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Title: The contribution of divorce to parental self-efficacy and perception of parenting among

divorced parents: A qualitative study

Student Name: Ramone Che Rix

Student Number: 3699123

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Department: Psychology

Supervisor: Jenny Rose

Co-supervisor: Professor Nicolette Roman

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Abstract

Divorce and self-efficacy are areas that have been studied quite widely and extensively in recent decades. Going through a divorce has an effect on how parents actually parent their children, which in turn has an effect on the behavioral, emotional, social and academic outcomes of the child. Divorce is considered a significant factor in determining emotional and social problems that children begin to exhibit. However, few research has been conducted on the relationship of divorce with parental self-efficacy and perception of parenting among divorced parents in South Africa. Therefore, this study used qualitative interviews to explore the impact of divorce on parental self-efficacy and perceptions of parenting among ten divorced parents from working to middle class community in Cape Town, South Africa. . The interviews were analyzed by making use of thematic analysis. Results showed that, although participants experienced an initial period of extreme emotional distress and feeling overwhelmed at being a single parent, their confidence in their parenting increased over time as they began to adjust to their new lives and received adequate and regular support. This was accomplished through various techniques and coping mechanisms employed by the participants, and with their social support structure playing a significant role on their parental self-efficacy. This study contributes to the research that has been conducted on parental self-efficacy, specifically, the research that has been conducted in a South African context, which has been generally lacking in terms of previous research.

Key Words: Parental self-efficacy, parenting perceptions, divorce, thematic analysis, divorced parents

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background

Self-efficacy is described as individuals' perceptions or beliefs in their ability to perform a certain task or beliefs in their own capability to be able to handle, organize, navigate and successfully execute certain actions regarding a task at hand (Sanders & Woolley, 2004). According to Bandura (1993, 1977); Gross and Rocissana (1988); Leahy-Warren, McCarthy, and Corcoran (2011), individuals' perceptions of their own skills, competencies and capabilities concerning certain tasks will in turn affect their behavior (regarding a particular task) and how they carry out this task. Extrapolating from this definition, , it can be inferred that, if individuals' perceived competency at a certain task is fairly low, then this will cause them to approach that task with the mind-set that they will not do well at this particular task. This may then also cause their behavior (and perhaps subsequent performance) at this task to be affected by their self-efficacious belief.
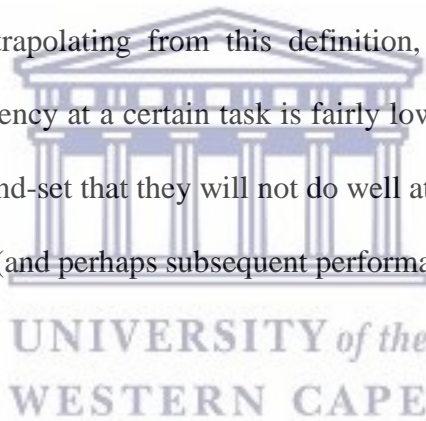
Parental self-efficacy is how individuals perceive that their parenting capabilities and competencies will have an effect on their actual parenting behavior and children outcomes. Leahy-Warren et al. (2011) found that parental self-efficacy influences healthy parenting practices. Furthermore, they consider a parent's sense of self-efficacy to have the capacity to reduce perceptions of reactions to stress and depression. Parental self-efficacy that is measured correctly seems to be a predictor of various parenting practices, and parents who tend to have children with problem behaviors and are seeking help for these behaviors are likely to have low parental self-efficacy in terms of being able to carry out daily parenting tasks (Sanders & Wooley, 2004).

There are many variables that can influence one's parenting practices and, in turn, one's parental self-efficacy. One of the significant factors that can be seen as a major contributor to the development of low parental self-efficacy is divorce or the separation of one of the parents from the family (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). Finlayson, Siefert, Ismail, and Sohn (2007) have found that males and females who come from divorced families have common problems such as shorter education, unemployment, likelihood of divorce, and risky health behaviors. Divorce is also a large indicator of stress in childhood (Huurre, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006), which may continue into adulthood as well (Vousoura, Verdeli, Warner, Wickramaratne, & Baily, 2011), thus divorce portends negative outcomes for the children whose parents are divorced. It stands to reason that if going through a divorce has lifelong negative implications on the child's life, then part of those implications can be attributed to the way children parented after the divorce has taken place. Parenting children, among other things, will be affected by the parental self-efficacy of their parents. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to explore the contribution of divorce to parental self-efficacy and perception of parenting among divorced parents. Which will in turn have value in providing learnings and knowledge that can be implemented in the development of parental interventions and programs can assist divorced parents

1.2. Problem statement

Divorce can impact the lives of both parents and children in many negative ways. Its effects are often evident well into the adult life of a child that has been through divorce (Finlayson, Siefert, Ismail, & Sohn, 2007). From a parental point of view, this can affect their parental self-efficacy as divorce has been seen to cause depression, anxiety, stress and overall strain on parenting (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011), all of which are factors that affect parental self-efficacy (Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). The problem that then has the potential to arise is that low

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levels of parental self-efficacy may increase the likelihood that the child will experience and exhibit the negative outcomes and behaviors as mentioned above concerning divorce and its effects. A study like the current one is therefore important as it looks to explore the role that divorce has on parental self-efficacy.

Most of the research that has been conducted has either looked at divorce on its own (Fincham & Beach, 1999; Froman & Owen, 1990; Moran, Dykes, Burt & Shuck 2006; Reece, 1992; Wilkins, 2006) or parental self-efficacy on its own (Hurre et al., 2006; Wade & Cairney, 2000). Therefore, there is a huge gap because of the fact that there is not enough research pertaining to divorce and parental self-efficacy together. This study is significant then in contributing to that area of research where there is such a large gap, looking at divorce and parental self-efficacy together, more particularly, the contribution that divorce has on parents' self-efficacy. It also has value in terms of knowing which parental interventions and programs can be used or developed in order to assist divorced parents. Lastly, the context in which the study is taking place is also very significant as the research in South Africa regarding divorce and parental self-efficacy is fairly limited. The current study will then serve to bridge this gap and provide knowledge and insight to the role that divorce plays in parent's lives in a South African culture and context.

1.2.1. Aim and objectives of the study

This study aims to explore the parents' perception of the contribution of divorce to their parental self-efficacy.

- Explore the beliefs and perceptions of parents regarding being divorced;

- Explore parents' perceptions of their parental self-efficacy;

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- Explore parents' understanding and perception of the contribution of divorce in relation to their parental self-efficacy.

1.2.2. Research questions

- What are the beliefs and perceptions of divorced parents regarding divorce?

- What are parents' perceptions of their parental self-efficacy?

- What are parents' perceptions and understanding of how divorce has contributed to their parental self-efficacy?

1.2.3 Significance of the study

There is limited research available that looks at parental self-efficacy and divorce together. This is further compounded by the fact that research in this area has been difficult to conduct in South Africa over the past few decades due to a wide variety of marriage forms, languages as well as religions and cultures existing in the country (Budlender, Ntebaleng, & Simalane, 2004). Further, there is a significant amount of research on parental self-efficacy and divorce separately. This study is significant in that it looks at both of these aspects together, specifically the contribution that divorce has on parental self-efficacy. From a theoretical point of view the study will provide literature in an area where the research is limited. In practice, it also has pronounced value in terms of knowing which parental interventions and programs can be used or developed in order to assist divorced parents.

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1.3. Theoretical framework

1.3.1 Social Learning Theory/Social Cognitive Theory

This study was conducted within the framework of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory or Social Cognitive Theory. Albert Bandura contributed greatly to the current understanding and perception of behaviorism. Unlike his contemporary, B.F. Skinner, who believed that human behavior is shaped by conditioning and 'unconscious learning' (Weiten, 2007), Bandura believes that cognitive processing is a key and distinctive feature of human behavior that should not be neglected or overlooked. Bandura mentions that most human behavior is learned by modeling through observation.

According to Bandura, there are four important processes that need to take place in order for observational learning to take place. These are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Weiten, 2007). Attention means paying attention to the behavior of others' as well as their consequences. Retention is mentally storing or remembering certain actions so that they can be called upon and used in later situations or contexts where it is needed. Reproduction means it is not enough just to know what one has learned, but this knowledge needs to be able to be reproduced in action. Lastly, motivation indicates that responses aren't likely to be reproduced if there is no motivation to respond in that way. This motivation is often related to whether or not a person believes that he/she will receive a positive response from a given behavior (Weiten, 2007).

Bandura postulated that personality and behavior are not simply determined through learning in which humans are passive and non-active 'bystanders', but that people have an active role in the development of their behavior and personality. In this, humans are able to self-regulate, be proactive, self-organize and self-reflect. They are also able to predict which consequences are likely to come forth from a given action and with this insight choose the action that they

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think will produce the most desired outcome (Bandura, 2001; Weiten, 2007). With this background, Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism is important to consider when discussing self-efficacy, and by extension parental self-efficacy. Reciprocal determinism states that internal mental events (cognitive processing or simply, thinking), external environmental events (things that happen around individuals that are not particularly in their control), and behavior all overlap and influence each other when it comes to individuals' learning and their

choice of action or behavior (Weiten, 2007). Another important aspect of Social Cognitive Theory, and an aspect that this current study focuses on is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy relates to one's perceptions of self and one's perceived ability to succeed in certain situations and contexts. It relates to how people perceive or think they would perform at a certain task and how these perceptions influence behavior and cognition. Self-efficacy does not refer to a person's ability itself, but rather to that person's perception of his or her ability to successfully navigate and bring certain tasks in their lives to completion (Bandura, 1993).
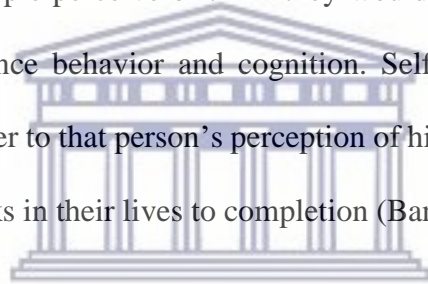
According to Bandura, perceived self-efficacy reaches into and influences five major processes in life. These processes are the cognitive, motivational, affective, cognized goals and selection processes (Bandura, 1993). Looking at cognitive processes, most goals that people set for themselves and courses of actions that are chosen are first shaped by their thoughts. People are likely to first anticipate a situation and an outcome of a particular course of action cognitively or in their thoughts before they put this into action. Those with high levels of self-efficacy would tend to visualize and anticipate situations in their mind in which the outcome is positive and where they are able to complete the given task successfully. People with a high self-efficacy visualize themselves as being up to whatever the task at hand is and having all of the resources and ability to be able to complete the task successfully (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2009). For example, someone with a high level of self-efficacy

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might see an advertisement for a job and they would then begin to visualize, construct and rehearse a situation in their mind in which they apply for the job, do well at the job interview and are able to fulfill that job description well. Their belief in their ability to be successful at that task is high.

The second key process that is influenced by one's level of self-efficacy is motivation. There are three different forms of cognitive motivators, namely: casual contributions, outcome expectancies, and cognized goals (Bandura, 1993). When it comes to casual contributions, according to Bandura (1993), someone with high perceived self-efficacy would attribute any failures at various tasks that might occur to a lack of effort (which means that they believe that if they had worked or studied harder or put in more effort, they would have been successful at that task). Individuals with a low levels of perceived efficacy will attribute failures to their perceived inability (they believe that they failed because they are simply not good enough to successfully complete whatever task it is that they have attempted) (Bandura, 1993; Weiten, 2007). With regards to outcome expectancies, Bandura explained that an individual's motivation is influenced by whether or not they expect a certain course of action to have a positive outcome or not. When an individual's self-efficacy is high, they would expect most outcomes to yield a positive result and thus their motivation is increased as well (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). If an individual has a low level of self-efficacy, they would perceive a certain task to have a negative outcome or expect that they will fail at a certain task and this will in turn negatively affect their motivation regarding that specific task or course of action (Bandura, 1993).

