stage

The emotional divorce can be brief or protracted, which is a time of deliberation and despair, and occurs when one or both members of the pair become aware of their discontentment. Feelings that are usually experienced at this stage can be: disillusionment, dissatisfaction, alienation, anxiety, disbelief, despair, dread, anguish, ambivalence, shock, emptiness, anger, chaos, inadequacy, low self-esteem, loss, depression, and detachment. Some of the behaviours associated with this stage are: avoiding the issue, sulking and/or crying, confronting the partner, quarrelling, denial, withdrawal, pretending all is fine, and seeking advice.

Divorce Phase

Stage 2: Legal Divorce

This period encompasses the legal, economic, and co-parenting and child custody aspects of divorce. It starts when the husband, the wife, or both, initiate legal action. Feelings experienced during this stage may be self-pity and helplessness. Behaviours that could occur are: bargaining, screaming, threatening, and attempting suicide, and consulting an attorney or mediator.

Stage 3: Economic Divorce

Fears as regards financial survival cause some people to cling to an unsuccessful marriage. Most realise that when assets are divided, each will have substantially less than they did in tandem. Feelings that could be experienced in this stage are: confusion, fury, sadness, loneliness, relief, and vindictiveness. Behaviour associated with this stage could be:

physical, separation, filing for legal divorce, considering financial settlement, deciding on the custody/visitation schedule.

Stage 4: Co-parental Divorce / Issues of Child Custody and Contact

The lives of children change dramatically when their parents dissolve their marriage (Ahrons, 1989). Feelings that could be experienced by the parents could be: concern for children, ambivalence, numbness, uncertainty, and fear of loss. Behaviours associated with this stage are: grieving and mourning, telling relatives and friends, re-entering the work world, feeling empowered to make choices.

Stage 5: Community Divorce

This social and community stage begins during the divorce, and like the economic and co-parenting stages, continues beyond the legal divorce. Having others available to listen, sympathise, and to validate the unhappy person's worth is extremely helpful. Feelings experienced during this stage could be: indecisiveness, optimism, resignation, excitement, curiosity, regret, and sadness. Behaviour associated with this stage could be: finalising divorce, reaching out to new friends, undertaking new activities, stabilising a new lifestyle and daily routine for the children, exploring new interests and possibly taking on a new job.

Stage 6: Religious Divorce

In all societies, significant life events, both happy and sad, are marked by some kind of ceremony or ritual, often with religious overtones. Rituals are believed to aid healing, as they tend to 'embody our feeling for us' (Blessum, 1988), and to enhance a sense of connectedness to others who participate in the same ritual, such as laying flowers at the grave of a

loved one. Feelings that could be experienced during this stage are: self-doubt, desire for church approval, fear of God's displeasure or wrath. Behaviour associated with this stage is: gaining church acceptance, the administration of a religious divorce ceremony, and making peace with the spiritual self.

Post-divorce Phase

Stage 7: Psychic Divorce

Many individuals going through divorce describe the process as going through a dark and narrow tunnel on a roller coaster. Once the legal divorce has been finalised and they begin to fit the pieces of their life's puzzle together in a new way with different proportions allocated to the pieces, some light filters in and the tunnel widens. Feelings experienced during this stage could be: acceptance, self-confidence, energy, self-worth, wholeness, exhilaration, independence, and autonomy. Behaviour associated with this stage could be: re-synthesis of identity, completing psychic divorce, seeking new love and making a commitment to some permanency, becoming comfortable with a new lifestyle and friends, helping children to accept the finality of their parents' divorce and their continuing relationship with both parents.

It is important to be aware of the various phases and stages of the separation and divorce process; and to take into account that each research participant, his nuclear and extended family and friends will be at different stages in the process of divorce. Each of the research participants will also experience every event and stage differently, with individual meaning attached to it. Having described the stages of separation and divorce, in the next section I would like the focus to fall on men. I will discuss some of the possible problems and concerns that men

experience when going through the process of divorce, and will also consider some of the extreme consequences of divorce for men.

Problems, Concerns and Consequences for Divorcing Men

Although divorce is a very common experience, and increasingly acceptable in general society today, it could still be a rather traumatic experience. Few people exit a marriage without some degree of stress (Bilge & Kaufman, 1983; Coney & Mackey, 1989). Although a substantial amount of research has been undertaken regarding women and divorce, and also regarding the impact on children from divorced families, very little research has been carried out concerning men, and more specifically, the problems and concerns they face during divorce. Even when studies do involve divorced men, they often appear to be a tangential concern. The focus often falls on father-absence and the subsequent impact on the children (Hepworth, Ryder, & Dreyer, 1984). Dominic and Schlesinger (1980) noted this lack of attention and referred to divorced men and fathers as 'family shadows'. Bloom et al. (1978) reviewed research on marital disruption and found, during the previous 15 years, only one study directly related to the problems of divorced men. White and Asher (1976, p.86) stated: 'Far too little is known about the nature of the stress faced by men undergoing marital disruption and how men respond to these stresses'.

It could be that the paucity of previous research undertaken regarding divorced men reflects cultural stereotyping more than blatant neglect, since men are often expected to take care of themselves and to be able to cope with, and triumph over any situation that comes their way (Pleck & Sawyer, 1974). Similarly, beliefs may tend to play down the sufferings and problems of divorced men because men are often viewed as the ones responsible for the break-up of the marriage, and visions of unfaithfulness come to the fore (Atkins & Rubin, 1976). Another assumption could be that, because women seek assistance by means of

counselling more often than men (Chesler, 1972), it may be wrongly assumed that men have fewer problems and concerns.

Although the problems of divorced men and women may be of a different nature, the impact of divorce upon men is not lessened (Atkins & Rubin, 1976). There are some researchers who state that men have a greater need for and benefit more from the married state than women and, therefore, suffer more from a disruptive or divorced marriage (Bloom & Hodges, 1981). Other authors have also challenged the assumption that men are less emotionally affected by divorce than women (Bloom, Asher and White, 1979). Gerstel, Riessman, and Rosenfield (1985) suggest that marriage protects the mental health of men and women in different ways. These authors argue that material conditions are most important in accounting for greater symptomatology amongst separated and divorced women; while social networks have more of an impact on the symptomatology of separated and divorced men.

The issue as to whether men, or women, suffer more following divorce is not clear. Clarke-Stewart and Bailey (1989, p.167), for instance, found that 'men were better adjusted than women in the three years after divorce. They also were better off financially, had more stable and satisfying jobs, and had experienced less psychological stress and more psychological satisfaction in the previous months'.

Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson (1993) undertook a longitudinal study using specific time markers to determine the thoughts, problems and concerns that men experience during different times in the divorce process. Similar inquiries were done on three different occasions, which were, during the first month of divorce (Time 1), at a six month follow up (Time 2), and a one year follow up (Time 3). The inquiries focused on four areas of functioning: the relationship with their former spouse; thoughts on eight areas of life; anxiety levels and descriptive

information; and the most pressing problems and concerns. The results are given below as percentages in Tables 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5.

Table 2.2 indicates the relationship with the former wife.

Table 2.2

Percent of Sample Responding to what their Former Spouse's Relationship was during Three Time Periods of Divorce.

Role	Percentages		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Helps provide financially for your children <i>(if you have custody)</i>	2.4%	2.4%	3.7%
Social companion for you	14.3%	8.3%	7.4%
Takes care of the children <i>(if you have custody)</i>	2.4%	1.2%	0.0%
Takes care of the children at any time you might call <i>(if you have custody)</i> or lets you see the children most of the time when you want to	25.0%	26.2%	13.0%
Sexual companion for you	9.5%	9.5%	1.9%
Performs routine housekeeping	3.6%	3.6%	1.9%
None of the above	54.8%	56.0%	75.9%

Secondly, Table 2.3 indicates the thoughts of the male participants relating to eight areas of life.

Table 2.3

Percent of Sample Responding to Areas of Life that are Thought About 'A Lot'.

Role	Percentages		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
1. Financial matters	59.0%	51.2%	38.5%
2. How the children are doing	48.0%	61.4%	52.9%
3. The reactions of people at work to my divorce	11.1%	6.3%	0.0%
4. How I am able to handle my children	25.0%	29.0%	26.9%
5. The reactions of my friends to my divorce	21.7%	11.9%	0.0%
6. The reactions of my relatives to my divorce	27.2%	14.5%	1.9%

7. Loneliness	45.23%	3.3%	25.9%
8. Anger toward my former wife	15.7%	16.7%	13.0%

Thirdly, Table 2.4 illustrates the responses regarding the anxiety levels and descriptive information, which were obtained from a ten-item psychological adjustment scale.

Table 2.4

Percent of Sample Responding to 'Often' or 'Almost Always' to Self-Description of men.

Role	Percentages		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
1. I seem to tire quickly	22.6%	19.1%	11.2%
2. I am inclined to take things too seriously	38.1%	38.5%	27.8%
3. I find myself agreeing in order to avoid conflicts	32.2%	23.8%	22.3%
4. I worry too much over something that does not really matter	23.9%	20.3%	13.0%
5. I find myself forgetting things	21.7%	19.1%	18.6%
6. I seem to get angry at the least irritation	19.1%	14.3%	7.4%
7. I find myself brooding about the past	21.5%	23.8%	18.6%
8. I lack self-confidence	26.5%	17.9%	22.3%
9. I feel I am an important member of my family	57.8%	55.4%	45.3%
10. I find myself needing to get away from my family	9.7%	15.7%	11.3%

Table 2.5 indicates the extent to which men, going through divorce, relate to the problems or concerns of various areas of life at the three different times.

Table 2.5

Percent (22% or more) of Sample Responding to 'Always-Often' to Problems Encountered by Men; During and Post-Divorce.

Role	Percentages		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Starting a new job	22.6%		

Making new friends	22.9%		24.1%
Dating new people	35.0%	30.9%	25.9%
Developing an intimate relationship	36.2%	29.7%	29.7%
Being depressed	35.3%		22.3%
Getting involved in social activities	23.5%		
Having enough money	38.5%	30.9%	31.5%
Making ends meet	33.8%	23.8%	22.2%
Being lonely	51.3%	31.0%	26.0%
Meeting my spouse in social settings	25.3%	26.5%	
Talking with my spouse about money matters	28.0%		
Not having enough time to get things done	41.7%	45.8%	48.2%
Being sexually satisfied	41.7%	18.6%	37.0%
Feeling inadequate as a person	25.0%		
Resenting my ex-spouse	25.0%	23.9%	
Having enough time for my children		24.6%	

In summary, Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) research found that being lonely during the first month was a major concern to men; however, loneliness decreased significantly as a major problem after six months. White (1979) in earlier research found loneliness to be the most pervasive and problematic area for men who are separated. During the first six months of divorce, men also seemed to have difficulty making new friends, dating new people, developing intimate relationships, and being sexually satisfied. In a related study Hughes (1988) also found that contact with in-laws decreased substantially but contact with close friends and family did not change after the divorce. It is interesting to note in Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) research that 10% of the divorced men stated that they still had a sexual relationship with their former wife one month and six months after divorce. A high percentage of these women were also social companions to their former husbands for up to six months or a year (McCabe, 1981).

Problems and concerns that were most prevalent in Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) research were interpersonal relationships, loneliness,

practical problems, financial concerns and problems with former spouse contacts (high conflict). These findings were similar to previous research done by Berman and Turk (1981). An interesting observation is noted when Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) research is compared to McCabe's (1981) research on women. McCabe (1981) used the same method of research as Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson (1993). The women in McCabe's (1981) research were much more concerned about 'how the children are doing' at Time 1 (42.0%), but decreased their concern to 32.0% by Time 2. The women experienced 74.0% concern about financial matters in Time 1 and 66.0% in Time 2. A lower percentage of men at Time 1 in Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) research expressed concerns related to 'how the children are doing' (48.0%) than they did regarding 'financial matters' (59.0%). However, concerns reversed by Time 2 (children = 61.4%; finances = 51.2%). Teyber and Hoffman (1987) noted that divorced fathers often abandon parenting because of society's inadequate sex role prescriptions which suggest that children 'belong' to their mothers and because of continuing conflict with the children's mother.

Men also seemed more concerned than women about the reactions of co-workers and friends to their divorce. In McCabe's (1981) study, women thought very little about their co-workers' reactions to their divorce (2.0% at Time 1; 4.0% at Time 2) or about their friends' reactions (4.0% at Time 1). This contrasts sharply with the men in Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) study. Eleven percent (11.1%) of these men at Time 1 and 6.3% at Time 2 were concerned about their co-workers' reactions to their divorce; at Time 1, 21.7% were concerned about friends reaction.

Men in Mitchell-Flynn and Hutchinson's (1993) study also reported loneliness to a much greater extent than the women did in McCabe's (1981) study. The percentage of women reporting loneliness was 26.0% at Time 1 and 14.0% at Time 2. However the men reported 45.2% and 33.3% at Times 1 and 2 respectively with regards to loneliness.

These problems and concerns are, however, only guidelines while each person will have unique experiences. Also of interest are some of the extreme consequences of divorce for men, which indicates that being divorced has a very real impact on some men.

Bloom, Asher and White (1979) noted that divorced and separated men have higher admission rates to psychiatric hospitals than divorced and separated women. The admission ratio of divorced men to married men is also higher than the admission ratio of divorced women to married women. Although divorced and separated women attempt suicide more often than their male counterparts, the deaths from suicides are higher among men. Indeed, separated and divorced men have higher mortality rates from nearly all causes, including homicide, motor vehicle accidents, and cirrhosis of the liver than separated and divorced women (Bloom et al., 1979; Verbrugge, 1979). Other deaths may result from lethal combinations of drugs and alcohol, lung cancer, diabetes, and arteriosclerosis.

Kressel (1985) and other investigators have concluded that, compared to women, divorced men seem less able to articulate plausible psychological explanations for the marriage breakdown and generally seem more bewildered by the entire separation experience, which seems to hold whether they had actually initiated the divorce or not. Kitson and Sussman (1982) have found that men more often than women respond with 'I'm not sure what happened' to inquiries about the cause of divorce.

Men become stressed because of the many disruptive changes that occur in their lives once they separate. Most have one or more changes of residence within the first couple of years of separating. They must adjust to cooking, cleaning and shopping for themselves, and the ease or difficulty with which they cope will depend on how much independent responsibility they assumed before and during their marriage. In an articulate and moving first-person account of his divorce, after 22 years of marriage, newspaper columnist Darrell Sifford (1982,

p.228) presents a vivid description of his difficulty with shopping: 'Grocery shopping was for me the worst of the strange and unfamiliar domestic ordeals, not because I didn't know what to buy but because, to my amazement, I was uncomfortable in the supermarket aisles...with my cart and shopping list.' He wondered if the other shoppers who were scrutinising him thought that his wife was out of town, or that he was perhaps unmarried, or that he might be homosexual. 'In a bizarre way, I had become paranoid in the supermarkets, convinced at times that others were concerned more about me than about their shopping.'

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1976), noted in a study of divorced fathers these types of adjustment difficulties as well as several other findings: divorced men spend more time at work, possibly out of loneliness, or because of greater financial pressures; 75% of divorced fathers felt that they were functioning less ably socially, especially with women, and 19% reported sexual difficulties; non-custodial fathers reported extremely painful and persistent emotional distress associated with seeing their children less frequently and with having little say in the decision making regarding visitation .

Divorcing (Jacobs, 1983) and divorced (Grief, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) fathers have been studied more extensively than divorced men who are childless. Their research has focused specifically on fathers' post-divorce adjustment, the father-child relationship in pre- and post-divorce situations, non-custodial fathers, and single fathers. Most data suggest that those fathers who have continued to maintain contact and involvement with their children after separation are less depressed. Furthermore, one cannot predict the nature and quality of post-separation fathering from the relationship during the marriage: some 'closely involved' fathers before separation do not maintain this behaviour after separation because of an inability to adapt to a visitation status; while other men become more active and interested fathers only after separation.

Tepp's (1983) study of non-custodial, but involved, fathers three years after divorce, is noteworthy. These men reported feelings of loss, dysphoria, sadness, and struggle regarding not having custody of their children. They describe feeling 'shut out' from parenting functions, decreased feelings of being special, a sense of displacement, and a sense of confusion and difficulty about their status as parents. Anger is not mentioned as a specific emotion in these men who were examined three years after divorce, but Wallerstein's (1986) research is illuminating in this regard: almost 30% of the men in her study continued to feel angry and bitter 10 years after the separation.

Wallerstein's (1986) 10-year follow-up study of divorced families has yielded several other important findings. Two-thirds of the 52 men had remarried; a figure that is lower than the much reported remarriage rate of 80% for men (Cherlin, 1981). Half of these remarried men had re-divorced or separated. One-third of the unmarried men were in a stable relationship, including three men in homosexual relationships. Wallerstein noted defensive posturing in several of the fathers who had largely phantom relationships with their children. These men, who had rarely paid child support over the years and who referred to their children, not by name, but by size or birth order, spoke proudly about their close, sustained relationships with their children, as well as their regular support payments.

One of Wallerstein's (1986) most startling findings is that in most of the families, the divorce had resulted in an enhanced quality of life for only one of the partners, more often, the wife. Despite the passage of a decade, only 16% of divorced men had improved psychologically, 12% had deteriorated, and 17% remained unchanged, which may be explained in part, but certainly not completely, by the fact that only 35% of the men had sought to dissolve their marriages – the remaining 65% of divorced men had opposed their wives' initiation of the divorce. Those men and women who had initially sought the

divorce, were more likely to have enhanced the quality of their lives than those who had opposed it.

The Symbolic use of Music and Text

Philosophers, writers and musicians have been investigating the power of music to evoke emotions, for millennia; the pursuit is probably as old as the phenomenon of music itself. Over the past few decades, the development of music psychology, with its promises of scientific objectivity, has sparked a renewed flurry of activity in this field. Literally thousands of papers have been published that present data relating to various aspects of phenomena involving music and emotion from many different disciplines. For the music psychologist, however, there has been a single fundamental question: what is it about music that enables it to evoke emotions in listeners? A considerable amount of research has been undertaken regarding the effects of music on human behaviour. An abundance of evidence indicates that people not only regularly use music deliberately as a mood induction tool (Sloboda, 2000), but also that listening to music in everyday circumstances can lead to moderated mood and altered cognition (Bruner, 1990).

Sometimes, music evokes intense feelings of sadness and joy, which can, occasionally, even lead to strong physical reactions or overt physical behaviour, such as shouting, screaming or crying (Gabrielsson & Lindstrom, 2000); less extreme physical reactions, such as 'piloerection' (goose bumps) and lumps in the throat, are commonly cited as musically induced phenomena (Sloboda, 1991). Emotional responses to music are correlated with physiological functioning, as evidenced by measurable effects on the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems (Panksepp, 1997) and by detectable changes in neural activity (Panksepp, 1997). To complement these findings, clinical observation and the success of music therapy (Bunt, 1994) to aid patients with psycho-

physiological complaints ranging from autism (Keats, 1995) to dementia (Pinkney, 1999) also stand testament to the power of music to affect psychological and physiological states.

Of importance to this study is the theory by Dowling and Harwood (1986) which states that music exists on three levels, that of *index*, *icon* and *symbol*. Music, acting as an index, evokes responses by provoking associations in a listener's mind between the music and something extra-musical. Indexical association can be sparked as a deliberate compositional ploy, such as its use of the French and Russian national anthems in Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*; alternatively, associations may belong exclusively to the domain of a particular listener, for whom a particular piece of music might spark related memories. Either way, music acting as an index works in a Pavlovian way, a true classical conditioning reaction based on previous stimuli or experiences (Pavlov, 1927), and can evoke emotion to the extent that it constitutes an emotional stimulus for the listener.

The iconic level represents the sounds and patterns of a musical surface, or the ebb and flow of a musical line. Dowling and Harwood (1986), and later Lavy (2001, p.176), suggested that 'music mimics the form of emotional life'. If the concept of iconic ebb and flow appears to be somewhat amorphous, the reason, allegedly, is that the representation of emotion in musical icons is necessarily vague. Lavy (2001) illustrated his concept of iconic ebb and flow by the recognition of a violin sonata that sparked memories of a love affair from years before.

The symbolism of music is important for this study. By attaching music to the themes that will be extracted from the participants' testimonials in Chapter 5, it is hoped that it would enhance the emotional experience of the reader by relating to his or her feelings while he or she is listening to the music and reading a specific text (Lavy, 2001). The symbolic level of representation, therefore, is only available to a listener who has an understanding of the musical idioms in

question. Lavy (2001) found that by asking participants to read and listen to specific music, it amplified the emotional experience, and the way in which the reader related to the piece he / she read.

Hence, using the music symbolically to represent what is being read, Lavy (2001), could leave the reader with a richer and more lasting experience of emotion and relatedness to certain texts.

In the present study, relevant song titles were linked to the themes that were extracted and explored from the participants' written testimonies of their journey to and through divorce. It is hoped that the symbolic representation of the songs could enhance the readers' emotional connectedness to the participants' experience of divorce.

Conclusion

In this chapter the ecosystemic approach which grounds the study and highlights the manner in which divorce is seen, was reviewed. The essence of the ecosystemic approach consists of systems theory, ecology and cybernetics, which is appropriate to the present study since this approach was developed in the context of family therapy. Fitting with the ecosystemic approach, the involvement in divorce by extended family and friends was explored and literature relevant to this was reviewed.

The life-cycle perspective was then discussed in order to highlight possible problems that couples and parents may experience during early, mid-, and late marriage. Following on the life-cycle perspective, the phases and stages of separation and divorce was reviewed. Lastly, some of the problems, concerns and consequences for divorced men, were discussed.

In the next chapter, the research design and method for this study will be discussed, which will highlight the manner in which the study will be approached and how the information collected from the participants will be analysed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In this part of the 'song' the listener will discover the type of music to which the song will be sung: classical, rock, dance etc. The type of performer or singer that would best fit the music, will also be selected.

Introduction

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are surrounded by social research. Educators, administrators, government officials, business leaders, human service providers, and health care professionals regularly use social research findings and principles in their jobs. These findings can be used to raise children, reduce crime, improve public health, sell products, or just to gain a better understanding of someone's life experiences. In this particular study the focus will fall on how three males experienced their journey to and through divorce.

In this chapter I will discuss the research design and the research method. The research design will be described by central terms such as postmodernism, social constructionism and qualitative research. As part of the research method, issues such as the sampling, method of data collection and data analysis will be reviewed.

The central terms that will guide the discussion in this chapter as well as the research, can be defined as follows.

Paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry along three

dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. **Ontology** specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can be known about it. **Epistemology** specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known. **Methodology** specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.6).

Similarly, Guba (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003 p.19) defines paradigm as 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action.'

As noted in the literature in Chapter 2, not much research has been conducted regarding men and their experience of divorce, in comparison to an overwhelming amount of research carried out on women and children, with regard to their experiences of divorce. This phenomenon is also of great interest to me although it will not be investigated in this study. However, as was mentioned in the first chapter, it was my experiences and observations while working at the Family Advocate's Offices in Pretoria that initiated my curiosity and questioning concerning divorce, and especially, how men experience divorce.

Therefore, as Neuman (2000) puts it, social research involves many things and it is only one way for people to find out something new and original about the social world. According to Neuman (2000), in order to do this, a researcher needs to think logically, follow rules, and repeat steps over and over again. A researcher also has to combine theories or ideas with facts in a systematic way and use his or her imagination and creativity. The researcher needs to organise and plan carefully and has to select the appropriate technique to address the question. A researcher must also sensitively treat the people who are being studied in an ethical way.

The research process requires a sequence of steps, which are suggested by various approaches which begin with the researcher selecting a topic or a general area of study, for example divorce, as in this study, or crime, homelessness, or illness.(Neuman, 2000).Because a topic is too broad to be able to conduct meaningful research, for that reason the researcher should narrow down, or focus, the topic into a specific research question that can be addressed in the study, in this case, 'How do men experience the process of divorce'. It is also important to review literature on the research topic and research question to assist the researcher to develop possible ideas and hypotheses concerning the chosen topic, as was done in the previous chapter. Thereafter, the researcher needs to make decisions regarding the many practical details involved when conducting the research, which forms an important part of this chapter.

More specifically, the discussion in this chapter will cover the paradigm, epistemology, and approach of this study, the method employed to gather the data, the analysis, and the interpretation of the data.

Research Design

A qualitative research paradigm was selected for the purposes of the present study. In this section, reasons will be provided for the selection of the said paradigm, and the manner in which the postmodernist epistemology and social constructionist approach contribute to this study. As this section progresses, some factors such as reliability, validity and possible pitfalls in qualitative research, will also be briefly discussed. However, this section will begin with a discussion of the postmodern epistemology that will guide this study.

Postmodernism

The modern era was based on the assumption of the existence of universal truths and language as faithful and unbiased (Fuks, 1998). This philosophy ascribes to a view of the world as understandable, controllable and predictable. which means that we 'know' what to do to effect change in a certain direction. From this perspective, there could only be one 'truth' or account on which to rely and to which some people had access. However, when different people claimed to possess this 'truth', it became clear that there could not be just one single 'truth' but that many possible interpretations were possible.

Qualitative research is often informed by the ideas of postmodernism, which '...is a broad term for many different approaches that set themselves up in opposition to the coherence and rationality of the modern world' (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 1999, p. 462). Postmodernism rejects the notion of a universal and objective knowledge (Lynch, 1997) while knowledge, or what we believe, is instead, seen as 'an expression of the language, values and beliefs of the particular communities and contexts' in which we exist (Lynch, 1997, p.353).

The message of postmodernism seems to be that we should be wary of any account that claims to offer the sole explanation or interpretation, since many alternatives, accounts, descriptions, or meanings may be possible (Doan, 1997). In other words, postmodernism allows for a multiversity of reality containing multiple selves, meanings and contexts (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). As in this study, different realities will be perceived, and meanings drawn from, the same event, namely, 'divorce', which does not mean that all accounts are equally valid. Some may disregard age and gender, and sometimes, it depends from where you are positioning yourself; for example, whose fault is it that a couple divorces: is it the man that was unfaithful or did the woman not satisfy his needs?

We should 'beware of any singular, totalising account that claims to contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth' (Doan, 1997, p.129). Postmodernism is appropriate to the present study because the focus falls only on men's experience of divorce and what seems to be reality and truth for them, which does not mean that it is the only reality and truth; there is also the partner's, children's, family's and friends' reality and truth that could be explored. This also leads to the fact that the results will not be generalised to a particular population, because I cannot claim to have heard the true experiences of all men that have experienced, and are going through, divorce.

In the same way social constructionism concurs with postmodernism in asserting that all stories are not equally valid, and in cautioning against singular accounts, whose power tends to further silence and marginalise those whose stories fail to fit. It prefers 'stories based on a person's lived experience' rather than 'expert knowledge' (Doan, 1997, p. 189) since they 'allow for the experience of personal agency' (Doan, 1997, p. 189).

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism can be construed as a postmodern approach. Berger and Luckman (Speed, 1991, p.400) contend that 'we socially construct reality by our use of shared and agreed meaning communicated via language; that is, that our beliefs about the world are social interventions'. In other words, postmodernism reminds us that each of us has a unique reality and truth attached to experiences, and social constructionism takes all the individual experiences we have, and we look for shared and agreed meanings via our language and beliefs. So, in the present study, each of the three research participants will have his own reality and truth about divorce, but some of the experiences will be shared and there might be agreed meanings: for example, they all might have experienced loneliness after divorce.

A social constructionist perspective, as opposed to a constructivist perspective, 'locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social community context' (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80). People live their lives through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning to their experiences. A social constructionist perspective is especially interested in the normative narratives, or grand narratives, which are formed by, and in turn, influence people, and against which people measure themselves. Social constructionism challenges these narratives, and, therefore, focuses on knowledge as power, believing that 'cultural specifications' exert a real influence on people's lives (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80). People live their lives through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning to their experiences.

An example of how these grand narratives are deconstructed could be illustrated by Dr. S. Pretorius, founder of the organisation Fathers-4-Justice South Africa, who points out that fathers are not equally treated in cases for custody, throughout South Africa. According to him these fathers are often the victims of power struggles led mostly by mothers and lawyers (Pretorius, 2005, p. 1).

In the present study of divorce, many of the concepts described have been socially constructed. Divorce may not only be viewed as a life experience, but also as a social construction, which has been informed by societal and cultural expectations of what happens when one gets divorced. Many grand narratives are also discernible such as the one which says that women are better mothers than men, or that most divorces are the husband's fault, or that women are granted custody preference from advocates and the court more than men are. These are not 'truths' but are ideas that have been socially constructed and reified.

'Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality...they seek answers to how social experiences are created and given meaning' (Denzin

et. al, 2003, p. 8). This statement relates well to social constructionism, which examines how meaning is created within the social context.

Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) define qualitative research as: 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world ... qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (p.3). Qualitative researchers focus on qualities, processes and meanings rather than on quantitative concerns such as measurement (quantity, amount, intensity, frequency) and causal relationships between variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

'All qualitative researchers in some way reflect a phenomenological perspective' (Bogdan, 1987, p. 227). Researchers operating in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of naturally occurring complex events, actions, and interactions in context, from the point of view of the participants involved (Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle, 1990). According to Moon et al. (1990) these researchers look for universal principles by examining a small number of cases intensively, which is also the case in the present study. Furthermore, they are concerned with a holistic understanding of phenomena. Although many different traditions of qualitative research exist (Hoshmand, 1989; Jacob, 1987; Moon et al, 1990), all of the traditions share these same general characteristics. As a first step towards defining qualitative research, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe four continua that underlie all social science research from qualitative to quantitative:

Constructive.....Enumerative
Generative.....Verificative

Inductive.....Deductive
 Subjective.....Objective

These continua imply different views of reality and how reality is known – different epistemologies. Qualitative research is usually located closer to the constructive, generative, inductive, subjective, poles of these continua. In their polarised expression, these continua differentiate between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle, 1990). Neuman (2000) describes the different principles between qualitative and quantitative research in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Different Principles between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests hypotheses that the researcher begins with. • Concepts are in the form of distinct variables. • Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardised. • Data are in the form of numbers from precise measurement. • Theory is largely causal and is deductive. • Procedures are standard, and replication is assumed. • Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables, or charts and discussing how the results relate to hypotheses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures and discovers meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data. • Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalisations, and taxonomies. • Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher. • Data are in the form of words and images from documents, observations, and transcripts. • Theory can be causal or non-causal and is often inductive. • Research procedures are particular, and replication is very rare. • Analysis proceeds by extracting themes and organising data to present a coherent, consistent picture.

With reference to the differences between the qualitative and quantitative research principles, a brief overview will be given of some of the reasons why a qualitative research design was selected for the present study.

This study is informed by theory, as is the qualitative paradigm, which is guided by specific epistemology that gives me a specific lens through which to look at the world. In this study a specific qualitative approach referred to as hermeneutics, by Crabtree and Miller (1992) will be used, which is informed by an epistemology that is consistent with the chosen methodology. The purpose of the study was clearly stated before the research project started. The questions in this study, as with the qualitative paradigm, will be open-ended and discovery-orientated. Questions will also be asked in a way to encourage story telling and the focus will not be on linear causality but on context, and events and actions will be viewed holistically.

My role in the qualitative paradigm and in this study is active and participatory. I will strive to develop a close relationship with the participants, since the relationship will be one of the primary information collection instruments. The sampling, data collection and data analysis are also relevant and fall under the paradigm of qualitative research which will be discussed later under the heading, 'research method'.

Another key reason for adopting a qualitative research approach in this study is that there is a link between the qualitative and the ecosystemic approach that was discussed earlier in the chapter covering the literature reviewed. The link was made with a call for new research methodologies that were consistent with systems theory, used in the field of family therapy (Andreozzi, 1985; Keeney & Morris, 1985; Kinston & Loader, 1988; Schwartz & Breunlin, 1988 Schwartzman, 1984; Steier, 1985; Tomm, 1983). Durkin (1987, p. 257) suggested that 'specifically systemic methodology' is needed for research on systemic

phenomena. Andreozzi (1985, p. 196) believed that there was a need to 'bring our data analysis procedures into line with the conceptual reality of family and systems therapy'. The new epistemologists claim that traditional research methods are inadequate to contribute to knowledge about how systems operate and change because traditional methods are derived from linear, reductionistic paradigms (Hazelrigg, Cooper, & Borduin, 1987).