The third process in determining an individual's self-efficacy would be cognized goals. Bandura referred to this as the individual need to set and attain goals for one's self. A major

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motivating factor is the need for self-satisfaction through the fulfillment of valuable and important goals that have been set for oneself (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). If an individual's level of self-efficacy is low, they will have a negative perception of their ability to be able to attain these goals and therefore this would lower their motivation concerning these goals or it could cause them to not set certain goals for themselves altogether because they are not confident in their capacity to be able to see it through to fulfillment (Bandura, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002).

The fourth process is affective processing. This is one of the emotional mediators in perceived self-efficacy. As we have mentioned previously, an individual's feelings or beliefs concerning their capabilities to handle difficult and stressful situations can be largely influenced by that individual's perceived self-efficacy (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). If an individual has a low level of self-efficacy and does not believe in his or her ability to successfully navigate and deal with the difficult situation, he or she is likely to experience a great amount of stress, anxiety, depression and even an impaired immune system functioning when faced with that situation (Bandura, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). For individuals with a high level of self-efficacy, they would handle and experience stressful situations without the added burden of excess stress and anxiety. They will also handle setbacks and adversity with positivity because they believe that they possess within themselves the resources and faculties needed to yield a positive outcome to that particular situation (Bandura, 1993).

Lastly, looking at the selection process, because people are partially a product of their environment, their beliefs regarding their personal self-efficacy has the potential to shape the course of their lives. This is because their level of self-efficacy has an influence on decisions, choices and environments that people are willing to take on (or not willing to take on) (Bandura,

1993). People will, Bandura explains, lean towards avoiding environments and activities in which they believe that they will not do well at or do not think that they have the competency or capability to be able to successfully navigate that situation or thrive in that environment. The converse is also true with regards to what people select to take on and expose themselves to; when someone believes that they are able to handle a given situation or environment, they are more likely to engage with that activity (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002;).

Bandura (2001) further asserted that there are four different modes of agency: personal agency, which is simply the individual acting on his or her own; acting individually, i.e. choosing a certain course of behavior; proxy agency, which is trying to attain a desired outcome by influencing others to act on your behalf (with your interests at hand) and, lastly, there is collective agency, in which many people take on a certain course of action together in order to attain a shared desired outcome in their future. Of all the mechanisms of human agency, the most central is the personal self-efficacy belief (Bandura, 2002). All other societal, environmental and cultural factors are rooted deeply in whether an individual believes that they can successfully execute a certain course of action or not. Without self-efficacy an individual will have no incentive to act regardless of how strong societal, cultural or environmental factors are.

To further illustrate this point, the development of agency was commented on by Martin (2004) in a study of self-regulated learning. In this study, Martin (2004) posits that agency emerges when individuals cognitively choose to act or participate with the physical and socio-cultural world. This choosing relies on pre-existing cognitive mechanisms that allow for these choices to happen in the first place (Martin, 2004). In explaining agency, a large amount of emphasis

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was placed on cognitively being able to choose. This ties in well with Bandura (2002) on the importance of self-efficacy as a primary cognitive mechanism as a vital component in determining a set course of behavior and whether an individual chooses to engage with it or not.

A study done by Stajkovic and Luthans (2002) highlighted that there are five main components that are at the core of Social Cognitive Theory, namely, vicarious learning, forethought, symbolizing, self-regulation and self-reflection. Vicarious learning, according to Stajkovic and Luthans (2002), refers to individuals learning through observing the behavior of others as well as their consequences and from there making their own behavior judgments and decisions. This is similar to observational learning. The mental process of planning, anticipating and thinking of contingencies would be referred to as 'forethought' (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). It is here that an individual can weigh up possible outcomes of a certain course of action as well as plan how much effort will be required to complete this course of action. Most importantly, from here they can make judgments as to whether they have the needed energy and resources to complete this course of action successfully. The third component of Social Cognitive Theory is symbolizing; which refers to an individual's process of converting visual experiences into active models in order to help them process, remember information and decide on a specific course of action. Self-regulation is the process by which an individual controls his or her behavior or outward performance through setting internal standards for him or herself. Lastly, self-reflection refers to one's ability to reflect back on one's actions and decide if the outcome was desired or not, as this will determine whether that particular behavior is engaged in again or not (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). Self-efficacy, which can be defined as an individual's personal perception of their ability to succeed, is also closely linked to self-reflection and self-regulation. Bandura (2001) also puts forth in his Social Cognitive Theory that behavior, one's

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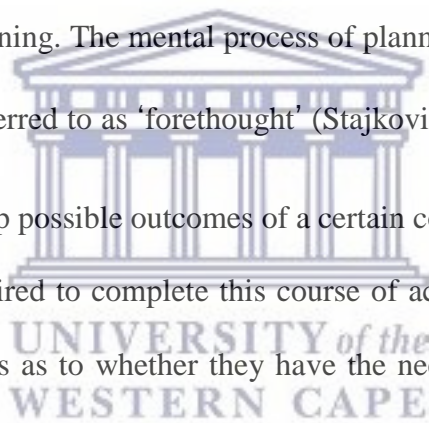
environment and cognitive factors (such as beliefs, perceptions, and self-efficacy) all interact with and influence each other. This is Bandura's concept under which all five of the aforementioned categories would fall. Dwelling more on the study of Stajkovic and Luthans (2002), their purpose was to show how Social Cognitive Theory contributes to a better understanding of work and motivation. They have found that self-efficacy is an important factor in an individual's work motivation, showing that an individual would be more likely to engage in (and want to engage in) work that they believe they are able to do successfully and vice versa.

In another study, done by Golsling, Ko, Mannarelli, and Morris (2002) on the importance and impact that environment has on personality and how personality influences environment, it was found that one can predict quite a significant amount of a person's personality or characteristics by looking at how they order, shape and decorate their environment around them. Participants were asked to look at an individual's office space and try to predict what this person's personality might be like. They were given the same to do with various individuals' bedrooms. It was found that predictions of one's personality were fairly accurate when looking at that person's surroundings - more so for bedrooms than for their office spaces. This study had a significant impact on Bandura's idea that individuals influence their environment and that the environment also has the power to influence the individual, and these are two of the main components of reciprocal determinism. Another study was conducted in order to attempt to explain the socio-economic variations in adolescent eating behaviors. Results showed that when it comes to fruit intake, a vital component in healthy dietary recommendations, cognitive factors (such as the belief that they will be able to maintain a diet with sufficient fruit intake and then making the effort to make this possible) were the greatest mediators between adolescents who have a low socio-economic status and those who have a high socio-economic

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status (Ball, MacFarlane, Crawford, Savige, Andrianopoulos, & Worsley, 2009). The conclusion and significance of this study was that Social Cognitive Theory is able to provide a useful framework that will aid in the understanding of socio-economic variations in eating habits and diets of adolescence. This would be useful in guiding health policies and programs that are dedicated to improving adolescent nutrition in areas of low socio-economic status.

It was thus through this lens and with this framework that this current study was conducted. The area of this theory that relates particularly to the study is the area of self-efficacy, more specifically parental self-efficacy, as this was the area that was deeply explored in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW
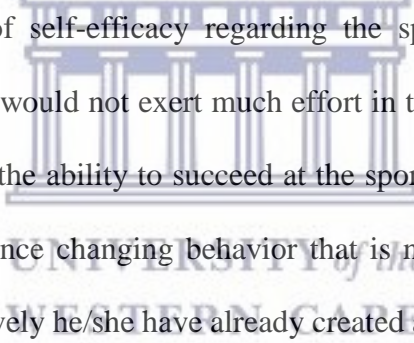
2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights and explains self-efficacy, parental self-efficacy and divorce. Self-efficacy will be expanded in terms of Albert Bandura's theory that contributed to understanding of what self-efficacy is and how it affects various aspects people's behavior. Further, literature on self-efficacy will be examined, this will lead into parental self-efficacy and what this is. How it affects parents and what factors affect a parent's parental self-efficacy itself will also be looked at. Lastly, the literature regarding divorce will be looked at as well: divorce statistics, reasons for couples getting divorce and the various effects that divorce has on those closely involved.

2.2. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy relates to individual's perceptions of self and his/her perceived ability to succeed in certain situations and contexts. It relates to how people perceive or think they would perform at a certain task and how these perceptions influence their behavior and cognition. Self-efficacy does not refer to a person's ability itself, but rather to that person's perception of his or her ability to successfully navigate and bring certain tasks in their lives to completion (Bandura, 1993). According to Bandura, perceived self-efficacy reaches into and influences five major processes in life. These processes are the cognitive, motivational, cognized goals, affective and selection processes (Bandura, 1993).

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Bandura (1977) highlights that a person's perceptions of their self-efficacy will determine whether or not they initiate and sustain certain behaviors that will help them deal with or cope with various circumstances that they face. For example, if someone was struggling at a certain sport, but had high levels of self-efficacy regarding this particular sport, this individual would continue to believe in his/her ability to succeed at this sport, in spite of the present adverse circumstances. This individual would then also continue to persevere over a longer period of time because he/she has a high level of self-efficacy. The behavior that is supposed to bring change and positive results is both initiated and maintained over time because this person believes in his or her ability to get the results that they are looking for (Bandura, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002).

If someone had low levels of self-efficacy regarding the sport (for various reasons and circumstances) this individual would not exert much effort in terms of improving him/herself in this sport because belief in the ability to succeed at the sport is low. The individual might not even initiate the performance changing behavior that is needed in order for him/her to become better because cognitively he/she have already created a situation and course of action in his/her mind (based on the level of self-efficacy) where individual do not have the perceived skills or capability to be able to generate a positive outcome (Bandura, 1993; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). If individuals do initiate the behavior (start the process), they may give up when they face adversity or when things become challenging because, again, their belief in their ability to overcome these challenges is low. Bandura (1977) further highlights that there are four main sources of information that influence a person's expectations of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and psychological states (also referred to as emotional arousal). All four of these sources of information play a vital role in their contribution to an individual's expectations or their self-efficacy.

Looking at performance accomplishments, this source of efficacy information is important and influential because it is based on personal experiences of mastery and accomplishments (or the lack thereof). If a person experiences repeated success in their lives and at challenges that they take upon self, this will raise mastery expectation, meaning that in future, whatever tasks, goals or situations an individual is faced with, he/she would have an expectation that he/she would be able to master it and be successful at whatever that task was (Bandura, 1977; Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2009). Understandably, this expectation is based on the fact that when individual have experienced repeated successes in previous undertakings, this will in turn increased their self-efficacy as well.

Once someone has developed a strong sense of mastery expectation, any negative impact of failures and/or occasional setbacks will not have a long-lasting impact. In fact, when these setbacks are eventually dealt with and mastered, this is likely to increase the individual's level of self-efficacy because he/she has now added the negative setbacks to their set of accomplishments that have been mastered as well (Bandura, 1977). That being said, the opposite is also true; individuals who experience failures on a more regular basis and are unable to move past or master them will in turn begin to have a lower sense of efficacy in that the repeated failure has caused them to develop an expectancy of failure, thus lowering their self-efficacy. Certain factors, according to Bandura (1977), are also important to take into consideration when looking at how an individual's information that they receive from their performance accomplishments influences their self-efficacy. Examples such as the timing of the failure or setback, the frequency with which setbacks occur and how long they last until they are resolved (if they are resolved at all) are all important factors that influence an individual's self-efficacy.