Qualitative research may provide partial answers to the search for research methods that are congruent with systems theory because the qualitative research paradigm is isomorphic with the cybernetic underpinnings of the field of family therapy (Hoshmand, 1989). This isomorphism should come as no surprise, since the field of family therapy grew from phenomenological roots. For instance, Bateson was a trained anthropologist who conducted ethnographic research among the Latmuls of New Guinea during the 1930s (Bateson, 1958; Kobayshi, 1988), the work from which Bateson first developed his cybernetic systems perspective (Bateson, 1958, 1972; Kobayshi, 1988).

As noted by Steiner (1985), qualitative research methods may be more effective than quantitative ones when grappling with the full complexity of systems theory. Like systems theory, qualitative research emphasises social context, multiple perspectives, complexity, individual difference, circular causality, recursion and holism. Qualitative methods provide an avenue for examining the experience of family therapy from the perspective of the client rather than from the more typical research perspective of the therapist and/or researcher (Kuehl, Newfield & Joanning, 1990). Todd and Stanton (1983, p. 329) have noted, 'life and research are inevitably messy'. Research is especially 'messy' in a field like family therapy that is concerned with complex, systemic change in human beings. Qualitative research designs may provide a systematic, scientific way of looking at a family holistically, with all of its 'messiness' intact.

As with any research paradigm there are some potential pitfalls that have to be mentioned before continuing. The first concerns methodology. Gurman and

Kniskern (1978) pointed out, over two decades ago, that the worship of traditional methodology is a strong factor militating against reflective and innovative science. Qualitative researchers have a different perspective as regards many traditional research concepts, including objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1990; Locke, 1989), sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Yin, 1989), data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Yin, 1989), reliability and validity (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1990; Locke, 1989). All of these concepts will be expanded in the rest of the chapter.

Secondly, in qualitative research, terms and concepts are sometimes poorly defined and methods are still being invented and revised (Miles, 1990; Strauss, 1987; Yin, 1989). Since there is some disagreement regarding vocabulary and research standards (Brown, 1988) a need exists for clear communication and careful explanation if qualitative terms, methods, and techniques are to be understood by scientists trained in a different tradition.

Thirdly, fundamental ethical issues like informed consent and risk-benefit equations take on different shapes in qualitative research. For example, anonymity is often impossible to maintain, and risks may be difficult to determine in advance due to the open-ended, exploratory nature of the research process. In addition, the 'private and intimate nature of the family imposes unique constraints and raises distinctive ethical issues for investigators using qualitative methods' (LaRossa, Bennett, & Gelles, 1981, p. 298).

Lastly, it is essential that family therapy researchers conducting qualitative studies understand the limits of the qualitative paradigm. For example, researchers must be aware of cognitive limitations on naturalistic data processing, such as the tendency of the human mind to select data in such a way that it confirms tentative hypotheses and the tendency of first impressions to endure even in the face of considerable contrary data (Lauer & Asher, 1988; Sadler, 1981). In addition, researchers who use qualitative methods must

understand that their work often gains reliability and validity at the expense of their findings being generalised (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), and they must expect to work hard in order to be able to document their findings (Strauss, 1987). Reliability and validity are important issues that need to be taken into account in research. All social researchers want their measures to be reliable and valid. Both ideas are central to establishing the truthfulness, credibility, or believability of findings (Neuman, 2000).

Reliability and validity in qualitative research are conceptualised differently from quantitative research designs, where reliability refers to the reliability of the measuring instrument and validity to measuring what it intends to measure. Reliability and validity should be coherent with the methodology, and, in qualitative research designs, 'reliability refers to trustworthiness of observations or data', whereas 'validity refers to credibility of interpretations or conclusions' (Stiles, 1993, p. 267).

In this study I will follow some of Stiles' (1993) strategies to render the data and observations as reliable as possible. The first refers to the epistemology or orientation that will guide the researcher in his expectations of the study and theoretical allegiance. Secondly I will describe the internal processes of investigation that refer to the impact the research had on him, which will be done in Chapter 4. Thirdly, I will need to establish a relationship of trust whereby I will seek to understand the world from the perspective of the participants and the data collected. Placing myself in the position of not being the expert, being congruent, honest and non judgmental could achieve this. The fourth strategy is iteration, which means that I will 'cycle' between my own interpretations and observations. I will attempt to be constantly aware of the dialogue between theories and interpretations and the participants and the text. Lastly, I will ground my interpretations, by linking them to the content and context, for example in Chapter 4, themes will be linked with examples from the participants' text.

I will also employ Stiles's (1993) strategies on validity to attempt to ensure the trustworthiness of interpretations and conclusions. The method of triangulation will be used to gather information, which refers to using multiple information sources. In this study the participants will write their own experience of divorce on paper and then a follow-up interview will be conducted on the basis of their account of the experience. Secondly, 'catalytic validity', which refers to the degree to which the research process makes sense to the participants and leads to their growth or change, is an underlying aim of this study and could be followed up in future research, which could also lead to further research being undertaken regarding the impact the research experience had on the participants. Thirdly, 'reflexive validity', referring to the manner in which the researcher's thinking is changed by the information, will also be mentioned in Chapter 4.

It is my hope that the integration of all the information mentioned in this chapter thus far could lead to a reliable and valid study that may offer but one possible truth regarding how some men experience divorce, especially since only limited research on this topic has been undertaken. Hopefully this study would remind and raise the awareness of psychologists and family advocates that some men also have intense experiences and problems surrounding divorce even though it is not always verbalised. It is also anticipated that men who read and are exposed to this study could relate to the research participants in this study for their own growth and meaning.

What follows is a description of the research method where the sampling, method of data collection and data analysis will be discussed, and as previously mentioned this also falls within the paradigm of qualitative research.

Research Method

Sampling

Many types of sampling are possible although qualitative researchers usually deliberately select small samples that fit the research aims. Qualitative researchers prefer to look intensively at a few cases that highlight individual differences and context. According to Neuman (2000) qualitative researchers focus on how the sample or small collection of participants illuminates social life. The primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific participants that can clarify and deepen understandings around specific phenomena.

A concern of the qualitative researcher is to find participants that will enhance what other researchers have learnt regarding the processes of social life in a specific context and for this reason they tend to employ non-probability sampling. For them, 'it is their relevance to the research topic rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which the people to be studied are selected' (Fick, 1998, p. 124). For the purposes of this study I will also follow this guideline in the selection of my participants.

The specific type of non-probability sampling used in the present study is purposive, which, according to Neuman (2000), is acceptable in certain situations where the judgment of the researcher is employed, with a specific purpose in mind, when selecting participants. This kind of sampling is inappropriate when selecting the 'average housewife' or 'typical school'. The drawback of purposive sampling is that the researcher never knows whether the participants selected represent the population, another reason why the study cannot be generalised to a population group. The advantage and reason for utilising purposive sampling for the present research undertaking is that it works well when a researcher wishes to conduct an in-depth investigation of particular participants. The purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of a specific question or experience.

Willingness to participate in the study has been taken into account when selecting the participants for this study. The sample size consists of three men who have been through the process of divorce.

Method of Data Collection

The primary source of data collection will be the participants' own written testimonies of divorce in the form of a story. The reason for making this the primary source of data collection is that I would like to exert as little influence as possible on the participants' initial accounts of their divorce experience. Thereafter, unstructured interviews will be conducted if I feel it is necessary to clarify any uncertainties regarding their written accounts. Written consent to participate in the study and for personal data to be used in the study, was requested from the research participants. The data collection process was carried out from a social constructionist approach, where the research participants and I were seen as partners in the co-construction of meaning. The meanings that emerge will also be seen as a product of the larger social system in which the participants live (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 1999).

Data Analysis using a Hermeneutic Approach

The data analysis approach that will be followed is hermeneutic. The analysis of information comprises the process whereby order, structure, and meaning are imposed on the mass of information that is collected in the qualitative study. The aim of hermeneutics is 'to discover the meaning and to achieve understanding' (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p. 266) or to make sense of 'that which is not yet understood' (Addison, 1992, p. 110).

Hermeneutics is coherent with an interpretive approach. Crabtree and Miller (1992), refer to Shiva's circle. Shiva is the androgynous Hindu Lord of the Dance and of Death. They explain: 'A constructivist inquirer enters an interpretive circle and must be faithful to the performance or subject; must be both apart from and part of the dance, and must always be rooted in context' (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p.10). As with the process of Shiva's circle, I will also search for the meanings of lived experiences that are hidden in the participants' writings and interviews. Although the analysis of hermeneutics does not have any set of prescribed techniques (Addison, 1992), there is a process that can be followed. The process that I will use has been adapted from Addison (1992), Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), Wilson and Hutchinson (1991), and involves the following practices:

Step 1: *Familiarisation and Immersion:* In this stage I will work with texts rather than with lived experiences, and immerse myself into the world created by the texts so that I can make sense of the worlds of the research participants.

Step 2: *Thematizing:* This step requires that I infer themes that emerge and underlie the research material and data.

Step 3: *Coding:* Coding occurs when similar instances are grouped together under the same theme.

Step 4: *Elaboration:* In this stage I will explore the generated themes more closely, which will enable me to gain a fresh view and deeper meaning of the texts. Exploring the texts in different contexts, for example, in class presentations, with lecturers and supervisors, with colleagues and taking into account my own values, biases, assumptions, interpretations, and understandings, leads to elaboration of the experiences of the research participants.

I will maintain an attitude of constant enquiry; searching for misunderstandings, incomplete understandings, deeper meanings, alternative meanings, and changes over time, as I move back and forth between the hermeneutic spirals.

According to Addison (1992, p. 113) 'analysing is a circular progression between parts and whole, foreground and background, understandings and interpretations, and research and narrative account'.

Step 5: *Interpretation and Checking:* In this step I will look at the final account of the research question and will also reflect on the impact that the research has had on me.

I will interpret and present the information in a thematic analysis by identifying common themes from the information and use extracts from the texts to substantiate the themes.

In conclusion, I will interpret and immerse myself in the world of meaning of word, text, or visual image, unpack its many meanings, and freely associate with regards to what it stands for. 'Immersion' is at the empathic, experience-near end of the interpretive continuum; 'unpacking' is the beginning of viewing the material from the outside, although still within the context of what the participants have recounted to me, and 'associating' is at the experience-distant end (Kelly, 1999).

Following the process explained above, I will immerse myself in the data collected in the form of written stories, in order to make sense of the experiences of the research participants. Themes will then be inferred from the material and subsequently coded and elaborated upon. The various themes will then be integrated into some form of 'general account', which would incorporate themes from the literature review, as well as my own meanings and thoughts generated by the research process. The themes that emerge from written testimonials of the participants will be symbolically and metaphorically attached by me. I will select

relevant song titles as the headings of the themes or experiences of the participants and give a rationale for selecting each song and how it connects to the experiences of the participants from my point of view. I feel that by doing this, I can relate to the unique experiences of the participants on a deeper level and express myself in a more meaningful way. Finally, as a conclusion to Chapter 5, there will be a reflection on my role during the interpretation and checking phase.

I will give meaning to the data of the three participants in accordance with how I think the participants may have experienced the divorce process. The process of attaching meaning is informed by the 'immediate context, social structures, personal histories, shared practices, and language' (Addison, 1992, p. 112). In searching for meaning, I will be aware that human action is not fixed and that it is constantly being negotiated, and changes, or evolves, over time, in different contexts and different individuals. The ideas that I have about the data will also be informed by my own values. Therefore the notions of 'truth' or correspondence to an objective reality, are not important issues in this approach and do not adhere to the belief of an objective reality.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design and method was discussed. Reviewing central terms such as postmodernism, social constructionism and qualitative research, expanded on the research design. Literature, such as that by Neuman (2000) and Terre Blanche and Durheim (1999) was mentioned to explain the use of postmodernism, social constructionism and qualitative research in this study. The research method was also discussed where issues such as sampling, method of data collection, and data analysis were reviewed which indicated the manner in which the study will be conducted, analysed and presented.

The following chapter will contain the voices of the participants in the form of their written testimonies. These were edited by me in order to maintain confidentiality and only the relevant information used in the analysis is included.

CHAPTER 4

THE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The voices of the participants, or singers in this study, or song, are the essence of what this study or song is about. By allowing their voices to be heard by others, they share their personal journey and experiences. Each one who hears the voices of the participants will relate to their songs in a unique way.

Introduction

This chapter embodies the written testimonials of the participants, which were, as mentioned above, edited to protect the confidentiality of the participants and all others mentioned in their stories, as requested by the participants. As much as possible of the original written testimonials of the participants was preserved and used in the exploration of their journey.

The Voice of M

'I was born in the 70's, grew up in a middle class environment where money was never really a problem. I matriculated and lived the most of my life around the same place. I spent a year in the defence force.

My ex-wife was born in the 70's. She grew up on a plot and loved horses with a passion. I believed she loved horses more than anything else in the world. Her family was never really financially stable for extended periods of time. They went

from moments of having enough to get by, to moments of having absolutely nothing, not even food. She grew up in a pretty rough environment; both her parents drank a lot as well.

I met 'C' for the first time through my friends. We were a group of kids who used to hang out together and she became part of the group. She became the most popular of the girls (as far as the guys were concerned). She was very good looking, naughty, and full of fun. My friend 'B', who introduced her to the group, was interested in her at the time. I believed I could never have a chance with a good-looking girl like that because she was out of my league. I was never very popular amongst the girls. I think, because I was introverted and they liked the other guys who weren't. She first started dating another friend of mine 'F' – she never fancied 'B'. I wished I could go out with her because she was really 'hot'.

Anyway, things never worked out between her and 'F', so they broke up. At the time it was mostly just fun and relationships in our teens were never as serious. My friend 'B' continued to try to impress her but she was just not interested. 'B' was my best friend at the time, so all the time he was chasing after her, I was with him, and I guess that's how I got to know her.

One night myself, 'B' and 'C' went out together. 'B' realised that she wasn't interested in him and it was then that I told him that I liked her. It became apparent that 'C' liked me and I was very surprised. I felt really good, through the rest of the evening we spent time holding each other and kissing.

I now spent most of my time with her, at her house. I got on well with her family because they seemed to like me a lot. 'C's mother even said she wanted me to marry her daughter. 'C' made me feel alive as we spent time together and we grew closer. We spoke about all sorts of things and always went out together. I loved being with her and I didn't need anybody else. We started to experiment with sex and our sexual relationship eventually became very intense. I was in

college and she was in school and we often didn't go, just to stay home and spend time together. I felt a strong connection with her and was falling in love with her and even had thoughts about marrying her one day. I had very little contact with my family and friends. I just wanted to be with her all the time. She made me feel alive.

We had a couple of pregnancy scares and at one time we believed she was really pregnant. We stopped using protection after we had spoken and decided we would get married. The test was negative though and we thought it was all right. I had by then dropped out of college and 'C' out of school, as we hadn't been attending.

It was then that I was called up to do military service and was sent for basic training. While I was there 'C' again told me she was pregnant. I wasn't sure if she was telling me the truth, so I phoned my dad and asked him to find out if it is true. He did and it was true. I tried to get a transfer closer to home, but I was refused. It was hard on me because I wanted to be with her, now more than ever. My dad suggested abortion, but I said no. I wanted this, I wanted to marry her, have children and a happy little family. I kept in contact with her, as much as I could. After basic training, I was transferred closer to home, and got my first leave. I was very nervous. I went home first, sat and thought for a while built up the courage and went to see her. I knocked on the door, it was getting dark, 'C' opened the door, and by this time she was already very pregnant. It was the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen. I grabbed her in my arms and held her close. We made love that night and I felt like I never wanted to be away from her ever again. We had become one.

I loved her so much that it was overwhelming, something that cannot be put into words. We decided to get married, before the birth of our son. I was still in the defence force so we got married while I was on pass. We got married in court, in a hurry, and had a small celebration afterwards. Our wedding was not wonderful

but it was still nice. The lady at the court tried to make it as real she could. I admired her for that. We were chauffeured back to her house, but never had a honeymoon. We exchanged rings as well, and I was happy and proud.

My son was born in the 90's. I wasn't able to witness the birth, but I was there as soon as they brought him out of the theatre. I went with the nurse while she weighed him, and this was now the next most beautiful thing that I'd ever seen. After a short while I was able to see my wife as they brought her out of the theatre. She was still under anaesthetic and asleep. I kissed her and let them take her back to the ward. We were told she would still be asleep for a while and that we should come back later that evening. My father-in-law and me celebrated that afternoon. We went back to the clinic later that evening and I was able to see 'C' and my son 'R' together. She seemed happy and was able to come home the following day. I'd never felt so good in my life. My life had gained new purpose and meaning, and I felt loved and planned to dedicate all my time to my family. Everything I did from then on would involve them and be for them.

I tried as hard as I could to be with them and often went AWOL and hitchhiked home just to be with them and then hitchhiked back to the camp in the morning. Money at the time was a big problem. The defence force salary was small and went towards food and stuff for my son. My father-in-laws medical aid covered his daughter, but everything they did for my son had to be paid cash, which left my in-laws in financial difficulty.

My father had said he would pay for the birth if 'C' went to a government hospital, but she didn't want to, so my dad refused. Our relationship (I and my wife) was good although she neglected to care for our son, I think, as a mother should, so I took on the majority of the responsibility. 'C' was in her teens when she gave birth to our son and became a mother, so I thought I needed to take some of the pressure off her. I believed she would slowly get into it herself. I was under a lot of pressure, having to wake up at night to feed and change 'R' and then go back

to the camp and work for the day. It was hard but I enjoyed it and felt like I was doing the right thing. Arguments often broke out between my wife and her parents because they felt she should be more responsible towards our son.

After finishing my military training I went home to my family and things went generally well, the only problem was money. My in-laws sold their plot at a very good price and bought a farm and we all moved there. Things went well for a while as they had money left over after buying the farm. My wife and I argued as well but not so much, at least until we got to the farm. She was very irresponsible and had a 'couldn't care less attitude'. Her parents fought with her and I fought with her. I was doing everything, looking after my son, household work, washing and working. She refused to do anything.

I used to drink alcohol, with my father-in-law regularly and this made her angry. I cut down on the drinking and drank a lot less because of this, but eventually I found myself getting drunk just to spite her. I also drank to keep going. I had become depressed and when I drank I felt better. There was constant bickering and fighting. It drove me crazy. 'C' fought with everybody and it didn't help that her own family took my side. I eventually got work and myself, 'C' and 'R' moved closer to my place of work. I thought things would get better if we had our own place, but nothing changed, we still fought and I still drank.

She had an affair, or a couple I'm not sure and I forgave her and tried to make things work. I put all my energy into 'us'. Eventually it became clear that she was seeing somebody else and we agreed that she would stay until she could arrange another place. It ate me up that I had to ask her to leave. We spoke about divorce and that was the plan, she moved out and decided that my son should stay with me. Even after the divorce, it didn't affect my son terribly because I was the one who gave him all the love and support, his mother didn't really care. I do know he loved his mom, because I remember him asking me when his mom would be coming home. It hurt like hell because I still loved her,

but now she was gone and with leaving my whole world started to fall apart. I felt like I had failed, like it was my fault, and that everything I believed in was now questionable. I felt worthless and wanted to die. I had thought about killing myself and had once put a gun to my head. The only thing that stopped me was, I loved my son too much and he needed me. I continued to see 'C', quite often. I made myself believe that it was so she could visit with our son but I now realise that I didn't want to let go. I was holding on to whatever scraps were left over. Without her, I was nothing. She became a prostitute to earn money, even after I had told her I would give her money to get by until she could get proper work. It didn't help. She did it anyway. I still continued to see her, and she played this emotional game with me. She fucked with my head. She knew she could do with me as she pleased. As much as I was hurting I still stuck around, and I got drunk all the time and even started selling my things for alcohol. It killed my pain.

M lost custody of his son and 'R's mother gained custody of him. Because of confidentiality no further information can be given about the reasons surrounding M's loss of custody.

We are now divorced and I very rarely see my son. I know she keeps him away from me to hurt me. I love him very much, and she knows this. I still communicate with her sister and mother. They tell me she's still full of shit and hasn't changed. I had always hoped she would change. I can only imagine she must be a very lonely person. I miss my son a lot, we were very close and I used to miss her too. A lot of time (years) has passed since we're divorced, but the last five years I believed I've let go of her.

I stopped every now and again while writing this story because I still feel, or rather, remember that pain. It's a horrible, dark place and it scares me and I don't want to be in that situation ever again, I'd rather die first.

When I first set out to write this story, I thought it was going to be easy. It took me much longer than I thought. I stopped every now and again as the old emotions well up inside me. I could say that this whole experience of my marriage and divorce left me very mixed up. I miss my son terribly and there were no visiting rights set up in the divorce agreement. 'C' has full custody and she just doesn't want me to see my son because, I think she's afraid I'll tell him the truth.

At first I never wanted to be in a relationship again, but I have been, and one thing I have learnt is that I need to invest less energy into my relationships and save some for my own needs and myself.

I would love to meet somebody one day who would love me as much as I love her. I would like us to have honesty and respect as well as support for each other. I believe in true love and I've realised that true love is not just an attraction and a need to be close to one another. It's a lot more complex and has a lot more parts to it than I think people realise. It's also a constant journey that needs to be worked on and nurtured.'

The Voice of E

'I met my wife in the 90's and we were both still students at that time. We made the fateful mistake of sleeping together on our first date, which ended with her storming out after sex, and me chasing after her down the passage of the block of flats we lived in. It was her first sexual encounter (or so I was led to believe at the time). For me, it was the beginning of a 10-year period of trying to pacify her, to avoid her soul-destroying, behaviour-conditioning 'silent treatments'... very, very effective indeed. I was in my late 20's at the time, and she, barely out of her teen years.

We were completely unsuited to each other, but the unnatural act of sex on a first date, created an unrealistic bond, a commitment, and an expectation between us. We were both decent well-educated students, and against our better judgment, we got caught up in trying to establish a relationship out of nothing but sex.

The relationship was stormy from day one. I found myself permanently distrusted, constantly under criticism, and my personal freedom was being slowly but surely taken away from me...along with my personality.

After a lot of pressure from her mother, who practically arranged the wedding all by herself, I was simply informed of the date and time of the ceremony. We got married in the late 90's with some important people attending the wedding ceremony. Nevertheless, it was the most beautiful day of my life. We both stood there, hand in hand, while the tears ran down our cheeks, dripping onto our clutched hands. I was touched like never before in my life. And I made a personal commitment that I will make our marriage work.

Soon after our honeymoon, life settled back to normal, with us busying ourselves with our respective careers. She was finishing off her intern year in a professional career, working in excess of 100 hours per week, sleeping many nights away from home. I was building my professional career, which was hard work and long hours, all on my own. My work hours were 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week, and thereafter on-call, during which I will be called out three to four times after hours. I was involved in other business opportunities that took a lot of my time but would secure our future forever.

We were on track to reach for the stars...and they were within our grasp. Then the first earth shattering shock came...my wife was having a romantic affair with one of her colleagues. The long nights doing nightshift apparently became too long, and with me being pre-occupied with securing our future, my wife fell for the

'sweet-little-nothings' whispered into her ear by an amorous colleague. The chocolates followed, the little poems, the rose on the pillow of her bed in the duty doctor's room...and God only knows what else.

I became suspicious when her cell phone account approached one thousand rand per month (since I was the one paying the bills), and phoned the number that was dialled up to 20 times per day, and all hours of the night. A handsome sounding man answered the phone and he was one of her colleagues. My life fell to pieces. I went into a daze that lasted for days. I could not work, I could not eat, I could not sleep...I was dying inside. And my wife was cold as ever.

In a desperate attempt, I frantically arranged romantic weekend breakaways. I booked us into the most opulent suite, complete with champagne, flowers, seafood platters, and soft robes. We spent most of the weekend in our robes, making love (should I say having sex?), and indulging in the Jacuzzi with its golden taps.

But I could sense my wife was absent. She even invited some friends over for breakfast (which was strange in the first place). The following week I checked her phone statement...more calls were made to her 'colleague' over that same weekend! She actually sneaked away from the breakfast table to secretly phone him from the room!

And that was just the beginning. After much pain, I convinced her to end the 'liaison', which took her several weeks to do. I lived with the pain for a long time, but eventually it faded (like my love for her), and we carried on with our lives.

She later joined me (reluctantly) at my place of work, and the staff and I, had to put up with her mood swings on a daily basis. We never knew whether the sun was shining or whether it was raining. She mainly saw female clients at work, and the following year my staff got suspicious why she was seeing a male up to

three to four times per week. Then through the post arrived little gifts, many letters, and greeting cards with topless girls on the cover reading, 'wish you were here', and my hell began all over again. Again, I placed her before an ultimatum, and I ended up drafting a letter to this gentleman, which she signed (reluctantly, and not without severely criticizing me for wanting to control her life?!), after which I made damn sure he received it.

Things calmed down in that regard for a while. The criticizing and stone-walling (up to four weeks at a time!) continued. By now even the sex was very infrequent. Like so many other stupid parents, I thought a baby would give new meaning and purpose to her life, make her happier in herself, and that our lot would improve.

'M', was born...the most beautiful, gorgeous, little angel any parent can ever hope for. She certainly changed my life forever! For the first time, I experienced complete and utter, unconditional love and the true meaning of life dawned upon me. I was in heaven...God has finally decided to bless me with happiness.

But my wife could not bear to see the love and happiness between father and daughter. I was accused of loving my daughter more than loving her, I was accused as being abnormal, because I gave 'M' the little teddy that came for free with the Valentine's lingerie I bought my wife, I was criticized for greeting my daughter first when I got home after work (never mind that my daughter came running to me when she saw my car in the drive-way), I was never allowed unhindered time alone with my daughter, my wife professed that she felt like she was 'abandoning' 'her' daughter if she leaves her with me for any length of time.

But I persisted in creating a nurturing, loving, warm relationship with my little angel. I changed nappies, fed her, bathed her EVERY night, read stories, sang songs to her, and even cared for her during the night most of her toddler months. For months I slept in our daughter's room with her in her cot, being there for her

when she woke and needed nurturing. My wife never once asked me back into our own room. She was tired (understandably), and was enjoying the sleep. I was thriving on the love between father and daughter. And all the while my wife and I were drifting further and further apart.

I was completely emotionally burnt out. I could not cope with my work anymore. I went for burnout counselling, and during the first session, the therapist identified that the problem was not with my work, but with my marriage. I had nowhere to 'recharge' my batteries to deal with the demands of everyday life. My wife joined the therapy for four sessions, but continued to stonewall me in between sessions. She eventually stopped attending.

In the end, my therapist's words were 'not all relationships were worth saving'. My wife started threatening me that, they came as a package, and if I don't take the one, I won't get the other. The REAL nightmare was about to start.

One afternoon I found our little daughter hiding under the kitchen table. I could not stand seeing her like that, and asked my wife for a trial separation for two to three months.

The rest happened very quickly. Someone informed me that a big truck was loading my furniture, and I immediately went home to see my daughter. My wife was packing just about everything we owned, but I let her be (I ended up sleeping on the floor). 'M' and I played hide-and-seek in the removal van. Not only did my wife move out of the house, but also she moved far away. A friend of hers (herself the mother of a two year old little boy) had the callousness to tell me that I must not think that I am going to live the life of a bachelor, and expect my wife to let my daughter live on my doorstep.

The next thing a pack of lawyers hounded me. There was the smell of money. Threats of financial ruin followed. My wife demanded astronomical amounts of

maintenance for herself, even though she had a professional career herself, and has been working during our entire marriage.

For the first few months I flew weekly on a Friday morning to where my daughter lived and, hired a car, stayed in a guesthouse, spent the weekend with my daughter (9:00am to 5:00pm), and flew back home on Sunday evening.

But my wife could again not bear seeing that my daughter and I were still extremely close and happy, even under the non-ideal circumstances. She got a new boyfriend within a week of our separation, cut off all her hair, got a huge tattoo and my contact weekends were cancelled one after the other.

Eventually she only allowed me contact for three hours per week!!! And for that I had to fly to them every time. She even once told her domestic to lock 'M' and I up inside the house.

Her lawyers threatened me, her father threatened me, her brother threatened me, and her friends and family ignored me. Desperate pleas from me to mediate between us, ended with her father throwing the phone down on me.

She enrolled 'M' in an unregistered preschool (run by a family friend), which my lawyers fortunately overturned, she exposed 'M' repeatedly to health risks (and even paraded this fact in affidavits before the court), but the court curtailed her freedom of movement, and she now requires permission from a Travel Health Consultant before taking our daughter anywhere not deemed safe. But her family is wealthy, and the lawyers are hounding...and the justice system favours even heartless mothers.

The mother now works as head of a department, and the small child has to go to preschool in a lift club at 7:00am, and only gets fetched at 5:00pm...but she is not allowed to spend afternoons, instead, with the father (who does not keep

office hours) and her granny. She sleeps over at the mother's family, but is supposedly too young to sleep over at the father's house. Every other boyfriend, Tom, Dick and Harry is allowed to care for the child, but not the father. Why, because it is 'disruptive' to the child. According to the mother, it seems ANY contact with the father is 'disruptive'! Can she not see what the long term effects will be on this innocent little girl?!

I am also faced with our inefficient legal system that allows vindictive mothers to get away with this kind of 'sick' behaviour. It has been nearly two years, and our divorce pleadings have not even been closed. The next trial date is only available in next year! It took five months to obtain a court order for interim contact with my daughter. We have been waiting in vain for nearly nine months for the Family Advocate to investigate, as per the court order. But even they ignore my desperate pleas.

And in the meantime, the mother is happily sacrificing our daughter in her quest for vengeance and dishing out punishment left, right and centre. Assisted by money hungry lawyers, who take even the most ridiculous dispute to court, just as long as they can continue 'writing fees'. None of them even know the name of our daughter!

But good things come from bad. I have a completely new outlook on life, I no longer seek wealth (which was mainly to finance my spendthrift wife in any event), and I lead a simple inexpensive life. I have given up my professional career, and am involved with an organisation that helps people that are going through divorce and custody battles. Together with many other parents, I now dedicate all my time fighting for the interest of my daughter...and every other child caught up in the divorce of the parents. My wife of course tells everybody I led the life of a 'playboy'! But she will not get away with it.

We will expose these parents and other 'experts', who are nothing but the devil parading as good 'custodians' of our children. They will not hide and carry out their injustices in secrecy. We will elevate them to 'celebrity' status, so that every single person that comes into contact with them will see them for what they really are...vindictive monsters that will even harm a child for their own selfish interests and their own failures.

Am I obsessive? Of course I am! But that is because I, like so many other fathers, suffer from DEPRIVATION forced upon us by being denied meaningful contact with our children. But we will not stop until our work is done...for the sake of our children'.

The Voice of N

'My story, single child, and parents divorced when I was very young. I stayed with my grandmother until some family members convinced her to put me in a school hostel. My Grandmother was very strict and reinforced discipline, i.e. I do not smoke to this day. The hostel days started my personal rebel streak, because I was taken away from the things I loved and enjoyed, which were my Grandmother, Uncle, dogs, bicycle, cats, freedom, and mountain climbing.

Some family helped to trace my dad via the maintenance check. So I bought a train ticket at and I travelled to my father (I was in my early teens at that stage). My dad and his then 2nd wife (Bitch) met me on the station. Needless to say a happy re-union took place, I was the happiest that I was for a long time. So I stayed with my dad and went to school the next year. It was hell because of the new environment and the constant crap from my dads wife.

I started visiting the docks as ships fascinated me, and that is how I tricked my dad to sign me into the navy. After std. 8 I went to a recruitment centre and was

picked for the navy, but my dad also enrolled me in a hotel school in Europe, so I went. I adapted so quickly to my new job as a chef, and I began to love Europe. As I left my dad, and went to Europe with my head in the clouds, I forgot to call my mom and she was still thinking that I was living with my Grandmother. I saw my mom once or twice a month. So I called her from a call box out of Europe after two months. She was upset, and only now I can understand why because I have children of my own. But Interpol haled me back to start my navy training in the RSA.

I arrived back in RSA and immediately applied to be a submariner. We were about 3000 that applied. I got the position with about three others after 17 weeks of psychological evaluation. So I left for Europe again to start my new career. We started training in all aspects. We were one of the first subs to be built and because I was good with languages I was moved between the different sub's to train staff. That gave me the opportunity to travel all over the world. I visited approximately 130 countries all over the world in 10 years.

My travels came to an end and I returned to RSA, where my mom was there to welcome me. Life started in the RSA and it was good. I met a gorgeous girl and we got engaged and married (only for one year). Her family put so much pressure on her and us. We did part as friends, and I did spoil her a lot. Last I heard from her she had been married 5 times with no children and her life was in ruins.

I just have to say that my dad was a great person and that I learnt many skills from him. In my absence in Europe his second wife left him and re-married with two kids.