With regard to vicarious experiences, people rely on their personal experiences as a vital source of information or an influencing factor regarding their self-efficacy. However, this is not the only means by which people attain information that shapes their self-efficacy. Another important source of efficacy influencing information is vicarious experience. Seeing others perform and succeed at tasks with minimized adversity and loss has the potential to lead an individual to expect that they too will be able to achieve that goal or be successful at whatever task it was that they observed others being successful. Even when faced with adversity or some sort of setback, an individual will believe that with perseverance and prolonged effort that they will be able to be successful. This is based on the vicarious experience of watching others succeed and perform well in that particular area (Froman & Owen, 1990; Warren et al., 2011). Looking at marriage, for example, if an individual has seen around them many marriages in their family that have lasted for many years without the couples getting divorced, the partners have stayed together and worked through and dealt with all of the issues that have come up along the years, they are likely to begin to develop a sense of positivity and belief within themselves that they too will be able to make it work and successfully navigate any and all adverse circumstances or issues that may arise along the way. Similarly, the opposite is also true regarding vicarious experience. Keeping with the example of marriage, if an individual is in a society or family that has a high divorce rate, their self-efficacy regarding marriage has the potential to be fairly low, because of the fact that all that they have seen being modeled to them were couples getting married, facing some adversity and then ending the marriage. It is very likely that this individual will now begin to have a low expectation of themselves and their capability to have a successful marriage and deal with whatever adverse circumstances will/may arise along the way. Important to note regarding vicarious experience is the fact that it is a source of information that relies greatly on social comparisons (Bandura, 1977, 1993). This makes it slightly less dependable than performance accomplishments, for example, as a

source of information. This is because an individual might simply be living in a society that has very high divorce rates and therefore will develop a low expectation of being able to have a successful marriage; meaning that it was not so much the individual or their experiences that have shaped their efficacy expectations but rather the environment, society and context of which they were a part.

One widely used method of attempting to influence and change human behavior is verbal persuasion. Individuals can be led to believe that they will be able to cope successfully with whatever they might not have done well in in the past through verbal persuasion or suggestion (Bandura, 1977). This can take place in many different forms: counseling, motivational speaking or simply just speaking to a friend. Another factor that causes verbal persuasion to be a contributing factor to an individual's self-efficacy would be the fact that it can often be linked to that individual's emotions as well, which could then lead this person to be more easily

persuaded (Bandura, 1977; Warren et al., 2011). Though verbal persuasion can be a valuable source of self-efficacy information, it can be deduced that expectations of self-efficacy that are brought about with this method, though somewhat effective, can be less effective than expectations that are brought about with performance mastery. This is partly because, with performance mastery, individuals have their own personal experiences to draw from and this is often what can keep them focused and motivated in the face of adversity. Where verbal persuasion is concerned, whatever expectations of mastery and success may have been developed are more likely to be removed or lowered in the face of trouble or adversity.

Regarding emotional arousal or psychological state, stress, failure and various other adverse circumstances often induce a variety of emotional responses or emotional arousal in individuals. This can provide valuable information to that individual regarding their self-

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efficacy and competency. They are able to learn a lot about themselves based on their emotional responses to various adverse circumstances (Bandura, 1977). When individuals are highly emotionally aroused and their stress and anxiety levels are high, they are more likely to perform less well and handle the situation in less of a positive and healthy manner. Because of this, individuals are more likely to expect to be successful when they have low levels of stress, anxiety and emotional arousal (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002; Warren et al., 2011). For example, if an individual is preparing to take their driver's license test and they are extremely nervous and stressed about it, because of the high emotional arousal that they are experiencing regarding the task of taking a driver's tests, they are likely to expect that they will not do well in the driver's test. This can be compounded even further if they have failed this same test before and they were very nervous and tense the first time that they did it. Here it is evident how two sources of efficacy information are contributing to the individual's expectations of how they will perform at the task: performance accomplishments as well as emotional arousal.
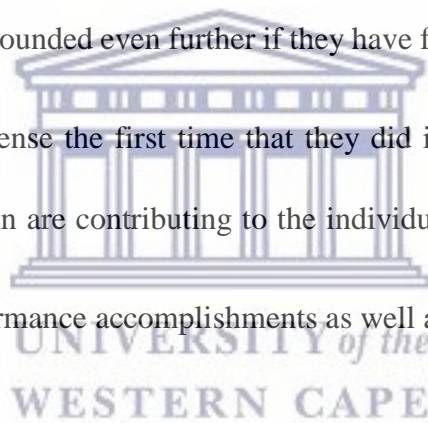
It is important to note that self-efficacy is domain or context specific (Hastings & Brown, 2002) meaning that high self-efficacy in one domain (sport, for example) may not necessarily mean that this individual will have high self-efficacy in another domain (studying); self-efficacy may not always be transferrable across domains. All of the four sources of efficacy information (or factors contributing to an individual's level of self-efficacy) play a role (and sometimes an overlapping role) in developing an individual's perceived self-efficacy. With that being said, the domain of parental self-efficacy will be discussed in the next section.

2.3. Parental self-efficacy

How a parent goes about parenting their children will be to some degree affected by the perception of their parenting ability, i.e. their perception of their competence and ability to be a good parent and be able to do it well and properly. This perception would largely have been shaped by the four sources of efficacy information (i.e., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and psychological states). Bandura (1977) further hypothesized that in the midst of challenges and adverse circumstances an individual's expectations of their personal self-efficacy will influence three aspects: initiation of coping behavior, expended effort, and duration that this effort will be expended in the face of problems and adversity. For example, a parent with high levels of self-efficacy, even when divorced or in the midst of parenting challenges and adversity, is more likely to initiate a coping behavior that he/she feel would best suit the situation and bring about a positive outcome. This parent would then also be willing to exert and deploy a large amount of his/her effort and resources because the parent's perception of their ability to be able to cope as a parent with whatever adverse circumstances they are facing is high. The parents are also more likely to continue this problem solving behavior for an extended period of time because they believe that eventually it will yield a positive outcome. If this hypothesis is related to parental self-efficacy, it can be inferred that a parent's way of viewing themselves as a parent will influence how they parent and the way that they raise their children (Bandura, 1977).

In addition to this, a parent's self-efficacy can also influence how that parent feels about themselves as a parent and various other areas in the parents' lives as well (Sanders & Wooley, 2004). It was found that parenting training can increase parental self-efficacy by improving their daily activities and relationships with their children. This training has been associated

with improvement in children's behavior, a decrease in parental stress and depression, a decrease in the need for cohesive disciplinary methods and an overall increase in parental self-efficacy. Parental self-efficacy has also been found to affect various other factors within the parent-child relationship (Sanders & Wooley, 2004), for example the quality of care provided to the child, the quality of the mother-child interactions as well as warmth and responsiveness from the parent to the child. These characteristics can be very influential during childhood and adolescent development of certain behavioral problems. High and healthy levels of parental self-efficacy have been found to be associated with higher child self-esteem, higher academic performance, better social skills and lower levels of anxiety and depression. Low levels of parental self-efficacy, particularly maternal self-efficacy, and parents who are overly cohesive and abusive, unsupportive and dismissive, are more likely to have their children have emotional, behavioral and developmental problems (Sanders & Wooley, 2004). Warren et al. (2011) have also found that parental self-efficacy is comprised of the following attributes: personal beliefs, their capabilities and power as well as their ability to structure and perform actions so that will have a positive result. These attributes are situation specific. For example, a parent might feel that they have a low sense of power and capability when it comes to teaching their children to deal with conflict; because of this they will then struggle to organize, initiate and structure a course of parenting activities and outcomes that will yield a positive result where conflict resolution is concerned. This parent might feel this way because they themselves feel incompetent and lacking in their ability to successfully resolve conflict. So we see how the parents' personal beliefs is a significant factor in determining their level of parental self-efficacy. Parental self-efficacy has been found to be a mediator between mothers' experiences with children that are older, their parental satisfaction and even education. It was also found to have an influence on healthy parenting practices (Warren et al., 2011). There are also some key factors that influence a parent's self-efficacy, such as maternal ages, number of children,

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depression, fear, one's self-esteem and confidence. It has also been found that mothers tend to peak in their levels of self-efficacy earlier than fathers and that in general maternal parental self-efficacy tends to improve over time. This is positively linked to parenting competence and reduces levels of depression (Froman & Owen, 1990; Moran, Dykes, Burt, & Shuck 2006; Reece, 1992; Troutman, 1986; Wilkins, 2006). Attributes such as low self-confidence, fear and self-doubt are also associated with low levels of self-efficacy (Warren et al., 2011).

Further studies have shown that parental self-efficacy affects the quality of parenting that is delivered. High self-efficacy was shown to be related to increased quality of mother-toddler interactions, sensitivity, warmth and responsiveness. These positive parental outputs have been seen to be a protector against children developing adolescent behavior problems. They also promote higher self-esteem, better school performances and social competencies as well as lower levels of depression and anxiety (Holmbeck, Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, 1991; Murdock, 2013; Pettit & Bates, 1989; Stifter & Bono, 1998; Teti & Gelfrand, 1991; Tucker, Gross, Fogg, Delaney, & Lapporte, 1998; Warren et al., 2011). The converse has also been found to be true of parenting quality in that parents with low self-efficacy tend to use coercive discipline more as well as discipline practices that are overly harsh and even abusive. In addition to this, some parenting practices have also been seen to be permissive and inconsistent and these parental practices have been linked to the child developing behavioral and emotional problems (Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff, & Acker, 1993; Bugental & Cortez, 1988; Feehan, McGee, Stanton, & Silva, 1991).

In a study consisting of a total of 62 cohabitating couples with a first born of 18-36 months conducted by Sevingy and Loutzenhiser (2009) it was found that, for fathers, two of the main predicting factors of parental self-efficacy are parenting stress and their relational functioning.

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It can be deduced that when fathers' parenting stress is high and their relational functioning is

not satisfactory or even dysfunctional that their levels of parental self-efficacy will be low. For

mothers in the same study it was found that factors such as general self-efficacy as well as

relational functioning were predictive factors of parental self-efficacy. Thus, mothers with high

levels of general self-efficacy and healthy overall relational functioning are more likely to have

high levels of self-efficacy. In a study done by Coleman and Karraker (2000), the parental self-

efficacy of 145 mothers of school-aged children was examined. It was found that mothers who

were less emotional and have more sociable children have high levels of parental efficacy.

High levels of parental self-efficacy have also been found to be associated with mothers who

have higher education, families with higher income and those with previous experience with

children. Lastly, the study also found that mothers who have high levels of parental satisfaction

are also more likely to have parental self-efficacy. This makes sense in that, if an individual

experiences high levels of satisfaction, this means that they are able to successfully navigate

most challenges that might come up while doing this task and therefore their self-efficacy is

likely to be higher due to their informational source of performance mastery.   As can be seen,

parental self-efficacy has a significant role to play in both parental styles as well as in the

child's emotional, social, and academic development.