I left the navy and ended up living with my uncle. I worked in law enforcement where I also needed a lot of discipline. I met a lot of people and that's how I met my X, through her brother-in-law. It was a connection with immediate romance.

We started dating. She was still at school at that time and her parents did not know me as she was on holiday. We planned to go away with her sister and brother-in-law. We went to her house to meet her parents and immediately her father confronted me. He wanted to know what she was doing with a 'chinaman'. I had to produce my ID and divorce papers to prove that I was Afrikaans and South African.

My ex's father was an alcoholic and she was the 'laat lam'. They would go to town and he would down a couple of brandies on a Saturday. They would buy biltong and cheese and she would have to drive home. They would lock themselves in the room until everything would blow over.

We went on our first holiday and it was glorious fun. We returned and she went back to school, and I had to go back to work. I bought myself a nice car and so it happened that I drove every weekend for two years to her house with flowers and food. As I could not be there during the week I tried to do as much as possible for them because they did not have it good. She finished school and I got her a job and accommodation. She met up with some school buddies and they lived in a flat. She got her first new car, and she disappeared for an entire weekend without answering her phone.

After this we split up, however she came back apologising after two weeks and we made up. We then got engaged, and then the tongues started wagging that she is pregnant etc. We got married in the early 80's and the family had to wait a further five years for the first child to be born. It was a girl and the other one was born two years later and it was a boy, he was also the only male grandchild in the family. My X's brother immediately wanted to hijack my son because they had no children.

Our marriage cruised on, I was successful and she also found a new job and this is where I met one of my best friends, who supported me through all the hell that

was about to break lose. It was a happy time and we became house friends with a social group of note.

Then my X changed jobs again after several years. We had a good social life and few fights. We bought a new house, everything was all right until I invited my mother-in-law to live with us, what a disaster. The rest of the family was not willing to look after her. She mentally screwed my kids by keeping a black book with misdemeanours and because of this my kids do not like her to this day.

During the time the X's mother was living with us the X found it convenient not to cook any more, worry about house work, or look after the kids it was now her mothers job, even after hours. The X started to make excuses to stay late at work and drink. This is when I stopped showing affection. Her behaviour became very promiscuous and I suspected an affair (I was not wrong). The children went with me on a camp in (they were still young). While we were away we phoned daily as usual and were none the wiser what was happening back home. In the meantime the X's family including her mother whom I accommodated, helped her move out of my house!! What audacity!

We arrived back form camp on a Sunday (I hate Sundays, comes from hostel days), and the X walked up to me with no greeting and handing me the keys to my house and said 'here, you sleep lekker'. The bitch took my crying kids too and drove off. I was fucked... I never suspected or expected this, but my hatred was immediate. She moved into a townhouse and a week later the boyfriend moved in, and we are not even divorced yet. Her behaviour in front of my children I will never condone!!! I went home and broke all memory photos' etc. that I could. I lost the house, moved to various rooms, and shacks. I lost my job, marriage and became insolvent. The shock, hatred and embarrassment you could not explain.

She wanted it all she kept the children away from me even on weekend visits and she got a court order against me. She turned every one against me and even

phoned my ex-bosses. She would switch off her phone so I could not even talk to my children. So I bought each of them a phone to communicate and insisted to the court that I have the children from Friday to Mondays before school. My ex found out I was starting with a new business and told the court that I was a smuggler. She tried things like this for years to fuck me up. Even our house friends assaulted me on my X's instructions. I grovelled, no job, and too fucked up to be caring for my kids although I always put them first, she took me to court again for maintenance. In court I was on first name basis with her lawyer, so much so that he even told her to stop her kak!!

I have not spoken to her unless my children were sick and she phoned. I spoke to her across the table for the first time last year, concerning my daughter's education. I may have left out some details as I was taught in the far east to clear your mind of the bad and remember the good, but my X in my life NEVER.

She married the new ass-hole, only to spite herself, and only now it comes out from her family that kept quiet for so long, that it was not only my fault and I am not alone to blame, as made was out, for the divorce.

I wrote this story as I remembered and jotted down the flashes of re-call. I would never recommend that anybody with marital problems see a Pastor, Dominee, Rabbi, or anybody from a church, as they are biased, untrained and will always take the part of the female. Even lawyers are for the females – maybe they all want to have sexual flings with the women, I wish I knew. Also do not try and commandeer friends that you had when you were married, because they disappear, like mist and become backstabbers'.

Conclusion

In this chapter the written testimonials of the participants were recorded. The next chapter will include the exploration of these, as well as a comparison to the relevant literature as discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING THE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The vocalist, or singer, is the person that sings the lead and most prominent part in a song, and ultimately gives meaning, feeling and character to the song. In this section we will be listening to a Trio, which means three leading voices in one song. Through their courage they will share their experience of a journey not often written and sung about.

Introduction

In this chapter the written testimonials of the three participants will be carefully explored and similar, emerging themes will be highlighted and compared to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The themes that emerged will be connected with relevant songs that enhance and highlight the emerging themes. In this way, I will relate more effectively to the research participants through the use of symbolism. I hope that other readers will also find different songs that they can relate to the journey of the participants.

It needs to be noted that the themes highlighted in this study may not be mutually exclusive, nor are they meant to represent an ultimate truth about the reality of the participants or about divorced men in general. I therefore, acknowledge that the themes highlighted in this chapter, and the songs chosen to symbolically represent the themes, are coloured by the lens through which I looked, at this particular point in time. I further acknowledge that these themes are by no means exhaustive. Another person, looking through his or her particular lens, may therefore highlight different themes and/or add to the ones presented here.

It is important to remember that this study focuses on the journey of the participants to and through the divorce process. They are considered to be the experts because of their lived experience of divorce. The themes will be structured in chronological order from the beginning of the participant's journeys till their divorce and will conclude with their own reflections on the writing of the stories. Also, where relevant, the themes will be compared and integrated with the literature and theories of Chapter 2, which is important because it adds to the richness of the information and reveals possible shortcomings both in the past literature and this study.

I selected the following songs to symbolically represent the identified themes from the written testimonials of participants:

- *'And then I kissed her...'*
- *'From this moment, life has begun...'*
- *'O-bla-di-o-bla-da, life goes one...'*
- *'I'll be watching you'*
- *'Thunder Struck!!!'*
- *'Goodbye My lover, Goodbye my friend...'*
- *'Since You've Been Gone...'*
- *'...and it's Hope that makes you carry on...'*
- *'The Man in the Mirror'*
- *'Don't Worry Be happy Now...'*

Exploring the Voices through the use of Symbolism

I am of the opinion that highlighting the themes in the form of music will demonstrate that these themes, although different in varying contexts, are around us every day in a variety of mediums, such as, songs, paintings, photos, poetry, movies and plays. I will now go into more detail about each theme and add extracts from the participants' stories to support the reason why the themes were significant to me. Where relevant, I will also compare the themes with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Each song, and/or lyric, chosen as a title and theme, will also be explained and connected to how it fits with the experiences of the participants.

'And then I kissed her...'

The First Connection

'And then I kissed her...' were the famous words by the Beach Boys in a song about a boy's first romantic encounter with a girl he met at a party. All marriages have a definite beginning, middle that could be filled with various stages and an end, whether it is divorce or death. Under this theme, the beginning of the relationships of the participants with their former spouses and their relationship with their future family-in-law will be explored. The three participants all placed emphasis on the specific moment they met their now former spouse and the involvement and influence of the spouse's parents. The reason could be that it is usually seen as a unique and memorable moment, and as such, is usually told over and over again for years, to friends, family, and later, to children. But this first encounter could also contain underlying factors that could be precursors or indicators of divorce lurking in the future and therefore, provide glimpses of doomed relationships before they even start. This has already been researched and confirmed by some researchers like Gottman (1994) and will be

further reflected on at the end of this theme. But, first, let us explore the experiences of the participants regarding their first connections with their former spouses.

M's relationship started with friendship and moved on to become emotional and physical over some time, but when it happened, M said, *'It was a surprise. I felt really good, through the rest of the evening we spent time holding each other and kissing'*. M seemed to have been in the disadvantaged position from the start as he also said that he never felt that he stood a chance to get involved in a relationship with his former spouse, and when she eventually gave him that chance he had felt he had a lot to prove to her and himself. However, he seemed to have been excited and happy, and according to him, they seemed to have had an emotional and physical connection from early on in the relationship.

However, E described his relationship as *'stormy from day 1...'* He recalls their initial meeting as *'we made the fateful mistake of sleeping together on our first date, which ended up in her storming out after sex and me chasing after her down the passage'*. E seemed to have experienced a physical connection from day one, but it seems he feels they lacked an emotional bond because of the act of sex at the beginning of their relationship. However, upon reflection of that experience, E seems to think that the first encounter was a mistake and that maybe he, or they, could have handled it differently.

N met his wife through her brother-in-law and said, *'It was a connection with immediate romance, and we started dating'*. According to N there also seemed to be a physical and emotional connection from the start and he later mentioned that he was excited and willing to commit himself to her from the first day of their relationship.

The participants' first encounters with their former spouse seem to be filled with connection, mostly on a physical level and less emotional, and it seems uncertain

how realistic the emotional connection was at this stage of the relationship. M's relationship started with friendship first and seemed to have had more emotional elements before they became a couple 'physically'. It also seems to have been an exciting and impulsive time with new beginnings, some being stormy and some, unexpected.

As was noted in Chapter 2, White (1990) found that some marriages start out being more vulnerable to divorce than others. Some of the factors White (1990) mentioned were; second marriages, divorce of parents of one or both partners, premarital cohabitation, premarital childbearing and sexual relationships, younger at marriage, childlessness, race (higher frequency among blacks than whites), and low marital happiness. Comparing White's (1990) findings to the histories of the participants, we see that one respondent has been married twice, one whose parents were divorced, all the participants had entered into sexual relationships with their former spouses prior to marriage, while two had encountered pregnancy scares, with one of the former spouses falling pregnant prior to marriage, and finally, all the former spouses of the participants did seem to have a certain degree of low marital happiness (which will be touched on later in the chapter), which seemed to have led to adultery later in the relationship.

Also in Chapter 2, it was noted that according to Gottman (1994), he found that he could predict with approximately 95% certainty what the eventual fate of a marriage would likely be. Some of the key factors he considered in making his predictions occurred when a couple experienced problems with relatives, distance and isolation, problem-solving ability regarding conflicts, affect, pervasiveness of discord and rebound, the couple's view of their marital history, diffuse physiological arousal (related to autonomic nervous system reactions). In comparison to the participants, all of the relationships seemed to exhibit some degree of distance and isolation from the participants' former spouses (according to the participants), all the couples experienced clear problem-solving difficulties regarding conflicts, the participants seemed to struggle with showing affect, and

one of the participants after reflecting on his marriage history clearly said that they had problems from day one. 'The idea is that dysfunctional marital interaction consists of inflexibility and a constriction of alternatives' (Gottman, 1994). While reading the themes one should bear in mind these comparisons and the relatedness between the participants and the research of Gottman (1994) and White (1990) because they will be highlighted throughout the themes.

Pressure

The beginning of the relationships between the participants was also marked by pressure from the former spouse's parents. It seems that the participants had to prove in some way to the parents of their former spouses that they were good enough for their daughters. Two of the participants seemed to have succeeded to a certain extent in winning over, especially, their mother-in-laws from the start. The pressure placed on the participants was experienced in different ways, but each with the same end product, to live up to certain expectations from their soon-to-be in-laws.

In M's story he was seemingly labelled as the hero or rescuer by his former spouse's family and, in particular, by her mother. According to M, he said '*I got on well with her family, they liked me a lot. C's mother even said she wanted me to marry her daughter*'. M's former spouse was brought up in difficult circumstances, while M came from a financially, more stable home; M also said that '*I believed I could never have a chance with a good looking girl like that*'. M seemed to have been under some pressure to live up to the expectations of his mother-in-law to prove that he could be a good husband to her daughter. M also seemed to place pressure on himself because he did not feel that he deserved this beautiful girl and constantly had to prove to either himself or her, that he was good enough for her.

In E's story he said that *'after a lot of pressure from her mother, who practically arranged the wedding all by herself, I was simply informed of the date and time of the ceremony'*. It seems that the pressure placed on E was not in terms of proving to his in-laws that he was good enough, but rather, in terms of being labelled the perfect son-in-law who would be successful and provide for their daughter, which placed E under heavy pressure to live up to their expectations. Furthermore, E also seemed to have been pressured into marriage. These factors seemed to put his relationship with his former spouse under pressure because he had to work long hours to constantly improve himself as well as prove that he would reach financial security and success, especially to his in parents-in-law.

In N's story, he recalls the first time he met his former spouse's parents as, *'and immediately I was confronted by her father'*. According to N there seemed to have been conflict from the beginning, between him and his father-in-law. His former spouse's father wanted N to produce his ID document to prove that he was not *'a chinaman'* and that he was Afrikaans and South African. It seems that the parents of his former spouse even evaluated N culturally, which seemed to have caused much pressure and humiliation to be placed on N, especially since culture and heritage is not something one can change,. N was challenged, from the first day, by his former spouse's family and constantly had to prove that he was worthy of their daughter in various other ways, which it seems, placed much additional pressure on their relationship.

The stories of each of the participants seem to contain some feelings of surprise, uncertainty, anger, expectation, and love, after the first meeting with each of the families of their former spouses. However, pressure and having to prove either to themselves, or to their in-laws, that they were good enough, seemed to dominate the stories of the participants in this theme.

'From this moment, life has begun...'

The Wedding

This song is probably one of the most popular wedding songs sung by Shania Twain, the theme of which seems to be the celebration of the beginning of a life together and the merging of two people in marriage and love. Each of the participants reported a unique recollection about their wedding. Most people see the wedding as a formal ritual that binds two people legally, traditionally and spiritually by their cultural and religious beliefs. The wedding is the formal beginning of the couple's lives together and is usually celebrated and witnessed by the family and friends closest to the couple. Whether the wedding is a big extravagant event or a small on the spur of the moment occurrence, it is usually remembered by the good and special things surrounding it.

M's wedding also seemed to be marked with some difficulty and stressors yet he could appreciate the special moment, and recalls, *'We got married in court, in a hurry, and had a small celebration afterwards. Our wedding was not wonderful but it was still nice. We exchanged rings as well, and I was happy and proud.'* The rings seemed to be important to M as a symbol of commitment and he seemed to be emotionally touched by the moment.

According to E's story it seemed that his wedding was a profligate ceremony with some high profile guest speakers and that his mother-in-law practically arranged the entire wedding that he was just about forced into: *'nevertheless, it was the most beautiful day of my life. We both stood there, hand in hand, while the tears ran down our cheeks, dripping onto our clutched hands. I was touched like never before in my life. And I made a personal commitment that I will make our marriage work...'* Although E previously said that the beginning of his relationship was stormy and the build-up to the wedding was accompanied by pressures and stressors, it seems that E, however, was willing to make a

commitment to his former spouse, was emotionally touched and happy with their union in marriage.

N did not comment much on his wedding except that it was a beautiful event. However, the period from the time of their engagement till the wedding was marked with family problems, and as he recalls, *'and then the tongues started wagging, she is pregnant etc.'* N seemed to have been so preoccupied with proving his new family-in-law wrong, that their daughter was not pregnant, that he could not experience and fully appreciate the joy of the wedding. He subsequently did seem to prove his family-in-law wrong, since their first child was born only five years after the wedding.

During the build-up to the wedding it seems that the participants experienced some feelings of happiness, pressure, and commitment. As was noted in Chapter 2, the stages of the family life cycle begin with the merging of two people into a new couple unit upon marriage while each partner maintains some individuality and separate identity (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988). This initial stage calls for mutual adjustment even if the couple has cohabited for months, or even years, prior to marriage. Research by Carter and McGoldrick (1988) indicates that upon marriage, a new agreement that recognises evolving responsibilities and more formalised relations with others as a unit rather than two individuals who are romantically involved with each other, needs to occur. In reading the stories of the participants, this agreement did not seem to have occurred effectively. Carter and McGoldrick's (1988) research is also applicable and evident in the following theme, where the 'honeymoon phase' is over and the partners have to start distinguishing their roles and working at a long and lasting marriage.

'O-bla-di-o-bla-da, life goes on...'