2.4. Divorce

Not much research has been conducted with regards to parental self-efficacy and divorce

together. There has, however, been a great deal of research conducted on divorce itself. Gigy

& Kelly (2008) have identified that the main reasons couples get divorced are emotional needs

being unmet, couples growing apart, a great degree of conflict and even being bored inside the

marriage. In a longitudinal study conducted by Zill Morisson and Coiro (1993), they sought to

determine the long-term effects of divorce on parent-child relationships, adjustment and

achievement in young adulthood. It was found that among young adults from divorced families, 65% of them had an unhealthy relationship with their fathers, and 30% with their mothers. 25% had dropped out of high school, and 40% of them had received some form of psychological help. Even after a control for demographic and socio-economic differences was conducted, youths from divorced families were still twice as likely to exhibit psychological and developmental problems. This is an important factor to be taken into consideration seeing as though developmental and psychological issues in youth were also associated with having parents with low parental self-efficacy. With regards to divorce and marriage in South Africa, a study by Palamuleni (2010) found that the average age for men and women getting married is increasing more than the average age for those not marrying at all. Men and women choosing to get married are getting married later in their lives, rather than earlier. It was also found that from 1996 to 2001, the percentage of women getting married has decreased from 35% to 30% whereas the percentage of those living together for the same time period has increased from 9% to 6%. The study concludes that potential explanations for these changes could be the increase in education and employment of women, urbanization and modernization. It was also mentioned however, that more research in this area needs to be conducted within a South African context. Which gives further emphasis to the significance of this present study not only because of the lack of research, but also because of the difficulty in being able to conduct this kind of research within a South African context. This is because of factors such as South Africa having a wide variety of marriage forms, religions and languages (Budlender, Ntebaleng, & Simalane, 2004).

A substantial amount of research has been conducted on the topic of divorce, particularly concerning the effect that it has on the children of those that are getting divorced. A long term study by Hurre et al. (2006) of the psychosocial effects of divorce has found that parental

divorce served as a major stressor for children, with its effects and implications extending well into adulthood as well. This was found to be more so for females than for males, especially in terms of psychological well-being and social relationships. The results of this study further found that females from divorced families reported more psychological problems than females from families who have not been divorced (this is based on higher scores in the Beck Depression Inventory, General Health Questionnaire and Psychosomatic Symptoms Score).

Uecker and Ellison (2012) have found that being raised in a single parent home does have a negative impact on religious outcomes; children are less likely to have religious affiliations and attend religious services. It stands to reason that these children will then not develop many of the morals, characteristics and values that are taught in religious institutions. This would then make it easier for them to exhibit some of their anti-social behavior and psychological issues mentioned before. Lopez (1987) has noted that divorce seems to accelerate parent-young adult separation. The young adults from these divorced families are likely to reach ego maturity, move away from home and engage in courtship activity earlier than young adults who come from households who have not been divorced. Although this might seem as an apparent benefit, these young adults may overestimate their maturity and autonomy and get themselves in situations that they may not be able to handle, particularly in terms of intimate relationships. These young adults also tend to look upon their fathers less favorably than their mothers.

Further studies have suggested that there is a relationship between divorce and children having depression, low academic and educational achievement, high risk behaviors at an early age, and an increased risk for attempting suicide (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; Donald, Dower, Correa-Velez, & Jones 2006; Lizardi, Thompson, Keyes, & Hasin, 2009). It is evident that divorce is a significant stressor and event

in the family and has long term implications for those that are involved. Arkes (2013) found that after having gone through a divorce, children have an increased risk in engaging with and using marijuana and alcohol.

Looking at all of these negative outcomes that have been found in children whose parents have been divorced, it would make sense that, if divorce has such a huge impact on a child's life, then part of what contributes to this would be the way that the parent parents their child or children after the divorce has taken place. As seen above, parental self-efficacy has an impact on parental outcomes which opens up the interesting sphere of what effect divorce has on parental self-efficacy and how this then in turn affects parental outcomes and practices. Most of the research has highlighted the effects that divorce has on the children of that family; however, it has also been found that depression and poor mental health can be a by-product or consequence of marital conflict and divorce in the parents (Fincham & Beach, 1999; Wade & Cairney, 2000). This, by deductive reasoning and as we have seen above, may in turn then begin to affect the parents' parental self-efficacy. The following section will focus on the methodology that was undertaken in order to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The study is a qualitative study. Qualitative research focuses on attaining or extracting data of people behaving in their natural settings and contexts. It also involves describing their lives and experiences from their own point of view (Cozby, 2007). This study provides insight into parents' perceptions and their personal conceptualizations of their experiences of being divorced parents. A qualitative approach adds value to the data and the analysis thereof in that it allows data that is not easily quantifiable to be understood, explored and described.

3.2. Research paradigm and approach

This study made use of an interpretive approach. This approach does not see reality as one that is objective or set in one way. Rather, it approaches research with the lens that humans construct their own meaning and reality through how they perceive their lives and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involves taking their experiences and looking at them, not in isolation as objective experiences, but rather taking their perceptions and conceptualizations of those experiences into consideration and looking at how this contributes to the meaning and reality that they construct for themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study this was done by interpreting and understanding how parents have perceived their divorce and how it has contributed to their parental self-efficacy.

Further, this study was descriptive and exploratory. It aimed to provide a detailed, accurate and descriptive account of how the parents construct and perceive their divorce and its contribution to their parental self-efficacy. The data was explored in order to identify common themes and

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patterns relating to the aim of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Coates, 2004). The data collection section provides specific steps as to how this process unfolded.
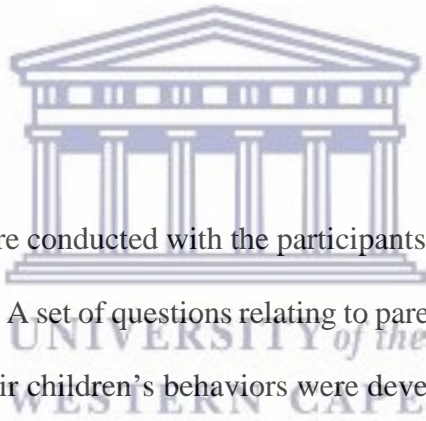
3.3. Sample

For the purpose of this study purposive sampling was used, which involves recruiting participants from a set of prescribed criteria (Cozby, 2007). In addition to this, snowball sampling was used, which is a process of non-probability sampling whereby participants are encouraged to recruit other participants (that meet the criteria) to be brought into the study (Cozby, 2007). This was continued until saturation was reached. For this study, ten participants were recruited. The purposes and aims of the study were outlined and explained, as well as informed consent forms drawn up to ensure that all ethical areas were considered.

Inclusion criteria:

- Custodian parents who are divorced.

- Custodian parents who have been divorced only once, because if parents have been divorced more than once their parental self-efficacy might have increased as it is something that they have been through before. It will also confound the results if there are differences in the number of times the participants have been divorced as this adds many extra variables.

- Parents who are not participating in another similar study already as this may affect the data that is collected; parents may respond in a certain way because of previous responding and information that they have attained from another study.

- Ability to communicate in and understand English as the interviews were to be conducted in English and the study would be written up in English. The first language of the principle researcher is English

Once this set of criteria was lined out, the method of snowball sampling was used. Advertisements were posted via social media and from there the first participants were recruited. From there, they were asked if they know anyone else that meets the criteria for the study as well and this was how the rest of the participants for the study were recruited. This was done until an acceptable number of participants were recruited. Because the study is a qualitative one, 12 participants were recruited. 2 initial 'test interviews' were conducted beforehand to ensure that the data collection tool demonstrated construct validity. The participants were all from a working to middle class background and were between the ages of 32 – 54. 9 of the 10 participants were women, and 1 man. Because of the fact that snowball sampling was used, 6 of the 10 participants were recruited from the same sector (education).

3. 4. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, i.e. the divorced parents who agreed to take part in the study. A set of questions relating to parental self-efficacy, the divorce, their parenting outputs and their children's behaviors were developed and administered to the participants. Interviews were done one participant at a time and took about an hour to complete. Participants were given consent forms where the study was explained and outlined to them. From there, permission was attained to use their responses in the writing up of the study as well. Because of the nature of the subject matter, sensitivity was a priority during the interview process. The interviews were conducted at a time and place of the participants choosing in order to ensure that they are in a comfortable environment, they were conducted either at the participants' home, their workplace or a quiet coffee shop of their choosing. The participants were allowed to take their time, silence was given if they felt they needed it and they were notified that they were allowed to pass certain questions if they were not comfortable with

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answering them, along with being allowed to stop interviewing at any time that they felt the need to do so. See ethics statement (pg. 35) for how sensitivity will be further addressed. Informed consent was attained as well as permission to record the interviews for transcription and analysis purposes. Once all of the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed for thematic analysis.

3.5. Data collection tool

Below is an extract of the interview schedule. The questions were developed using the research and literature that has been used and mentioned above concerning divorce and parental self-efficacy as a guide (the full schedule can be found in Appendix A):

How long have you been divorced?
How long were you married before you got divorced?
How long into the marriage until marital discomfort arose, and how long until divorce became a likely outcome?
How many children do you have and how did they handle or understand the divorce?
What was your relationship with your child like before the divorce and what is it currently like at the moment?

3.6. Data analysis

The data set was analyzed by making use of thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method of analysis whereby qualitative data is analyzed and reported on based on the patterns and themes that are found within that particular data set. It is with this framework that the data set was analyzed. It followed a very important six step process that is important when conducting a thematic analysis. These steps are as follows:

Step 1, becoming familiar with the data; this process involves transcribing the data, as well as reading it over and over in order to become extremely familiar with the data set that is being used. Step 2, generating initial codes; this involves identifying segments and pieces of data (at their most basic form) and coding them for distribution into themes at a later stage. The initial codes differ from themes in that themes are broader, whereas the codes can be seen as the 'cells' of the data, the most basic form of groupings of items and areas that arise within the data set. These codes later inform what becomes a theme and what does not. Step 3, searching for themes; as was mentioned, in this phase or stage the codes that have been generated were collated into potential themes. Step 4, reviewing themes: this phase involves an intricate review of the potential themes that have been generated in the previous phase. Some themes may fall away because there is simply not enough data to justify the as a theme, while some themes may even fuse into each other to create one broad over-arching theme. Phase 4 involves an intense refinement of what will be a theme and what will not. This is a very important process. Step 5, defining and naming themes; in this phase the themes that have been generated in the previous phase are given a set name and operational definition. This then provides proper detail and clarity of what each theme entails and then further informs which pieces of data fall into that particular theme. Step 6, producing the report; here the data is analyzed and interpreted in terms

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of the themes that have been set out and the report written up to describe what this means in relation to the initial research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once all of the data was transcribed, all themes derived and the report written up, it provided a valuable understanding of the experiences of the self-efficacy of the parents who had been divorced. Beyond providing a picture of what their parental competencies are like, it also provides a good description of the perceptions of their competencies as parents.

3.7. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and rigor are vital components that need to be established in qualitative research. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) stated that rigor is useful for establishing trust and consistency in qualitative research. This also provides means for the study to be duplicated using a different sample. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the following mechanisms used by Lietz, Langer, and Furman (2006) was put in place during the research process: audit trail, triangulation and supervisor debriefing. With these mechanisms in place and followed properly, it ensured that the study was credible.

In terms of the audit trail this comprised of a step-by-step documentation of each of the steps taken at each point of the research: What was done, how it was achieved and any feelings/emotions regarding these steps (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006). This was done regularly throughout the entire research process, making sure that each step was documented. This took place before each interview (thoughts, feelings and emotions were documented) as well as after each interview with regard to how that interview went. What were also documented in this process were the perspectives and thought processes of the primary researcher once all of the interviews had been conducted and now needed to be transcribed.