Life in the Marriage

This was the title song for the television programme, 'Tomorrow is another day', originally sung by The Beatles. The theme of the song is about the life of a couple and their experiences along their journey towards old age. One of the participants said that a marriage relationship is a fragile thing that constantly needs to be cared for, nurtured and worked on by both people involved. In essence, this is what this song means to me. The participants all provided a brief general account of how they saw their marriage developing after the wedding. In this theme, the general account of the marriage and the participants' striving for success will be explored. In all the stories there seemed to be a few small problems combined with financial stressors that started to stir some unhappiness in the marriage.

According to M, *'Our relationship (myself and my wife) was good'*. However he also goes on to say the he had to carry a great deal of the responsibility *'I was doing everything from, looking after my son, household work, washing and working'*. M mentioned that he was happy, to an extent, to do so much for his son and former spouse. When this seemed to become his role, with his former spouse not contributing at all, problems started to occur in their relationship. Another aggravating factor seemed to be M's frequent alcohol abuse. He recalls *'I used to drink alcohol, a lot with my father in law and this made her angry. I cut down on the drinking and drank a lot less because of this, but eventually I found myself getting drunk just to spite her. I also drank to keep going'*. It seems that, although M was drinking quite heavily, he was willing to work on giving it up, but eventually it became a tit-for-tat situation, with M also drinking to get back at his former spouse for the behaviour of which he did not approve.

E wrote, 'Life settling back to normal, with us putting all our efforts into our respective careers.' It seems that in E's relationship the very same financial security that he wanted, and was pressured to achieve, was the situation that started to create communication problems, as well as to drive him and his former spouse apart. E goes on to say *'She was finishing off her intern year, working in excess of 100 hours per week, sleeping many nights at her place of work. I was building my company, which I started from scratch, all on my own. My working hours were 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week, and thereafter on call, during which I will be called out three to four times every single night. I was also conceptualising the multi-million rand business, which would secure our future forever.'* It seems that with all the time and effort both of them put into their careers to secure their financial future, they were creating an even bigger drift in an already fragile relationship.

N said *'so our marriage cruised on'*, which sounds stable, but also monotonous. N mentioned that there seemed to be a slow but definite drifting apart from one another and a weakening in communication as their relationship progressed. N goes on to say *'we bought a new house and everything was alright, until I invited my mother-in-law to live with us, what a disaster'*. This seems to have been a definite problem and with the widening gap in communication and possible hidden problems, seemed to have been the turning point in the relationship.

In this theme the participants seemed to have had manageable problems which were eventually aggravated by something more specific that could carry the blame, like a mother in law, work stress or too much responsibility, alcohol abuse and financial stressors. The study by Storaasli and Markman (1990) in Chapter 2 indicates that the most prominent problems, according to their research findings, that cause divorce are money, jealousy, relatives and alcohol/drug abuse. These findings seem to reflect the same problems that the participants of the present study seemed to experience in their relationships. According to Storaasli and

Markman (1990) economic problems are the major cause of divorce and this seems to be a separate theme for the respondents of the present study.

Striving for 'money, money, money'

A significant aspect of the theme of life in marriage is that the participants all seemed to strive for success and financial security. Being successful and financially secure is an important and necessary part of most people's lives. However, if conflict regarding this matter arises, and cannot be properly addressed or contained, the relationship could end in divorce, according to Storaasli and Markman (1990). In the stories of the participants, it seems that money issues in general and, specifically, future financial stability, were significant stressors that seemed to cause unhappiness in the marriage, thus precipitating more significant problems in the marriage.

M and his former spouse struggled financially from the outset of their marriage, which seemed to contribute significantly to the pressure and conflict in the relationship. However, M strove to resolve their financial problems in the hope of relieving some stress and conflict. M said, *'I eventually found work and myself, C and our son moved there. I thought things would get better if we had our own place, but nothing changed, we still fought and I still drank'*. It seemed that M had a plan to sort out their relationship and money problems; however, nothing changed and the only way he seemed to know how to cope, was to indulge in alcohol abuse.

E said, *'We were on track to reach the stars...and they were within our grasp'*. It seemed that E felt that if they could just reach a certain financially secure point, everything would be perfect. However, as mentioned earlier, E and his former spouse spent a considerable amount of time at work, and in so doing they seemed to grow apart emotionally.

N said, *'I was successful'* and adds, *'It was a happy time and we became house friends with a social group of note'*. It seems that for N success went even further than money, it secured status with friends and social groups. N, and especially his former spouse, started to spend a considerable amount of time at work in what seemed to be an attempt to uphold what they had achieved. However, it seems that by so doing, they too, drifted apart emotionally. According to N, he blames his former spouse for becoming extremely career driven, and ultimately, for the divorce.

Along with striving for financial stability and success came pressure, stress, long working hours, emotional separation, happiness at times, conflict, friends and status and some unrealistic expectations of what money could do for a relationship. As Storaasli and Markman's (1990) research suggests, if those problems that money causes cannot be resolved, the conflict and problems will escalate and divorce becomes a reality in time.

'I'll be watching you'

Taking Responsibility for the Children

Although the song by Sting and the Police was not specifically sung by a father to his child, the song, nevertheless, expresses the theme of a man's unwavering 'eye' on someone he loves dearly. Likewise, all the participants seemed to have a great love for, and commitment to, their children, which, in spite of all the difficulties the couple experienced regarding their relationship, did not seem to waver at any time.

According to the stories of the participants it seems that they were the primary care-givers and support for their children. However, the involvement of their former spouses was also acknowledged. Two of the participants seemed to take

this role from the moment their children entered their world. As cited in Chapter 2, Storaasli and Markman's (1990) indicated that issues relating to children are the sixth most common problem that could lead a couple to divorce, which seems to be congruent with the participants since the issues regarding their children did seem to have a major impact on their relationships with their former spouses.

M experienced the birth of his son as: *'I'd never felt so good in my life. My life had gained new purpose and meaning, and I felt loved and planned to dedicate all my time to my family'*. It seemed that the birth of his son brought with it many emotions similar to those he experienced at his wedding. M seemed to feel that his life had gained purpose and he was willing to put all his energy into his relationship with his son and former spouse. According to M he was fully responsible for the care of their child. His former spouse was only sixteen at the time they had their son and he felt that he should take most of the duties over to allow her time to become familiar with caring for their son. M said, *'She neglected to care for our son, I think as a mother should, so I took on the majority of the responsibility. C was only sixteen when she gave birth to our son and became a mother, so I thought I needed to take some pressure off her. I believed she would slowly get into it herself'*. It seemed that although M had to work, clean and look after his son, he, nevertheless, said, *'It was hard but I enjoyed it and it felt like I was doing the right thing'*. According to M, his former spouse's behaviour never really improved and this seemed to be another cause of arguments and conflict between M and his former spouse as well as between her and her parents. M also recalls her parents taking sides with him because she was not taking any responsibility for their son.

E and his former spouse had a daughter, and according to E, the child was planned in the hope that this would reunite his relationship with his former spouse and would give them something to work at together. E experienced the birth of his daughter as *'...the most beautiful, gorgeous, little angel any parent can ever hope for. She certainly changed my life forever! For the first time, I*

experienced complete and utter, unconditional love and the true meaning of life dawned upon me. I was in heaven...’ It seems that E and his former spouse started to drift apart and argued about the amount of attention that E gave to his daughter in comparison to his former spouse. E seemed to have genuinely experienced unconditional love with his daughter and he dedicated a lot of his energy to her. E describes his role as father: *‘I changed nappies, fed her, bathed her every night, read stories, sang songs to her, and even cared for her during the night most of her toddler months. For months I slept in our daughter’s room with her in her cot, being there for her when she woke and needed nurturing.’* It seems that E felt that he was the primary caregiver of his daughter and that his former spouse withdrew, mostly from E.

N and his former spouse had a daughter and a son. As mentioned earlier, conflict with her family regarding children had existed since their engagement. When they had a son, however, the family’s involvement escalated, because according to N *‘my son was the only male grandchild in the family. So immediately my ex’s brother wanted to highjack my son because they had no children.’* There did not seem to be any happiness nor support from N’s family-in-law because of their newborn son; only resentment and a sense of entitlement. N says that he and his former spouse shared most of the duties while the children were still young. However, only once his former spouse became successful in her career could she not attend to everything and, then, N’s role seemed to change to that of primary caregiver. However, N’s mother-in-law also lived with them as was previously mentioned, and this seemed to cause much conflict between N and his former spouse. N said *‘as the mother-in-law was now living with us the ex found it convenient not to cook any more, she did not worry about house work, and the mother-in-law looked after the kids even after hours.’* N did not seem happy that his former spouse’s role had changed from caregiver to career woman and he was even less happy that his mother-in-law took over the role as caregiver to their children, causing conflict between him and his mother-in-law which increased the distance between him and his former spouse

The relationships between the participants and their former spouses seemed to engender feelings of jealousy, arguments, competitiveness and resentment from the time of childbirth and continued throughout the child-rearing years. However, it seemed that the further the couples withdrew from each other emotionally, the stronger the development of the fathers' bond with their children. All the participants said that their children brought them feelings of life-changing love and blessing, and this inspired them to do anything for their families.

As cited in Chapter 2, Carter and McGoldrick (1988) demonstrated that early parenting in the second stage of the family life cycle could cause relationship distress and conflict. This stage begins with the arrival of the first child and ends when the youngest child enters school. For most new parents, the shift from the relative flexibility of couplehood to the 24-hour-a-day responsibility of parenthood, brings new challenges and potential areas for conflict, as well as new joys, which seemed to be the case for the participants, since they were all happy and excited about their children's' births and the joy they brought them. However, the arrival of children did seem to bring some of the problems of the couples to the surface, thus escalating the conflict and unhappiness. Parents may also start aligning themselves with their children to push the other parent away or for some secondary gain.

'Thunder Struck!!!'

The Affair

The band AC/DC produced a rock song that shook the world in the 80s. The song with its heavy metal guitar, hard drums and screaming vocals had everyone listening, some in horror and some in enjoyment. As with the song, a theme of shock and horror emerged from the participants when their former spouses had

affairs. Although all the participants seemed to suspect that their former spouses were having affairs, they were still shocked once this was confirmed.

M said, *'she had an affair, or a couple I'm not sure and I forgave her and tried to make things work. I put all my energy into 'us'. Eventually it became clear that she was seeing somebody else and we agreed that she would stay until she could arrange another place.'* Although M says that he forgave his former spouse and made a concerted effort to reconcile, this was still insufficient to avoid separation. It seems that even when M's former spouse had an affair, he still felt that they could reconcile and that he needed to put more energy and effort into the relationship to make it work, which did not seem realistic. However, M later did appear to realise that the relationship was over, even though it was very difficult to accept.

E's former spouse had an affair at the beginning of their marriage which impacted heavily on E and their relationship; however, they reconciled and seemed to have managed to move on from the incident. His former spouse later joined him in his business but it was not long before he noticed that *'through the post arrived little gifts, many letters, and greeting cards with topless girls on the cover reading 'wish you were here', and my hell began all over again.'* E gave his former spouse an ultimatum to, once again, end the affair, which she did and they reconciled for a second time. The relationship was not in a good state although E said *'things calmed down in that regard for a while'* but he then adds that *'although the criticising and stonewalling (up to four weeks at a time!) continued. By now even the sex was very infrequent.'* So it seems that although they had decided to remain together, the relationship drifted apart and towards separation. Furthermore, E and his former spouse decided to have a child in the hope that they would reconnect and find new meaning and purpose in the relationship, which did not succeed and just seemed to wedge them further apart, as mentioned earlier. The damage appeared to have been too great to allow recovery after the second affair and eventually this led to separation.

N said that *'My ex started to make excuses to stay late at work and drink. This is when I stopped showing affection. Her behaviour became very promiscuous and I suspected an affair (I was not wrong).'* As seen in N's experience, he seemed to have disengaged himself from the relationship as soon as he suspected an affair.

Although the participants appear to have experienced feelings of shock, loss and confusion, there also seemed to be some desperation to try and make the relationship functional again. The participants did not express much emotion at this critical time of their relationships when writing their stories. The phases of separation, according to Ahrons and Rodgers' (1987), that were discussed in Chapter 2 can be compared to the experiences of the participants. According to Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) the *Pre-Separation phase* takes place when the act of physical separation is preceded by a gradual emotional separation. This movement towards separation is rarely a mutual effort and more likely it begins when one of the spouses decides that the marital distress or dissatisfaction is not likely to disappear or change. As seen in this section, one of the partners (in the present study, the, former spouses' of the respondents) clearly started to disengage from the relationship. As a result, they entered into an affair, and although probably for different reasons, of which unhappiness and dissatisfactions were surely contributory factors among all of the former partners.

'Goodbye My lover, Goodbye my friend... '

Confusion of Separation

James Blunt sings this song that speaks of saying goodbye to someone close to you and whom you loved dearly. In the song, it does not matter how much the person has hurt you, the separation is nevertheless, very difficult. For the participants there seemed to be a theme of confusion and mixed feelings associated with separation and it does not seem to matter whether the couple

made a joint decision to separate or one of the partners asked the other to leave or move out. As seen from the experiences of the participants, separation is not easy, and there seem to be feelings ranging from anger, guilt, love and a push and pull between terminating the relationship and 'giving it a last try'.

M said *'it ate me up that I had to ask her to leave. We spoke about divorce and that was the plan, she moved out and decided that my son should stay with me. It hurt like hell. I still loved her, but now she was gone and with leaving, my whole world started to fall apart.'* In M's experience he seemed confused between love, on the one hand, and the hurt on the other, his world also started to spin out of control.

E said that he had asked his former spouse for a trial separation, which seemed to imply that if they could work on their relationship they could unite again. But it seemed, much to E's surprise, that the situation deteriorated, and with this came more consequences than he realised. E said *'In 2003 I found our 20 month little girl hiding under the kitchen table. I could not stand seeing her like that, and asked my wife for a trial separation for two to three months. The rest happened very quickly. Someone informed me that a big truck was loading my furniture, and I immediately went home to see my daughter. My wife was packing just about everything we owned, but I let her be (I ended up sleeping on the floor). My daughter and I played hide-and-seek in the removal van.'*

N's former spouse moved out of their house while he was away with their children for a weekend. Neither N nor the children were aware of this, but according to N, her family knew that she had planned to move out and assisted her, which was very upsetting for N. He was angry and appeared to feel betrayed not just by his former spouse but by her family and especially his mother-in-law. N said, *'The children and I were on a leadership camp for the primary school. While we were away we phoned daily as usual and were none the wiser what was happening back home. In the meantime her whole family including the*

mother in law who I accommodated helped my ex move out of my house!! What audacity! We arrived back from camp on a Sunday (I hate Sundays, comes from hostel years), and the ex walked up to me with no greetings and handed me the keys too my house and said 'here you sleep lekker'. The bitch took my crying kids to and drove off. I was fucked...I never suspected or expected this, but my hatred was immediate.'

The participants handled their moment of separation differently: some with immediate anger, and others with saddening calmness. However, it seems that they all experienced a sense of loss, love, helplessness, unexpectedness and hurt. According to Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) the *Early Separation phase* is characterised by highly ambivalent feelings. People become confused and upset when their feelings fluctuate between love and hate, anger and sadness, euphoria and depression. These deep feelings are also evident in the experiences of the participants which also seemed to indicate clear signs of the *Late Separation phase*, marked by the crossing over from separation to divorce. During this phase, the power struggles during the marriage are likely to become even more exaggerated especially concerning matters regarding children and finances. The divorcing couple's decisions are often so loaded with conflict that the power struggle will continue with little or no resolution.

'Since You've Been Gone...'

The Divorce

Kelly Clarkson sang this song in which the main theme is the regaining of 'lost space'. With the passage of time, she became stronger, although it was difficult in the beginning. The participants also seemed to carry much hurt during their divorce and even more so, it seems, when the difficulties are not singular but comprise many issues. There appeared to be four important parts as

experienced by the participants during their divorce, which will be discussed separately: the legal system, the children, family and friends, and feelings associated with the divorce experience.

Feelings and Experiences Associated with Divorce

M said, *'I felt like I had failed, like it was my fault, and that everything I believed in was now questionable. I felt worthless and wanted to die. I had thought about killing myself and had once put a gun to my head. The only thing that stopped me was, I loved my son too much and he needed me.'* According to M, his world fell apart and it seems that the divorce challenged everything that he believed in. He was hurting and tried to cope the only way he knew how: *'She fucked with my head. She knew she could do with me as she pleased. As much as I was hurting I still stuck around, and I got drunk all the time and even started selling my things for alcohol. It killed the pain.'* Alcohol became a crutch to M during this time of hurt and pain, and he gave up everything just to kill the pain and not to feel emotion any longer. It appeared that alcohol replaced his lost friendship.