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The transcription process was documented in terms of how it went, how long it took to transcribe each interview and how the primary researcher had experienced the transcription process given the sensitive nature of the data at hand. Triangulation, which refers to the data set being analyzed by two other parties in order to get two different perspectives, was also used (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006). The data set was given to the supervising researchers in this process for them to analyze and identify any inconsistencies or areas of concern. This was done once the transcription process had been completed and various themes had been identified. When any areas of inconsistency and/or concern were highlighted, the primary researcher then revisit these aspects and analyzed how these could be dealt with in order to make sure that there was no bias or areas that had been overlooked or misinterpreted as a result of working very closely with the data at length. This a very important aspect as it ensured that the credibility of the study was not compromised in any way. Lastly, supervisor debriefing was also used. On a regular basis within the data collection process, the principle researcher had debriefing sessions with one of the supervising researchers in order to talk through and debrief any thoughts and feelings that the researcher may have that have come up with as a result of conducting the interviews or any other aspect of the study.

3.8. Reflexivity

Rolfe (2004) emphasized that reflexivity is an important aspect of maintaining good reliability and validity in qualitative research in that it is a valuable and ongoing self-critique of one's moral, social and political standpoints, thus avoiding the data from being subject to any bias. Reflexivity in this research study involved the primary researcher actively and honestly acknowledging his own personal experiences, stances and viewpoints that he brought into the research, so as to not pretend that the researcher came into the research process with full objectivity. This was a dialogue that took place personally through frequent journaling by the researcher as well as verbally with the research supervisor.

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3.9. Ethics consideration

Participants were divorced parents which made the study particularly sensitive. It is imperative that ethical standards are strictly followed and maintained at all times. There were several measures that were put in place to ensure that proper ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Firstly, permission to conduct the study was attained from the Human Science Research Ethics Council (HSREC) and the Senate Higher Degrees Committee. Participants were asked to read the information sheet and complete an informed consent form if they chose to take part in the study. With regards to their rights of participation and non-participation, all participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from this process at any point if they felt the need to do so. In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, it was made clear to each participant that their names or personal details will not be disclosed at all. The only information that would be used was the data that was extracted from their responses that they gave permission to use. Data were kept in a safe and secure place (the researcher's password protected laptop) in order to ensure this and a reflective journal of each session was kept by the researcher as well. This was to ensure all participants' identities, personal information and responses were thoroughly protected. Lastly, a counselor was made available to participants if they felt that they needed to debrief after the session. It was understood that the nature of this research was sensitive and might cause emotional and/or psychological disturbance for certain participants and therefore it was made a priority that they would be referred a counselor should that be the case at all. In addition to this, they would be shown warmth, positive regard, genuineness and empathy during the interviewing. If they needed time to be silent, to gather their thoughts, this would be allowed and participants would not be rushed, be made to feel uncomfortable or uneasy when going through the interview process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

A thematic analysis was conducted based on the recommendation of Braun and Clarke (2006), and it is through this framework that the following findings are presented. This chapter will provide the background or context of the participants in the study. Further, it will present the research findings in accordance with the themes and sub-themes that were identified.

4.2. Context of the participants in the study

There were several similarities present among the participants who took part in the study; this is important to note. Seven of the ten participants who took part in the study are from a middle-class socio-economic status. Of the ten participants, six are in education and/or social work with children. Within the context of the study, these factors are important to take note of as the report is presented.

4.3. Themes and subthemes identified and operationally defined

Using the six step thematic analysis method as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006), four themes were identified. The four themes were deduced from the data set rather than having prescribed themes beforehand. These themes are further divided into subthemes. Table 1 provides an outline of each theme and its relevant subthemes.

Table 1.

Themes	Subthemes
• Marriage	• Religious and idealistic perceptions regarding marriage • Problems arising within the marriage • Attempts at resolving the marriage

• Consequences of the divorce	• Logistics and finances
	• Consequences on the children
	• Consequences on the participant
	   ▪ Emotional
	   ▪ Social
	   ▪ Behavorial

• Parenting after the divorce	• Positive effects on parenting • Negative effects on parenting • Openness and Honest Communication • Importance of Discipline
• Emotional awareness and understanding	• Seeking professional help • Listening to and knowing each child individually • Allowing them to make their own decisions • Constantly learning and growing their parenting style • Child outcomes

• Support structure	• Parents
	• Church
	• Friends and colleagues
	• Ex-partner
	• Children

4.3.1. Marriage

4.3.1.1 Religious and idealistic perceptions regarding marriage

In order to understand the role that divorce plays in a parent's parental self-efficacy, it is important to understand the circumstances under which the currently divorced parents were married. Their view of marriage, why they chose to marry, and their perception of marriage, is of particular importance in understanding how the divorce impacted the way they perceive themselves as a parent as well as their views of divorce (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). This section will focus firstly on the participants' view of marriage as a start.

All of the participants indicated that they perceive marriage as a life time union with their partner. Divorce was not even considered going into the marriage. Marriage was seen as a final promise or commitment made with their partner that would last for life. This view has been further reinforced by the fact that all of the participants ascribed a certain degree of religiosity to themselves. All of the participants indicated that they were from the Christian faith. They mentioned that, according to the Christianity religious views that they were brought up with, divorce is seen as something that is morally wrong and that should not be an option at all. The

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only time that divorce was seen as an option by the participants was in the case of any infidelity. The religious aspect of the couples' lives was so strong that it seemed to be the one factor that participants used as their guideline for their marriage. Participants indicated that they saw marriage as a 'covenant' or promise being made between the two people and God, with their friends and family being witness to this. It was clear that participants have taken up this view of marriage due to a combination of two factors, vicarious experience and observational learning. Vicarious experience had to do with watching others succeed and perform well in that particular area (Froman & Owen, 1990; Warren et al., 2011). Thus, the participants had reinforced their ideas of marriage as it was indicated that growing up they did not witness other couples getting divorced. Participants had witnessed other couples who had been married for decades (even though many of these couples were in unhealthy marriages, sometimes even in abusive relationships) and believed that with perseverance and prolonged effort in adverse times that they too would be able to stay together and make their marriage work. This can further be linked to observational learning. Certain views, practices and perceptions of marriage are observed in a certain society and over time they become cognitively integrated (Weiten, 2007). Religion, specifically Christianity, is one of the main factors contributing towards participants seeing marriage as a life time bond between themselves and their partners, a promise that is only broken if there is infidelity in the marriage. The degree to which these religious views were adhered to and believed often determined how long a couple would try to work at the marriage as well as how far they would go in order to make the marriage work. These are some of the excerpts from the participants>

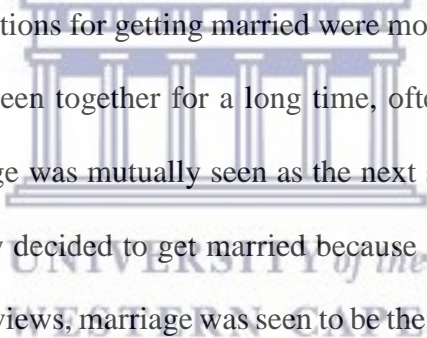Participant 1:*"I didn't think that my marriage would end up in divorce."*

"Uhm, one because I was idealistic about marriage and covenant and covenant keeping. Uhm, 2 because I thought the only possible reason my marriage could have

been terminated would be as a result of disloyalty and I didn't see disloyalty as a fact."

– Participant 1

Participant 7: *"Well, I don't think most people go into marriage planning their divorce. So you always think it's gonna have a happy ending."*

Participant 6: *"Uhm, I believe that marriage is not an agreement it's a covenant. And covenant is part of God's plan, so I understood that in covenant you must be very careful before you break up a covenant. You have to stick to what you've promised, it's a promise that you've made before God and before witnesses."*

Participants' reasons or motivations for getting married were mostly based on feeling that they loved their partners and had been together for a long time, often since they were teenagers. They were in love and marriage was mutually seen as the next step in their lives. Two of the participants indicated that they decided to get married because of the woman being pregnant and, because of their religious views, marriage was seen to be the right thing to do or the correct course of action to follow. It is evident that participants' views of marriage as well as their reasons to get married are similarly influenced by the aforementioned factors of vicarious experience and observational learning (Froman & Owen, 1990; Warren et al., 2011). Further, none of the participants thought that their own marriage would end in divorce, despite the high prevalence of divorce in the society. This indicates a strong self-bias when it came to their own marriage (Weiten, 2007). This was further reinforced by the belief that their marriage was divinely mandated or orchestrated by God. These are some of the excerpts from the participants to buttress this belief:

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Participant 2: *"I definitely thought it would be something that wouldn't apply because we were Christians and at the time we were extremely busy in our church and obviously as Christians its expected that it all will last forever…"*

Participant 6: *"I definitely believed that my marriage would not end in divorce… Because I knew uhm, the commitment that I had and I knew that I loved deeply and knew that I was honest and true to what I've decided to do."*

With regards to participants' views of divorce, a major factor that contributed to this was society and the environment around them. Nine of the 10 participants came from backgrounds that were very 'traditional' in their thinking and therefore believed that no matter how bad the marriage, it should be worked at and problems should be dealt with no matter what. Regardless of being in an unhappy marriage, divorce was not seen as an option.

– Participant 4: *"I think the only thing is what you hear from people who's been divorced or maybe see on the TV now and then, but I thought divorce is the ugliest thing, I mean, it can't happen to me… Because people made the other parties so bad. You know, it was always the other party that was the problem. So people spoke negatively about their experiences."*

– Participant 7: *"… especially those older than you, you tend to listen to older people because you think they wiser. But I sort of learnt that their mind-set was not like mine… and they all say you gotta stay together for the child's sake, you can't get divorced, it's not right, and all those sort of things"*

4.3.1.2. Problems arising within the marriage

Gigy and Kelly (2008) have identified that the main reasons couples get divorced are emotional needs being unmet, couples growing apart, a great degree of conflict and even being bored

inside the marriage. These, as well as a few other factors, were all prevalent in some way or the other with the participants and the reason(s) they've indicated for getting divorced. With regards to the various problems that arose in marriage that eventually led up to the divorce, participants all indicated similar problems that they started to see arise. These have been categorized into three sub-categories, starting with what can be seen as 'minor problems' and from category one-three they increase in severity.

Sub-category 1 involves the factors that arose over time and, according to participants, these problems could be worked through if both parties tried. Problems such as boredom in the marriage, lack of intimacy, lack of communication, no love in the marriage and couples simply growing apart.

– Participant 2: *"I think it's definitely just the lack of communication, the not speaking to each other about how we felt perhaps."*

Participant 2: *"Uhm, I believe that once intimacy is taken out of the marriage (and when I say that I mean the sex factor), I think you lose a lot of the person because there's no vulnerability, there's no need physically anymore and emotionally leaves you questioning."*

Participant 1: *"... here I was in this loveless marriage, laboring so hard, giving my life for this man..."*

Participant 3: *"... there was no really intimacy afterwards. And if we had sex it was based on, she felt obligated. Not passion, romance, based on an argument... a demand and then it happened."*

Participant 9: *"He didn't know what to do with me, and it just started to break down right away."*

Category 2 contains problems that were seen as more serious and caused serious friction in the marriage when they arose, or were brought to light within the marriage. These include verbal and emotional abuse, neglect, as well as physical abuse and engaging in the use of pornography. Manning (2006), in a review of the impact that pornography has on marriage, found that where internet pornography was engaged in privately by one partner, it would create distance between the partners as well as affect the sexual energy in the relationship.

These problems as they arose had a more direct negative effect on the marriage than the problems mentioned in category 1.