E only mentions how he felt emotionally in two instances during his entire story. The first, when he found out about the initial affair that his former spouse had, and said that it felt like an *'earth shattering shock'*, and the second, just before his separation with his former spouse when he says he was *'completely emotionally burnt out'*. E intellectualises and internalises his feelings and does not easily display them. During the divorce he focused all his attention on his daughter and her well-being. A great deal of E's experience of the divorce was focused on his daughter and efforts not to lose her, so much so that he suppressed his emotions in order to 'survive' the pain that he felt.

According to N, his world fell apart after the separation, his dreams were crushed and during the time of the divorce, each day brought new challenges. At first he

was angry and he said, *'So I went home and broke any memory photo etc. that I could.'* N seemed to be so caught up in his anger and loss that he said, *'I lost my home, moved to various rooms, and shacks. I lost my job, marriage and became insolvent. The shock, hatred and embarrassment you could not imagine.'* Without his family, N lost his focus in life. He fell into a depression and even planned to commit suicide. All that stopped him was the thought of his children. For years to follow, N did not have a stable job, accommodation or any future goal. He relied on two close friends, some family members, and time, to heal and prevent him from drinking and falling into a deeper depression.

In Chapter 2, Kaslow and Schwartz's (1987) Dialectic Model was reviewed. The model starts with the *Pre-divorce Phase* that focuses on the emotional stage of divorce. The participants experienced this stage similarly to the way Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) mention it in the literature. The participants also experienced feelings of confronting their partner, quarrelling, denial, isolation and loneliness.

The Impact of the Legal System on the Participants

The legal system plays an unavoidable role in divorce and has an even greater impact when children and custody claims are involved. All the participants experienced different types of encounters with the legal system and all of them are bound by the legalities as regards their children, to the present day.

M gained uncontested custody of their son and the divorce was not that significant at that particular time because it was mutually agreed upon by M and his former spouse. According to M, after the divorce, his former spouse became a prostitute to earn money, even though M had said to her that he would support her financially until she could find a 'proper' job. M and his former spouse still maintained contact when she came to visit their son, and even during these times he tried to reconcile them. According to M his former spouse just used this

to further drag him into emotional turmoil. M said *'I was holding on to whatever scraps were left over. Without her, I was nothing. She became a prostitute to earn money, even after I had told her I would give her money to get by until she could get a proper job. It didn't help. She did it anyway. I still continued to see her, and she played this emotional game with me.'* M broke down emotionally and in this state, combined with constant alcohol abuse, he committed a crime. M was sentenced, but placed in a psychiatric hospital for special care. The content of M's legal proceedings is confidential, but he did say that it was not pleasant at all. Even worse, the legal proceedings caused M to lose custody of his son whom he very rarely sees anymore.

E's entire divorce was, and still is, a long and drawn out process, and even now the custody case is continuing, almost three years since E and his former spouse separated. Apart from the custody matter, money also played a telling part in his divorce, because both E and his wife were professionals and high earning individuals. Shortly after the separation, E said, *'The next thing a pack of lawyers hounded me. There was the smell of money. Threats for financial ruin followed. My wife demanded astronomical amounts of maintenance for herself, even though she has a professional career herself, and has been working during our entire marriage.'* E expresses a very strong opinion of the legal system after his experiences. E said, *'I am also faced with our inefficient legal system that allows vindictive mothers to get away with this kind of 'sick' behaviour. It has been nearly three years, and our divorce pleading have not even been closed. The next trial date is only available 2007! It took me five months to obtain a court order for interim contact with my daughter. We have been waiting in vain for nine months for the family Advocates to investigate, as per the court order. But even she ignores my desperate pleas.'* E too still experiences resentment and blame towards the legal system for the way that the custody and divorce proceedings were handled.

N's divorce proceedings were handled fairly swiftly, because he could not contest the custody, as he had lost his job and his house. He drank heavily and had severe suicidal ideations. His former spouse gained custody of their children after the divorce, but it did not stop there because N said *'I grovelled, no job, and too fucked up to be caring for my kids, although I always put them first, she took me to court again for maintenance. In court I was on first name basis with her lawyer, so much so that he even told her to stop her kak!!'* Money and maintenance also appeared to be a point of conflict during their divorce, which seemed to anger N. After his divorce N also held very strong opinions about the legal system and lawyers, he said *'lawyers are for females; maybe they all want to have sexual flings with women, I wish I knew.'* N still carries hurt, resentment and blame towards his former spouse and the legal system regarding the outcome of the custody wrangle.

According to Kaslow and Schwartz (1987), the second stage of the Dialectic Model is the *Divorce Phase* that starts with the Legal Divorce. As seen above, the participants did experience this phase and some of them were quite critical about the legal system's involvement and how this system handled matters concerning divorce. Threatening behaviour and constant consulting with the legal system seems to fill this phase for the participants as is mentioned by Kaslow and Schwartz (1987).

The Use of Children as Pawns in Custody and Divorce Battles

In all the participants' experiences, the children became 'pawns' in the quest for revenge between the divorcing parents, whether knowingly or not. Children became the one sure component that will inflict pain on, and / or hurt, the other parent and they inevitably became involved in a tug-of-war situation between the parents, which is usually followed by conflict regarding who the better parent is and, also, to highlight each other's flaws.

M said *'we are now divorced and very rarely see my son. I know she keeps him away from me to hurt me. I love him very much, and she knows this.'* M says that he misses his son and feels that his former spouse is keeping his son away from him in order to hurt him. Because M was placed in a psychiatric institution after he received his sentence, he is not eligible to be granted conditional and supervised leave, implying that the only way he could see his son is if his former spouse took the boy to visit M at the institution itself, which she does not want to do. The only way that M communicates with his son is by letter and phone calls. M says, *'I miss my son terribly and there were no visiting rights set up in the divorce agreement. My X has full custody and she just doesn't want me to see him. I think she's afraid I'll tell him the truth.'*

E is very angry, outraged and hurt by the way his former spouse and the legal system hampered his contact with his daughter. He feels that his former spouse made it difficult for him to see his daughter because she could not tolerate seeing them happy together. E said *'But my wife could again not bear seeing that my daughter and I were still extremely close and happy, even under the non-ideal circumstances.'* E felt that after his former spouse started to realise that he and his daughter were still close, she started to further restrict his contact with his child: *'by 2004, she only allowed me contact for three hours per week!!! And for that I had to fly in from one province to another.'* This aggravated the conflict between E and his former spouse and because of the legal system, E felt even more frustrated and restricted. He felt cheated because his former spouse had long office hours and instead of him being able to see his daughter while she was at work, his daughter had to stay with his former spouse's family after pre-school every day. E said: *'The mother now works as head of department at her place of work, the child (not even three years old) has to go to pre-school in a lift club very early in the mornings. And only gets fetched at late in the afternoons...but she is not allowed to spend afternoons instead with her father (who does not keep office hours) and her granny. She sleeps over at the mother's family, but is supposedly too young to sleep over at the father's house. Every other boyfriend, Tom, Dick,*

and Harry is allowed to care for the child, but not the father. Why, because it is 'disruptive' to the child. According to the mother, it seems any contact with the father is 'disruptive'. What also frustrated E was, as he puts it, *'the legal system's inefficiency'* and the fact that his former spouse was using his child to punish him and getting away with it. E said, *'and in the meantime, the mother is happily sacrificing our daughter in her quest for vengeance and dishing out punishment left, right and centre. Assisted by money hungry lawyers, who take even the most ridiculous dispute to court, just as long as they can continue 'writing fees'.'*

N had experienced much conflict with his former spouse, particularly with regards to visiting rights concerning their children. N said, *'She wanted it all she kept the children away from me even on weekend visits and she got a court order against me. She would switch off her phone so I could not even talk to my children.'* N struggled to remain in contact with his children and his former spouse did not make it much easier as seen from his point of view. N's children were all that he lived for at that stage and the struggle to see his children made him feel negative and hopeless.

Co-parental Divorce and/or Issues of Child Custody and Contact constitute another aspect of the second stage of Kaslow and Schwartz's (1987) Dialectic Model. According to Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) feelings such as concern for children, ambivalence, uncertainty, fear and loss are often experienced during this stage. These feelings were reflected in all the stories of the participants and as such, the literature findings are congruent with each other.

Involvement of Family and Friends during Divorce.

All the participants experienced some involvement of family and friends during their divorce, which was regarded as negative, especially concerning the in-laws and the former spouses' friends; and only years later, did one of the respondents

receive some positive support from his former spouse's family. As regards the involvement of participants' own families, they all mentioned that some members of the family supported them and perhaps a close friend or two. However, it was difficult for the participants to speak with those who were close to them and mostly, they followed the societal view of men, which maintains that they must be strong and not ask for help.

M does not mention any conflict with family or friends of his former spouse. He appeared to have isolated himself from his own family and friends during his marriage, which did not seem to have left any support for him when he needed it. M still maintains some contact with his former spouse's family and he says that her family says that his former spouse has not changed. M said, *'I still communicate with her sister and mother. They tell me she's still full of shit and hasn't changed. I always hoped she would change. I can only imagine she must be a very lonely person.'* According to M, he has realised that he had isolated himself during his marriage and divorce and mentioned that if he ever entered a new relationship he would not invest all his energy into the relationship, he would reserve some for himself and his own needs. He was also lonely during the time of the divorce and he did not receive much support.

E said, *'her father threatened me, her brother threatened me, and her friends and family ignored me. Desperate pleas from me to mediate between us, ended in her father throwing the phone down on me.'* Not only did E experience conflict between himself and his former spouse, but also with most of her family and friends. He does not mention any support for himself during this time, which is not to say that there was none, but this implies something about not speaking of it and being vulnerable. E was also confronted by a friend of his former spouse and said, *'A friend of hers had the callousness to tell me that I must not think that I am going to live the life of a bachelor, and expect my wife to let my daughter live on my doorstep.'* It was a lonely time filled with conflict and defensiveness in order to protect himself from the attacks from a unified front.

N was confronted and verbally attacked by his former spouse's family and friends, and even, on occasions, physically assaulted by a mutual friend. N said *'My ex found out I was starting with a new business and told the court that I was a smuggler. She tried things like this for years to fuck me up. Even our house friends...assaulted me on my ex's instructions. She turned everyone against me and even phoned my ex-bosses.'* N was lonely in this time and did not mention much support for himself during this time. N also felt that his friends had disappeared when he needed them and that they 'turned' on him. He said, *'Also do not try and commandeer the friends when you were married they disappear, like mist and are backstabbers.'*

As can be noted in the participant's narratives, their relationships with family, extended family, in-laws and friends, were renegotiated and redefined during and after separation and divorce. This aspect was also highlighted in Chapter 2, especially by Spanier and Thompson (1984), who also mention the difficulty that friends experience in deciding which one of the divorcing couple to support and to include in or exclude from certain events, which was, indeed, the experience of some of the participants where some friends chose to 'side' with their former spouses during the divorce while some friends disappeared and were not willing to be involved.

The entire experience of divorce was filled with conflict between the divorcing partners, the participants and their friends and family of their former spouses, the law, and within themselves. The participants faced feelings of anger, hate, humiliation, love, loneliness and helplessness. Also, they did not mention much about support from family and friends for themselves during the period of divorce.

‘...and it’s Hope that makes you carry on...’

Where they are Now and, Where they are Headed.

This song was sung by Shaggy, and is about his struggles in relationships and life, but he always seemed to find hope to carry on.

All the participants apparently gained meaning and learned something from their journey to and through divorce, although not all the experiences were positive. They also appeared to have gained some insight into themselves as individuals and the entire journey seemed to have carried them into new unexplored terrain in order to discover their purpose in life.

M said, *‘I could say that this whole experience of my marriage and divorce left me very mixed up. At first I never wanted to be in a relationship again, but I have been and one thing I have learnt is that I need to invest less energy into my relationships and save some for myself and my own needs.’* M had moved from dependence to independence and realised that he had isolated himself and was so involved in the needs of others, that he did not reflected on his needs, which, as a result, left him alone and empty. He also stopped abusing alcohol after some years and said that after he had stopped he could begin to feel emotions and learn how to deal with them for the first time in his life. As M reflected on his journey to and through divorce, he said, *‘It’s a horrible, dark place and it scares me. I do not ever want to be in that situation ever again. I’d rather die first.’* In a way, this sums up M’s story: that he ‘died’ and lost himself during this journey and only ten years later, was reborn again. Now, M says, *‘I would like to meet somebody one day who would love me as much as I love her. I would like there to be honesty and respect as well as support. I believe in true love and I’ve realised that true love is not just an attraction and a need to be close to one another. It’s a lot more complex and has a lot more parts to it than I think, people believe. It’s also a constant journey that needs to be worked on and nurtured.’*

E said, *'But good things come from bad. I have a completely new outlook on life, I no longer seek wealth (which was mainly to finance my spendthrift wife in any event), and I lead a simple inexpensive life. I have given up professional career and I am involved with supporting parents that go thru divorce and custody proceedings. Together with many other parents, I now dedicate all my time fighting for the interest of my daughter...and every other child caught up in the divorce of the parents.'* However, E has turned the experience and journey to and through divorce into a positive experience. He is currently assisting others who are going through similar struggles that he had been through, and maybe, in the process, it will serve as a healing for himself. He was left feeling lonely, helpless and confronted at every corner of his journey through his divorce. By supporting others through their journey, he can gain some new meaning in his life. However, much hurt and anger towards the entire system that governs divorce and custody and his former spouse, still seems to exist.

E ends by saying *'We will expose these parents and other 'experts', who are nothing but the devil parading as good 'custodians' of our children. They will not hide and carry out their injustice in secrecy. We will elevate them to 'celebrity' status, so that every single person that comes into contact with them will see them for what they really are...vindictive monsters that will even harm a child for their own selfish interests and their own failures.'*

N still lives with the hurt every day, harbouring much resentment towards his former spouse, the legal system, friends, family and others in the helping profession, as previously noted above. He adds, *'I would never recommend that any anybody with marital problems see a Pastor, Dominee, Rabbi, or anybody from church, as they are biased, untrained and will always take the parts of the female.'* N, however, did find a good job for which he has a passion. It took him a long time to reach the point where he could feel that he had some purpose in life again. He sees his children more regularly now and enjoys a good relationship with them. Although he and his former spouse hardly ever communicate, he said,

'I spoke to her across the table in 2005, concerning my daughter's education.' N has never really been in a serious relationship again but also, hopes that someday he could find someone special. He ends by reporting some consolation from his former spouse's family which appears to cause him to feel that he has now proved something that was not recognised by his biggest critics. He said, *'Now it comes out from her family that kept quiet for so long, it was not only my fault but I am not alone to blame as made out to be...'* This summarises N's journey, one of constantly having to prove himself to others, and now knowing that they will never recognise his efforts and that this left him alone and completely tired and without goals in his life.

The last stage in Kaslow and Schwartz's (1987) Dialectic Model is *Post-divorce* and the stage of the Psychic Divorce. This stage appears to fit with the current theme of finding meaning from the experience of loss, and the next theme of self-reflection and taking responsibility. Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) say that in this stage, many individuals going through divorce describe the process as travelling through a dark and narrow tunnel on a roller coaster. For the participants in the present study, it seems as if they had lost a dream or goal in life and it took some time for them to redirect their lives. Feelings experienced during this stage, according to Kaslow and Schwartz (1987), and shown by the participants, were acceptance of the divorce, self-worth, and independence.

Some behaviours associated with this stage were re-synthesis of identity, seeking new love and making a commitment to some permanency, becoming comfortable with a new lifestyle and friends, helping children to accept the finality of their parents' divorce, and their continuing relationship with both parents. Furthermore, not all the participants seemed to proceed to this stage within the same time-frame while some still appear to be moving towards this stage, which highlights the uniqueness of each of the participant's stories once again.

'The Man in the Mirror'

The Experience of Singing our own Song

Michael Jackson's song 'Man in the Mirror' carries a message that all your experiences and journeys in life will be reflected in yourself, and if you are unhappy with anything in your life you need to start by changing within yourself. I also asked the participants how they felt while writing their stories. Of great interest to the researcher was the fact that two of the participants spontaneously included in their stories these feelings while writing their narratives, which indicated that while they were writing, they were consciously thinking about the events and what they viewed as important and significant to them.