Participant 6: *"...he then started to physically abuse me and verbally abuse me. I think I was in such a state of shock and trauma that you tell yourself its not going to happen again and you tell yourself that it's going to get better. But unfortunately it did not so by the time that I made the decision I really went through a lot of struggles to know that I have to make a decision now."*

Participant 10: *"Because I was broken down by my husband so the verbal abuse is harder than physical abuse but I don't know."*

Participant 9: *"He was just open with me, he said to me, "I don't love you, when I look at you I think you're ugly. That's just how it is."*

Participant 1: *"... my daughter had discovered that he uhm, he was delving in some serious pornography, and uhm, it was like hectic stuff and it really hurt my child and it was shocking for me."*

Participant 2: *""I'm tryna help kids through this stuff and it's in my home! And you want me to make peace with it?" I said, "I can't." Uhm, so then, I said to him, "if you wanna fix this and you want me to stay."*

Category 3 contains problems that were seen as 'deal-breakers', the couple (or one party) simply could not deal with these problems and therefore divorce was seen as the only option, even if this was eventually only decided on years later. Their views on this were so strong that in some cases it was the main reason for the divorce taking place, despite their strong religious convictions. There were two main problems that came up; infidelity and one partner indicating/confessing that they are homosexual. As the Christian doctrine is against and has produced a negative attitude toward homosexuality (Mathibe, 2015), this was entirely unacceptable in the marriage of the participants. It is important to note that these categories are not rigid but fluid in that they overlap as well; for example, the couple dealing with a problem from Category 3 might also have a few problems of Category 1 prevalent in their marriage.

Participant 1: *"I had made these conclusions that the only way I would be able to get out of this was if there was infidelity."*

Participant 1: *"I thought maybe I was just being paranoid or uhm, but when I got here, I had a gut feel, and I just, I asked my daughter to just look at one particular social media platform, and uhm, the rest was history. It was uhm, I was getting feeds on my computer of everyone that he was speaking to. It was a flurry of things, he was flirting with women all over and that was it for me. By that time I just thought, "there is nothing left in me to stay. I have no will to stay any longer."*

Participant 6: *"…I realized he is again in contact with other men. Sexually with other men, uhm, he also had emotional attachments with other men and even then it was just too hard for me to make that choice… And I did, I asked him to leave the house on a Sunday morning I asked him to leave the house at 5am and he left."*

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4.3.1.3. Attempts at resolving the marriage

Because the participants shared a religious foundation for their marriage and saw marriage as a lifetime commitment with one partner, it stands to reason that they would then work very hard to try and fix the marriage and maintain it if problems arose. This was the case with eight of the ten participants. It also indicated that they had a good degree of self-efficacy to start with as they believed that, with enough effort and perseverance, they would be able to successfully navigate through the various issues that they were experiencing and save the marriage (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1993; Froman & Owen, 1990; Warren et al., 2011;). A prevalent trend that came up was that couples that were only dealing with Category 1 issues tended to not work very hard on trying to resolve them even though they knew something was wrong. A reason for this could be the fact that these issues are more subtle and not very overt and can sometimes go unnoticed for a while. Issues such as activities done together, stability, conflict and affection were found to worsen over time, usually after the 'honeymoon period' (Moen, Bradford, Lee, Harris, & Stuart, 2015). However, participants that showed emotional awareness and were more active in trying to resolve their marriage difficulties were able to identify these problems and try to fix them. These included techniques such as speaking to each other about problems, and trying to be more communicative. In some cases this problem was made worse because the couple simply didn't know how to go about fixing the issue, or the effort in trying to resolve it was only coming from one side, which was usually from the woman's side. This was the case with seven of the ten participants. Couples classes and counselling were also sought but this failed because one partner was not committed to the process of trying to fix whatever was wrong in the marriage. This then continued over several months and even years and this put further strain on the marriage as well as allowing space for further problems to arise.

Participant 1: *"Uhm, we went through the workshops and he just thought, '3 months of counseling, ticked box, you know, she's not gonna go, its fine."*

Participant 9: *"I went into it believing that I could make it work no matter what because God was greater than anything."*

Participant 9: *"I said to him, "listen, I want to keep this going. I wanna make this marriage work" and whatever, to the extent that if I can't make it work then I would rather gas myself than get a divorce because I wouldn't be able to live with the fact that I just didn't make it work."*
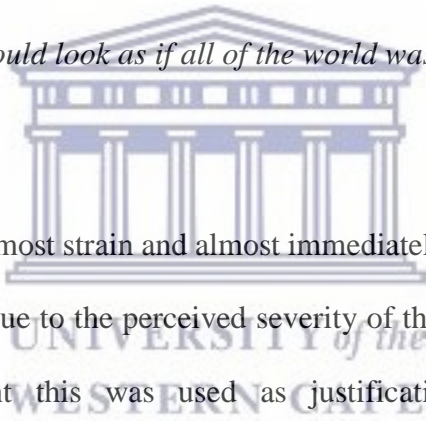
Participant 9: *"...they've both gotta want it. Because if the one doesn't... I, 10 courses later, years of struggle, I couldn't do it. I failed at it but I failed because he was not wanting to do it."*

Within Category 2, the participants explained that the problems were much more obvious and hard to ignore or continue to live with. This then led couples to seek help from peers, from elders in the church or from marriage counselors in order to help them deal with these problems. In four instances where abuse (two verbal and two physical) was prevalent, the severity of the abuse was a factor determining the effort expended in order to resolve it. In cases where women experience emotional, psychological or physical abuse, they are more likely to remain silent about it than to speak up against it (Chisale, 2018). Where verbal abuse was present it was not fully dealt with but was accepted in silence by the participants. However, in the instances of physical abuse, professional help was sought. Following this, legal help was also engaged in and eventually the decision to divorce was made because of not wanting to live in an abusive marriage.

Participant 1: *"... if you wanna fix this and you want me to stay, there's one thing I ask of you; to tell the truth. To the right people... so I said to him, "I*

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need you to go before the church counsel, I need you to tell these men and women that you have a problem and you need time off, because you cant be carrying on in the ministry whilst you're doing this. You need time off, you need to deal with this matter and then you need to be accountable to them and you need to share with them."

Participant 4: *"... there was one or two things I picked up, like for instance I got pornography on my computer, uhm, and I confronted him and he said no but somebody is hacking the computer but we had such a good relationship that I believed him, so it was totally unexpected. But I could see psychologically for him, he was much quieter, he was uhm, much more reserved, he would come home and he would look as if all of the world was on his shoulders."*

Finally, category 3 caused the most strain and almost immediately led to the termination of the marriage. This was probably due to the perceived severity of these problems. In the one case where infidelity was present this was used as justification for immediate divorce. Homosexuality was dealt with slightly differently. With the three cases where the husband came out and confessed that he was homosexual, the couple still tried to work and resolve this because divorce was seen as wrong and immoral. Eventually this too proved to be ineffective and divorce was the only option because of the clash between the doctrine of Christianity and being homosexual (Mathibe, 2015).

Participant 4: *"Well, out of a Christian background I feel that to be gay is not always the appropriate way. And because of the fact that he could live so long without it, why could he not live longer without it. But he just said he's not going*

to, he needs to come out with this and I was not willing to have a life further that already been a joke, or not a joke, but a lie."

Participant 4: *"But it happened at the end that he came out with the fact that he's gay and then he then decided to live that life. So this was not something that I could have changed or…. He said that that is what he is all about. Ya."*

Participant 9: *"Halfway in our marriage he told me that he is gay and uhm, it was 7, 6 years. Uhm, by that time we did not have children and also by that time I also said to him, "I still choose marriage" if he still chooses the marriage and goes through counseling to become whole, uhm, because in my belief I know that he was not created to be so confused, his core identity was broken and he decided that he will go through counseling"*

As mentioned above, the degree to which couples, especially the women, adhered to their religious views determined how far they were willing to go in order to save the marriage. Those who adhered very strictly to their religious views were more likely to put in great amounts of effort in order to keep the marriage going, whereas those who were religious, but did not adhere to it as strictly had a more practical approach to their situation in that they were willing to get divorced when they realized that the marriage was unhealthy beyond repair and starting to affect their children as well. This indicates the huge role that religious beliefs have on couples' view of marriage and divorce in that they would sometimes be willing to stay in a loveless marriage that is not contributing positively to anyone in the household in order to not break the marriage convent that they've made.

4.3.2. Consequences of the divorce

The second major theme that was identified was the consequences of the divorce on the lives of the participants. After going through the divorce, participants were now faced with the task

of adjusting to their new lives. A longitudinal study conducted by Tschann, Johnston, and Wallerstein (1989) found that individuals with good personal resources such as a higher socio-economic status and healthy psychological functioning were more likely to adjust positively to their new lives than those who did not. Leahy-Warren et al. (2011) have noted that adjustment to life after the divorce can be particularly difficult in that individuals who have been through a divorce are likely to struggle with depression, anxiety, stress and overall strain on parenting. This was evident in the initial period of the lives of all of the participants in that they now had to adjust both practically and emotionally and psychologically to their new lives. The reality that they have been through a divorce was also one that took time for the participants to accept and make peace with.

The various subthemes and areas of adjustment that have been identified have all had a significant impact on the participants and played a big role in their parenting moving forward, particularly with regards to the social, academic, behavioral and emotional consequences that it had on their children as well as themselves.

4.3.2.1. Logistics and finances

With regards to logistics and finances participants were now left with the weight of needing to provide for their children. This was seen to be one of the major factors that caused stress and worry in the lives of the participants. A study by Teechman and Paasch (1994) regarding the financial impact of divorce found that custodian mothers experienced significant declines in their financial resources after the divorce. These findings were confirmed in that all of the participants indicated a period of financial struggle and difficulty after the divorce.

The participants' responses varied with regards to the financial help that they were receiving from their ex-partners. They were receiving their maintenance on time and financial issues

were settled legally and mostly adhered to. However, the amount that they were receiving was often very low, which meant that the participant still needed to take on most of the responsibility of providing for the children. This meant taking on an extra job or working extra hours and in eight of the ten cases relying on their parents for financial help. This added a significant amount of stress and strain on the participants' part.

Further, the participants now needed to find a new place to stay, buy new furniture, and relocate to new areas. Having to do everything without the help of a partner was a very difficult process to navigate through while still dealing with the emotional consequences of the divorce as well. In cases where the financial and living situation was particularly hard, it would put more strain on the participants, their relationship with the children and their parenting outcomes. In cases where a participant was able to make meet all of their financial responsibilities, and provide comfortably for the family (often with the help of other family members and friends at first), it significantly lessened the burden in terms of being a single parent, adjusting to the new life and emotional healing from the divorce.
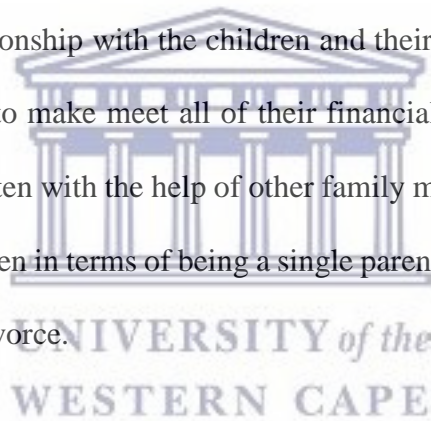
Participants also indicated that several changes in their life style now needed to be made and luxuries that they used to have they would now need to go without. One participant mentioned that they were now no longer able to afford going away on holiday so she decided that she would replace going away on holiday with camping because it is much cheaper, but still a good family bonding activity.

> Participant 7: *"I think if he never went to his father maybe I would have felt differently because then its just me, but I got money from his father, I got support."*

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Participant 9: *"... and the agreement also said he will sort all medical and education expenses for the children which is a huge relief for me."*

Participant 4: *"Financially, Yoh, I am a teacher so our salary is not what it should be and uhm, I do get maintenance and I must say he is one of those people who pays every month on the right time, so I've never had a struggle with maintenance, but even with that, buying my own house, having my own medical aid, which was all paid by him in the past, had place a burden in such a terrible way that I need to do not only my normal job, I need to take on extra classes and extra work in order to just survive."*

Participant 8: *"I had to start from zero. The first few months we lived with my mom in Pretoria and she supported me and my son 100% financially, like she provided for everything. With him I think he only gave us about R1000 which is nothing and eventually when I got the job that's when I moved to Cape Town. I had to start with a teaspoon and as you can imagine it was very hard. Ya, I didn't manage it very well, but eventually."*
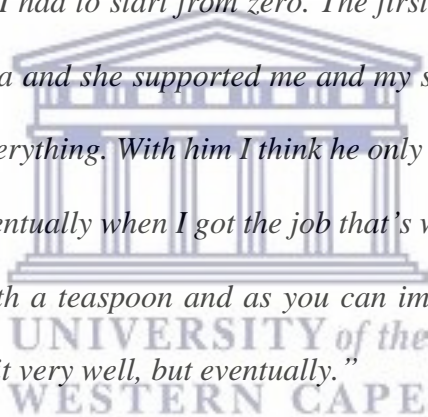
The topic of finances was one that was very prevalent, indicating the important role that being able to provide for themselves and their children plays in their management and coping with being a single parent. This was also seen in that the one thing that participants struggled to settle and argued about most with their ex-partners was finances. This would then also extend to the children and would have an effect on them, although for the most part the parents tried to keep the children out of this but this was not always possible. Participants were fortunate to not have the financial burden become too stressful for too long. Participants indicated that they had an initial period of struggling financially (where they had to rely on their parents) but once they managed to settle into their new lives and routines and get new jobs they were then well

equipped to look after themselves as well as their children. This is vital in the context of the study because financial freedom meant that participants were now able to devote more attention to their children, learn more about themselves and their parenting as well as be able to properly monitor their children's behavior, emotions, social skills and academic performance.

4.3.2.2. Consequences on children: Academic, social, emotional, behavioral

With regards to the consequences of the divorce on the lives of the children, these vary. The longitudinal study conducted by Zill et al. (1993) on youths from divorced families found that they were still twice as likely to exhibit psychological and developmental problems. Arkes (2013) has also found that after having gone through a divorce, children have an increased risk of engaging with and using marijuana and alcohol.

The effect that the divorce had on the participants' children varied mostly with regards to how the divorce was handled. In cases where the divorce process was handled well, with minimum issues and fighting between the parents, the children showed minimum negative effects in their lives. Alternatively, in the cases where the divorce was a long process, filled with tension, back and forth friction and arguing (and sometimes abuse) between parents, the parents would have more of a struggle with their children afterwards in terms of their behavior, emotions and social interactions and academic performances.

The effect that divorce had on the children varied somewhat. This was mostly based on age, the reasons for divorce, as well as the way the divorce happened. Nine of the ten participants had at least one child who was under 10 at the time of the divorce, indicating a greater probability of going through a divorce as a young child (Altenhofen, Sutherland, &Biringen, 2010). Because of this they did not have the mental capacity to fully understand the divorce. Participants indicated that they were confused as to where the other parent was and would

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sometimes think that it is perhaps their fault. In these cases the participant had to explain to their children or child that it was not their fault in words and language that they could understand. As they grew older and could understand more, more information such as the reasons and causes for divorce were also explained to them. This required emotional awareness and understanding from the participant in order to explain to the child on their level and having them fully understand it. Participants showed this kind of awareness and understanding and were able to communicate this effectively to their children. The effects of the divorce also varied and tended to show an upward curve over time, with the worst effects being shown immediately after the divorce. As time went by, they settled into their new lives and understood the divorce and why it happened better and then outcomes tended to become more positive than negative. This was done with a significant amount of effort from the participants in terms of their own parenting, ensuring that they are doing the best that was possible for their children.

Because our children were too young to understand much of what was happening, it affect them emotionally. For example, this was displayed through several nights of crying for the other parent, not knowing why they were not there. One of the participants' sons started to show signs of separation anxiety (Weiten, 2007) in that he would become extremely anxious that his mother would also leave him and would then cry and panic whenever his mother was late to pick him up from school or an after school activity. It was mentioned that this came as a direct consequence of the divorce, i.e. the father leaving. Another effect that was seen in the older children of the participants (teenagers) would be clinically diagnosed depression. This was seen in two of the ten cases.

> Participant 4: *"Yes, last year she had a total dip and I had to take her to a psychologist. She is on anti-depressants now and the psychologist also, uhm, she told me the psychologist said she doesn't like change anymore."*

Participant 6: *"Uhm, so he was anxious, he could not sleep and he was very sad and uhm, my youngest one, he had uhm, separation anxiety so if I'm late for anything his wheels will just come off. Late for sport, late to pick him up but I made sure that I was never late and I made sure that he knew exactly what was the day like, so that he doesn't feel… that he feels less insecure and he could in any case not sleep over at all. Not with his friends and not with his dad."*

Participant 2: *"… we've had, there were one or two occasions where he'd break and literally say, "does daddy not want me?""*

For the most part the behavior effects were positive, but this only came with time and understanding on the part of the child. One participant indicated that her daughter, who was only three at the time and therefore could not understand much, would often cry and throw temper tantrums, going into fits of anger and shouting. Teenagers of the participants also went into their shells somewhat for the initial period, being very quiet, not interacting with family and friends much and spending most of the time in their rooms (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991). This could be attributed to the normal teenage developmental process; however, participants indicated that they knew their children well and mentioned that the behavior that they were seeing was as a result of the divorce.

Participant 8: *"… you know he's a very outspoken child but then for some time he was very cocooned, like went into a shell uhm, because he didn't understand why and I think eventually… when we moved."*

Participant 9: *"She's now on some medication which I can't remember but she's stabilized and she's happy and she knows if she goes off it, uhm, it just, it goes very dark so she goes back on it again and she knows that."*

Participant 10: *"I mean there's days where jade would cry for 2, 3 hours about the smallest thing and you don't know what's wrong, what's going on and you don't know what to do and then my mom would just calm me down and she would say, "you go and sit there and I will take Jade.""*

Participant 10: *"She really gets angry a lot and that's what scares me now. I don't know what I'm going to do with Jade but I feel like we can work through it. I think because she's realizing now that mom and dad is not together anymore."*

The positive effects were seen years later and were more prevalent in the teenagers than the younger children of the participants. These came as a result of understanding what divorce meant. Because of this, the older teenagers would become more supportive and protective of their mothers, not wanting them to be hurt and treated the negative way that their fathers had treated them. One participant also indicated that her daughter went into several bad relationships, started hanging out with the wrong friends and also started abusing substances in her teen years, attributing this not only to the divorce, but also to the abuse that she had witnessed her mother go through within the marriage. This case confirms the research conducted by Hurre et al. (2006), where it was found that females were more likely than males to have psychological issues and were more likely to indulge in various high risk behaviors. Participants were often unable to deal with and understand their children's emotions on their own. The main consequence that it had with the teenagers is that they decided that they did not want to do the same thing in their families in the future. One participant indicated that her son was becoming a gentleman and treating all of his female friends and teachers very well because he saw that his mother was not treated well by his father and decided that he would be different.

Participant 8: *"He's become very overprotective of course and he would say stuff like, "Mom, this guy better not make you cry like daddy did. Me when I get married I'm gonna marry my wife, I'm gonna stay with my wife, I'm not gonna divorce her and I'm not gonna give her stress like daddy gave to you.""*

Participant 2: *"And I think in that way he kinda felt like he needed to protect me maybe."*

Participant 9: *"I took them to a psychologist who was recommended from friends of the school and she was fantastic with each one of them, really knows her thing."*

Participant 5: *"She didn't want to go to him at all because of the violence that she saw… then she got into drugs and all of that. I should have picked that up, I didn't. Uhm, I should have, I should really have and I didn't, she cried for help, it was her way of crying for help"*

Based on the information extracted from the participants, it seems that it is not the divorce on its own that has a consequence on the child but the nature of the marriage before the divorce (the household environment) and the manner in which the divorce process was carried out. Negative consequences were also greatly minimized or dealt with through the help of the children getting professional help to assist them in working through and dealing with what they may be experiencing and feeling as a result of the divorce. This was a key factor in the beginning stages of adjusting to their new life.

4.3.2.3 Consequences on the participant: Emotional, social, behavioral

The previous section expanded on the role that the divorce played in the lives of the participants' children. The divorce also had various consequences on the lives of the parents as well (Fincham & Beach, 1999; Wade & Cairney, 2000) which are often overlooked. This

section will be analyzing the role that the divorce played on the lives of the participants holistically. This was very important to take note of as it had a large impact on how the participants would then go about parenting their children as well as how they felt about the way they were parenting, which is the focal point of this study. This section will not go into great detail with regards to the role that the divorce played in the parenting of the participants as this will be elaborated on in later sections.

Firstly, looking at the emotional consequences that the divorce had on the participants, the reactions were fairly mixed but there were certain similarities that have prevailed throughout. For example, where the divorce was the decision of the participant (nine out of the ten participants) there was a great sense of relief and freedom that came with deciding to get out of the unhealthy marriage (this did not negate the negative emotional effects that were experienced). The one participant to whom the divorce was not a choice and came as a surprise from the other party did not share these same feelings. All of the participants, including those who felt relief and freedom, indicated that they were still very heartbroken at the fact that they were divorced. They experienced lots of anger, shame, nights of crying and struggling to make peace with the new reality of their lives.

For the initial period participants indicated that they felt extremely broken and the prospect of having to deal with everything and raise their children alone aggravated these negative feelings. This was accompanied with feelings of shame at getting divorced because of the way that it clashes with their religious views as well as the stigma that people have placed on divorce. Participants also indicated feeling emotions commonly associated with divorce, such as shame and guilt (Wietzker, Buysse, Tom, & Ruben, 2012), wondering if they could not have done anything better to save the marriage and feeling guilty at not being able to provide the conventional idealistic family unit, according to them, for their children. The stronger the

participants held on to their religious views of marriage and the idealistic family unit, the harder it was for them emotionally to accept the fact that they had been through a divorce.

> Participant 5: *"Emotionally I was very distraught, because you think you marrying the person that you love and all that and it didn't work out. You do feel a failure, you feel it's your fault, I did totally think it was my fault, you know?"*

> Participant 2: *"I would prefer dealing with it at night when he'd be asleep and I could just do my thing. Cry scream, sit in my silent moments…"*

> Participant 10: *"Sometimes its difficult, sometimes I feel like I'm gonna cry…It's hard. Very hard I get sad a lot. I can cry the whole time."*

> Participant 10: *"I'm still sometimes weak, like I still sometimes feel Like I can cry for days and lock myself in a room and just sleep and feel like I don't wanna see the world."*
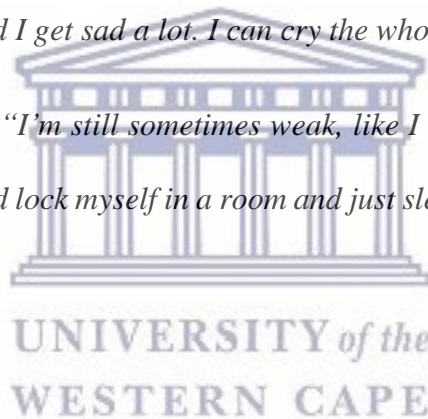
In a study researching the social consequences of divorce, Kalmijn and Uunk (2006) found that in regions or communities where divorce had a negative stigma attached, it was more likely that the women will start to lose contact with their friends, social clubs, and even relatives.