M said, *'When I first set out to write this story, I thought it was going to be easy. It took me much longer than I thought. I had to stop every now and again as the old emotions welled up inside me. I could say that this whole experience of my marriage and divorce left me very mixed up.'* M found it difficult to write his story and seemed to put a lot of thought into what he wrote. The emotions of the divorce and relationship still seemed to linger and left him confused. M also mentioned that he has had sufficient therapy since the divorce, and this seems to be evident in the emotional insight he has shown.

E's story does not reflect how he experienced the writing of his story because he also wrote the story for others to relate to his involvement with the divorced parents support group. However, he did say that it was difficult and that the emotions associated with his divorce and relationship were a nightmare and emotionally drained him.

N said that he found it difficult to write the story and think of the events in detail. His explanation for this was *'I may have left out some details as I was taught in the far-east to clear your mind of the bad and remember the good, but my ex in*

my life NEVER. As I remembered I jotted down the flashes of re-call.' Although N has moved on with his life he still cannot forget the hurt and his former spouse in his life.

For some of the participants, finding meaning and growing from this journey to and through divorce will take longer than others, and seeking individual assistance such as therapy, also seems to be useful for some. In this regard only time will tell what an individual will make of his experiences.

'Don't Worry Be happy Now...'

Problems and Consequences of the Divorce

This song is very well known throughout the world and basically these words sum up the theme of the song. It is significant to mention that all of the participants have suffered from 'emotional breakdown' as one participant explained it.

In Chapter 2, Bloom, Asher and White (1979) have noted that divorced and separated men exhibit higher admission rates to psychiatric hospitals than divorced and separated women. As noted earlier in the chapter, one of the participants was admitted to a psychiatric hospital with severe depression and suicidal ideation. Another participant, although not admitted to hospital, also suffered from severe depression and suicidal ideation. Although divorced and separated women attempt suicide more often than their male counterparts, a higher number of deaths by suicide is evidenced in the corresponding male population group and indeed, not only suicide, but also, nearly all causes, including homicide, motor vehicle accidents, lethal combinations of drugs and alcohol, lung cancer, diabetes, and arteriosclerosis (Bloom et al., 1979; Verbrugge, 1979). Two of the participants were heavy drinkers during and after their divorce, which contributed to their loss of their work, their houses etc.

Tepp's (1983) study of non-custodial fathers three years after divorce, is noteworthy and can be compared to the experiences of the participants. These men reported feelings of loss, dysphoria, sadness, and struggle regarding not having custody of their children and so did the participants in the present project. They describe their feelings of being shut out of parenting functions, report decreased feelings of being special, a sense of displacement, and a sense of confusion and difficulty about their status as parents, much like the participants of this study. Anger is not mentioned as a specific emotion in these men who were examined three years after divorce, but Wallerstein's (1986) research is illuminating in this regard: almost 30% of the men in her study continued to feel angry and bitter 10 years after the separation, and this also seems to be true for some of the participants of the present study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, themes were identified from the written accounts of M, E and N. As the themes emerged in my perspective, I symbolically attached to a song, the participants' experiences of their journey to and through divorce. I also compared these experiences to the literature from Chapter 2, where relevant. I acknowledge that another person may choose to highlight different themes or even choose a different language to describe the themes highlighted here. In some way, these themes seem to be congruent with previous studies about divorce and men's experience thereof. Even the themes identified in this study, in some respects, correspond to the literature while, it is also important that these themes be considered in the unique contexts of each participant's story.

Considering that I approached this study from an eco-systemic epistemology as was discussed in Chapter 2, it was interesting to look at the participants' stories and see how linear they were in their thinking during the divorce. They struggled to see their own contribution to the divorce and blamed their former spouses and

in-laws, without taking ownership of any of the responsibility. In the participant's context of divorce which involved conflict, being attacked and judged, it is understandable, to some extent that they could not stand back and reflect on their own contribution to the divorce. It would be interesting to see, in time, when some of the stress lessens, whether the participants would be able to look at their experience and journey of divorce in a more systemic and holistic way.

Combined with all the themes that were identified in this chapter, two of the participants' experiences stood out for me and were ever-present in all the themes, which also may have contributed to their linear way of thinking and approaching the divorce. The first is that throughout the journeys of the participants they had to *prove* and *defend* themselves. They seemed to be constantly on the back foot and in the disadvantaged position, in relation to their former spouses and family in-law. According to their stories, they had to prove to their in-laws that they were good enough for their daughters, and later defend themselves from the in-laws because they had hurt their daughters. The participants had to prove to their former spouses that they were good financial supporters and later defend themselves as being good fathers and husbands. Furthermore, that they had to prove to their friends and family, that they could cope with the pain of divorce and the loss of their children and wives.

The second, and most important, experience that stood out for me was the extreme loneliness. None of the participants mentioned any significant or really close support during the time of divorce. They seemed to have gone through the journey of divorce on their own, displaying very little emotion and coping by intellectualising and rationalising whatever happened to them. One could only imagine and speculate on what would have happened to the participants if they had not contained their emotions and nor employed intellectualising methods to cope, and also on the possible long-term effects of not dealing with their emotions,

Therefore, those who work with divorced men in the future, also need to consider the emergence of some of the themes noted here within the contexts of those individual persons with whom they interact, and be open to other themes that may emerge in the life stories of their individual clients.

In the next chapter, there will be a reflection on the findings and the strengths and limitations of this study. Areas for further and future research will also be identified.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each song has an ending or a conclusion. This is the part in which the singer concludes the song and gives a summary of the key information the singer wants the listener to remember.

Introduction

In this chapter, the present study will be evaluated and its strengths and limitations highlighted. The headings of the themes will be discussed and the chapter will conclude with suggestions of possible future exploration and/or further research.

Reflecting on the Study

The aim of this study is to give a 'voice' to three men who have journeyed through a divorce. The hope is that by the sharing of their journey, rich information would emerge regarding their unique experiences and meanings. The present undertaking was not geared to generalising its findings to a larger population. It is hoped that the information gained from these personal stories would give others the opportunity to hear the perspectives and unheard songs of three men who have walked the path towards and through divorce. Men's voices are often difficult to hear through the more dominant voices of women and children in the context of divorce, which seems to fill an unexplored area in the research concerning men and divorce, since most studies have focused on

women and children in particular in order to generalise their findings to a larger population. I believe that the aim of this study, therefore, has been accomplished, as each of the participants' stories is unique and rich with experience and personal meaning.

Similar themes in each story were identified, symbolically attached to relevant songs, discussed, and where relevant, compared to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This undertaking generated richness and a significant degree of depth, which allowed for a sense of uniqueness which seemed to be lacking in the literature. In this way, it is hoped that this study will stimulate 'new', perhaps richer thinking about men and divorce.

The following songs were attached to the themes that emerged from the written testimonials of the participants and were identified as similar experiences that the participants shared on their journey to and through divorce:

- *'And then I kissed her...'*
- *'From this moment, life has begun...'*
- *'O-bla-di-o-bla-da, life goes one...'*
- *'I'll be watching you'*
- *'Thunder Struck!!!'*
- *'Goodbye My lover, Goodbye my friend...'*
- *'Since You've Been Gone...'*
- *'...and it's Hope that makes you carry on...'*
- *'The Man in the Mirror'*
- *'Don't Worry Be happy Now...'*

The way in which each of these themes were manifested in various contexts and relationships in each participant's story, was highlighted. They were not mutually exclusive and were therefore linked with each other.

Strengths of the Present Study

This study afforded the opportunity for three divorced men to voice their experiences. The voices and personal accounts of men's experiences and journeys towards and through divorce seem to be an unexplored area in the literature. Hepworth, Ryder, and Dreyer (1984) noted that even when studies have been done with regard to men they usually focus on negative aspects such as their lack of involvement in fatherhood, lack of emotion, and stinginess with money and financial support. Many of these studies also appeared to generalise their findings, since individual differences seemed to be present (Gottman, 1994).

Symbolism was employed by means of songs, to relate more effectively to the experiences of the participants. It is believed that by so doing, richness and uniqueness could be achieved in this study, which might create an opportunity to relate to the participants' experiences of divorce on a different level.

The social constructionist nature of this study allowed for a co-constructed reality to emerge between the researcher and the participants before and after the discussion of their written stories. In this way, I was able to bring to the conversation, my understanding, questions, and experiences.

By following a qualitative research approach, it was possible to inform the participants about my aims and the processes that I followed. which is different to the tendency of more positivistic and empirical research that allows little or no disclosure to its participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The degree of deception often involved in such studies was therefore not present in this study.

The participants in this study were fully informed of the nature of the process in which they engaged. They were thus allowed to tell the story in their own way, since they were viewed as the experts in terms of their own journey and experiences.

As remarked in Chapter 3, quantitative researchers equate validity with the degree to which they are sure that they have gained an accurate account of reality. Quantitative researchers therefore tend to regard 'validity threats as nuisance or extraneous variables that can be controlled and eliminated' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 198). Various qualitative researchers, however, argue that it is not possible, neither is it necessary, to accurately pinpoint and eliminate such outside threats to validity prior to the research. It is often these 'other variables' that make up the contextual circumstances that are of interest to qualitative and social constructionist researchers. According to qualitative researchers it is, therefore, more important that a study be credible, meaning that it 'produces findings that are convincing and believable' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 204). Credibility and validity was achieved in the present study by continuously describing and explaining how interpretations and conclusions were derived.

Reliability in qualitative research, in essence, refers to the degree to which the researcher's observations of the generated information can be trusted (Rapmund, 2000). Researchers working from a quantitative perspective, focus strongly on the quality and nature of the measuring instrument and place much emphasis on how reliable this instrument is in producing the same result when a study is repeated, which appears to be an important prerequisite for research conducted from a positivistic and therefore quantitative approach, since these researchers believe that a 'stable and unchanged reality exists' and 'can be measured' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 227). Researchers working from an interpretive and social constructionist framework 'do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore do not expect to find

the same result repeatedly' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 245). For qualitative researchers it is therefore more important that findings be dependable. Therefore, hearing the personal accounts of three men's journeys to and through divorce would be regarded as reliable and dependable sources for the purpose of the present research undertaking.

Dependability was also ensured since the researcher aimed to give 'rich and detailed descriptions that showed how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interactions' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 242). In this study, the aim was to remain congruent with each participant's context and continually to refer to the text of each written story whilst making interpretations. I also remained aware of my own reality; therefore, my own values and viewpoint might have influenced how I constructed or interpreted the story of each participant, which was acknowledged to the reader during the interpretation phase.

Limitations of this Study

I acknowledge, as previously mentioned above, that my interpretations and practical presentations of the stories were likely to be coloured by my own perceptions and values. In this regard, my participation and involvement before the stories were written, were likely to have an influence on the manner in which the stories were constructed. Therefore, the written stories were also co-constructed by my involvement with the participants, and coloured by both my realities and those of the participants. In this regard, I attempted to remain aware of the manner in which I spoke and to be conscious that what I said may have influenced the participants and vice versa. Furthermore, I also acknowledge that the manner in which I elicited themes from each participant's story was coloured by the lens through which I was looking at that particular point in time. I therefore note that another researcher may highlight different themes and/or include other

themes. Therefore, the final outcome of this study cannot be considered to be a reflection of an absolute truth regarding the journey and experiences of men in general, to and through divorce, nor, about the lives of the participants. It seems more accurate to say that the outcome of this study points to a co-constructed reality between my personal source of information (obtained from lived, as well as academic and clinical experience), the theoretical and academic sources that were consulted, as well as the expert sources, namely the three participants, who wrote their stories.

A more empirical or qualitative voice in the field of psychological research could therefore criticise this study, as its outcomes cannot be generalised to a larger population. However, the rich, in-depth nature of this kind of study does not lend itself to being used for a larger sample (Rapmund, 1996). Since three people who experienced divorce were given an opportunity to write their stories, rich information about the experiences of these three persons was elicited. This undertaking focused on the similarities of the stories, and also, within the similarities, the unique nature in which they all described their experiences and the meaning that their experiences carried for each of them, which seemed important to the participants. Perhaps, in some way, the richness of these personal accounts could lead future researchers of various epistemological backgrounds, to new paths of enquiry.

Since this study did not seek to hear the stories of the participants' former spouses or children, the study may be criticised for being one-sided. However, the research design does acknowledge the entire family system, and it is likely that the former spouses and children of the participants may have completely different views of the divorce experience, which is in accordance with Maturana and Varela's idea that five members of a family do not have five different views of the same family, but that five different families are actually created, based on the five members' completely different sets of meaning (Maturana and Valera, 1980). Similarly, this study focused on one family member's construction of divorce, as

the man and/or the father of the family. In essence, this study was designed to look at three men's journeys to and through divorce and their associated experiences.

Due to the nature and aims of this study, participants were asked to share personal and sensitive information, which in itself, raises ethical questions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). However, I attempted to remain sensitive to this by using my clinical judgment throughout my interactions with the participants. In keeping with my research responsibilities, as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) propose, I also attempted to prepare the participants, as far as possible, regarding the expectations during the research process, and to enter into a verbal agreement with every participant so that they could indicate to me their level of comfort during the research process. To respect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used and names and or/places were altered (Denzine & Lincoln, 2000).

A final limitation of the present study is that written testimonial validity was not obtained from the participants. 'Testimonial validity' points to the validity that is obtained from the participants (Stiles, in Rapmund, 2000). In other words, the degree to which the participants considered the manner in which the study was explained to them, and the way in which it was conducted, was done in a valid manner. After receipt of the participants' written stories, they were asked to voice any personal gains or personal difficulties that they had experienced during the process of writing their stories. As was seen in Chapter 4, their reflections were also touched on as part of the study. Using my clinical judgment when reflecting on the process followed during the study, I attempted to remain within ethically correct boundaries. I remained congruent with the authentic purpose of this study, namely, to allow the participants to tell their stories as they experienced them, whilst attempting to remain sensitive to the surrounding personal and ethical issues.

Areas for Focus in Future Research and Exploration

The difficulty of the participants in expressing themselves emotionally and being vulnerable, along with the struggle to ask for support and help, seemed to stand out in this study. Also, the preconceived idea that the legal system favours women above men as custodians, and views men as the reason why marriages end in divorce, seemed to have an impact on the participants. Perhaps in the context of clinical practice, clinicians (who do not already do this) might focus on exploring with their clients (who are male and struggle with these issues), why it is difficult in their specific context to become emotionally vulnerable and/or to ask for help when needed. A further exploration could entail investigation into how the legal system would view men who expose their emotional vulnerabilities, compared to men who intellectualise their emotional experiences and come across as being very strong and in control.

I learned the importance of exploring the risks involved in becoming emotional as a male in the context of divorce. By becoming emotionally vulnerable, one becomes congruent, and emotions surface that some might construe as being weak, and which, according to society, could be seen as wrong. As a male, I was reminded of this when exploring the stories of the participants, which proved to be valuable to me, both professionally and personally.

The above suggestions for further exploration seem to hold opportunities for future research. A study that explores the reasons why it seems difficult to become emotionally vulnerable in personal, challenging contexts may prove testing, yet interesting. In addition, research on an entire system, namely the divorced family, may further challenge such an enquiry, but may also open doors into areas into which research on divorce should venture, as part of its own growth. Also, a follow-up study with the participants to explore which songs they would have chosen to represent the themes that emerged from their testimonies could prove interesting as well as generate further research information.

Furthermore, one must bear in mind that divorce does not happen in isolation and involves a number of systems. It could also be interesting to investigate the impact the different systems have on one another and how they contribute to the divorcing couple's relationship. For example, two major systems that almost always seem to be involved are the legal system (especially when custody and large sums of money are involved) and the couple's respective families of origin. This kind of research may also be extended to the clinical context that deals with divorce mediation and legal custody investigations.

In addition, the richness of the personal accounts in this study could have stimulated, in prospective researchers, a curiosity for a quantitative inquiry into some of the themes highlighted here; for example, a quantitative inquiry into the 'typical' reasons why men have difficulty becoming emotionally vulnerable during the process of divorce and experiencing loneliness. Furthermore, men of different cultures could be compared to see whether there is a prevalence of emotional vulnerability and loneliness in divorce in certain cultures.

'...In the Journey through life, Experience is a hard teacher, because it gives the Test first and the Lesson afterwards ...'

Vernon Sanders Law

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