Socially, all of the participants indicated that they had experienced mixed responses from their friends and colleagues around them which then led to various social consequences. Because the participants came from very religious backgrounds and societies, some friends and family members were against the divorce and therefore decided to separate themselves from the participants. This was done because they did not agree with getting divorced from a religious and moral point of view.

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Participants indicated that they gradually started to see their friends avoid them, stop inviting them to socials and events and some of them deliberately refused to talk to or have any contact with them. This led most of the participants to have to find a group of friends. New friends were mostly found in support groups of women who had been through similar experiences as well as in church activities and church groups. Religion is associated with better well-being, life satisfaction, self-worth and optimism (Van Cappelen, Toth-Gauthuer, Saroglou, & Frederickson, 2014). It therefore makes sense that participants reported an increase in church going and participation in church activities after the divorce. This was a great source of comfort and support for them. These groups were even used for the sharing of various parenting ideas with other parents. From a social point of view, the participants did go through an initial period of much shame and even became outcasts in their circles. However, after settling in to their new homes and living arrangements, participants started going out, making new friends and creating a new social group for themselves where they were accepted and would get the support they needed.

Participant 5: *"But I had parents to chat to, I had a sister I was quite close to at that stage as well. We're a year apart, so I chatted a lot to her as well, I had good friends, so. Ya, I hung out with my friends a lot."*

Participant 9: *"So I attend the other church but when I moved to kraaifontein I was already friendly with people in another church so I kinda slotted in with that one and they became family. So those people have been fantastic so I think a lot of my church friends were not sure what to take sides with it, but when I was out of the picture it was easier because they didn't have to. There's one who decided to have nothing more to do with me and struggled to speak to me*

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and that sort of thing. There's another one who will actually reach out to me

and say, "lets do coffee and that sort of thing."

Participant 9: *"Uhm so they really came around me and I joined their women's*

prayer group as well and each of us being female had our day to have our cry

and and everybody supported us and when it was my day to have my cry, they

supported me. So we were really really close like that. I really felt I had family

and friends around me I think that was a huge comfort."

The support that participants received from a social point of view proved to be a very significant one. As mentioned above, divorce is often linked to depression (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011) and the participants all mentioned that at some point they felt as if they were depressed and the worst of times occurring when they had lost their friends and felt alone. With the emergence of new circles of friends and support, participants indicated that they began to feel less overwhelmed and less depressed and felt that they were able to deal with their circumstances and single parenting in a much better way. This highlights how important support structures are in the lives or those that have gone through a divorce, which will be expanded on in the next theme.

From a behavioral perspective, this is probably where the most change in participants was observed. Amato and Booth (1996) noted that divorce did not have a negative effect on the mothers' relationships with their children. This was evident with the participants of this study as well. Because their living and financial situation had now drastically changed, along with the fact that they had now become single parents, all of the participants were forced to undergo several lifestyle and behavioral changes. The change that came up the most was that participants indicated a change in focus and action toward their children and no longer themselves. Everything they did was now centered on their children and doing what's best for

them. Participants would now begin to go out of their way to make sure their children had everything they needed, sacrificing their own needs and wants if this was needed. Further, they would also begin to try and understand what their children were going through better in order to help them and be there for them. A prevalent method of doing this was participants' seeking professional help such as parenting classes/courses as well as speaking to psychologists in order to help them better understand their children. This was also done to help their children deal with the divorce. A large emphasis was placed on the participant putting themselves aside and focusing all their energy, time and resources into parenting and being there for their children.

> Participant 9: *"... there I feel like I need to give them 100% because this is where they get parented and they know it."*

> Participant 9: *"... the psychologists words to me was... I said I'm worried about the influence that Carl has over their lives because he's with them half of the time, 40% of the time and I'm worried that they not getting parented and he's gonna influence them negatively with the way he behaves. You know, not set a good example. And he words were, "Don't worry about him, they've got you." And that was a commitment point for me, I was like, "right. I am mommy, I've got to be the best possible mommy without help and I've also got to cover things that daddy should have covered. So it made me double up on my efforts."*

> Participant 2: *"I've gone on parenting workshops, and there's my diploma (points at diploma) of completion. Uhm, so I try to do things to better myself in being the best mom I could possibly be for him, and support him on every level."*

The participants had to adjust to their new life of being on their own and having to be a single parent to their children and, as is seen above, this was not an easy process. In fact, it was a very

painful and difficult experience and adjustment to their new life that had to be made. Various coping mechanisms were employed by the participants in order to help them deal with the situation. Seven of the ten participants did not mention many negative coping mechanisms that they had engaged in. Two of the main coping negative coping mechanisms that were mentioned were engaging in alcohol usage to forget about their pain, and then, from a parenting point of view, it was indicated that sometimes they would be very lenient and just let their children do what they wanted for a short time period. This was done so that the parent could get some rest from the responsibility of having to do everything in the household themselves. These were not engaged in on a regular basis and did not become an issue in the household with regards to the participants looking after the children.

> Participant 6: *"… it's such an overwhelming idea of I have to take control of literally everything so I think there were definitely times where I just… that I'd allow them to watch 3 DVD's on a weekend. Which I know is not maybe good choices but, so that I just do not have to talk. If we watch a movie I don't have to talk. And I was so tired, going through a divorce you are so tired. Emotionally you are so tired, I did not sleep in the night but when I have a chance to sleep during the day I would just sleep, you are so tired,"*

> Participant 8: *"I didn't have family so it was the church and friends and beside drinking wine there and there, to forget our sorrows, parting with them." -*

> Participant 10: *"With lots of wine (laughs), no, but lots of wine, going to church, and then looking at my little girl growing up.*

In this section it is important to note that, even though participants did engage in negative coping mechanisms, they were able to control and direct themselves in a manner that it did not

spiral into addictive or destructive behavior which would have prevented them from parenting their children in a constructive and healthy environment.

4.3.3. Parenting after the divorce

The next major theme that was identified was parenting after the divorce. This section will elaborate on how the participants grew and changed after the divorce. It also looks at the role that this had on various aspects of their parenting, their parental self-efficacy and their lives as a whole. It is clear that, although the divorce had a huge impact on them emotionally and caused a tremendous amount of pain, stress, depression, anger and confusion (Leahy-Warren et al. 2011), they were still able to develop themselves to a point of dealing with the issues and processes that they had been going through. At the same time they provided for their children and parented them positively, making sure that their needs were seen to and that their education, emotions and general behavior showed minimal negative consequences that are associated with going through a divorce (Fincham & Beach, 1999; Hurre et al., 2006; Wade & Cairney, 2000). Participants indicated a strong need to make their children's wellbeing their number one priority and even indicated that it was their children who provided strength and motivation for them to carry on. Following are the sub-themes that have been identified from this theme.

4.3.3.1. Negative outcomes

All of the participants indicated a great amount of initial pain and difficulty in being a single parent. Feelings of loneliness were very prominent not only from a parenting point of view but also from an individual point of view. Participants indicated that initially they would go through periods of extreme loneliness because of not having someone to help them with their parenting as well as not having someone significant in their lives anymore. This was especially difficult during the initial period after the divorce as well as when the children would spend time with the other parent. Feeling alone and having to carry the full weight of parenting alone would

often become overwhelming to the participants. Though these moments happened frequently, the participants indicated that they would not last long and in times like this they would rely on their various coping mechanisms (mentioned above) and/or support structures.

> Participant 9: *"I think the one thing is that those around you should remember it can be extremely lonely."*

> Participant 4: *"... like a year or 2 when I got that days when I cried and felt lonely…"*

> Participant 8: *"... my worry was I'm gonna be alone, what's gonna happen to my children? It wasn't, "Oh my goodness, Im not gonna be able to take care of myself, I'm not gonna survive and provide for myself."*

> Participant 4: *"I thought that if you get divorced it's the end of your life. You will sit in a corner and you will, well that's how I felt, in the beginning. You can't go out, you can't go nowhere, because you don't have a husband. You need to go alone wherever you need to go, to parties you need to be alone and I thought its not possible."*

In addition to this, participants also indicated going through periods of questioning themselves and self-doubt. They were questioning whether the divorce was the best decision for themselves and their children, and doubting whether they would be able to handle the weight and responsibility of being a single parent, especially when their children were showing adverse behavior signs and questioning their decisions. This indicates that the divorce did play a significant role in their parental self-efficacy and the way they viewed themselves as a parent as attributes such as low self-confidence, fear and self-doubt were found to be associated with low levels of self-efficacy (Warren et al., 2011).

Participant 1: *"… it didn't affect my decision making, but it made the process a lot harder because I was so busy questioning myself, "is my approach wrong? Should I do this this way? Maybe I shouldn't say that?" I found myself being extra careful around them, I found myself being more cautious, and then sometimes I found myself being forceful, because I needed to make a statement that I was in charge."*

Participant 8: *"Self-doubt that probably I shouldn't have… at that stage for a very long time, of course until I got somebody who said, "whoa, what you did was right. That man is crazy." So yes I did go through a lot of that. Of, "I shouldn't have done this, maybe in the end we could have been a family."*

Participant 1: *"Uhm, so I did feel a great degree of insecurity. I especially felt insecure with uhm, with the way I was parenting my younger son... And uhm, I think, there are many examples, not just one area. I did feel quite insecure, I felt as if I was being assessed. Uhm, I was being question like I was being second guessed."*
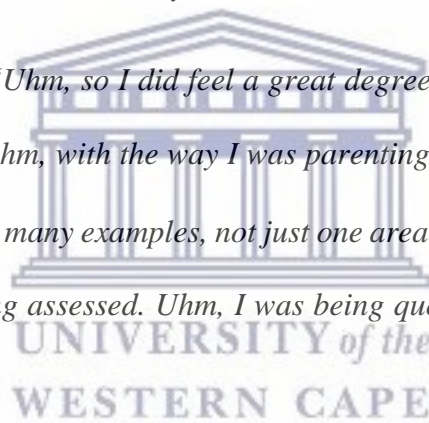
The final negative factor that participants mentioned they experienced adjusting to their new life and being a single parent was not always having their own thoughts and feelings taken into consideration by their children, firstly, as well as by their friends and family. Participants indicated that all of their time effort and energy had to be directed to the physical and emotional well-being of their children and, because of this, their own emotional and physical wellbeing was neglected at times to a large extent. The participants' friends and family would only be concerned about the children and whether they are doing okay but very few people would take the time out to find out how the parent was doing. This then leads to the feelings of being alone and overwhelmed to be aggravated. There were instances, however, where the children would

provide comfort and support for their parents, being there for them emotionally and helping them through the very difficult process of adjusting to their new lives.

> Participant 1: *"You will not have any idea what I am processing every day. How I have to get myself out of bed every day. I have to live this live, I have t make decisions, I have to keep living, uhm and choosing to live and that's not easy. That's an effort. You guys see your world is intact, it has never been altered because I've held it together for you in the absence of your dad. But in the process, I have been broken along the way and there has been no space for me to be whole."*

> Participant 6: *"There was one night that they were complaining about the food and I just lost it and I said, "you not grateful for what I do, so I'm going to get in my car and leave now." And I did it, I mean I just left and I came back an hour later (laughs)…"*

What was interesting to note was that these negative aspects of parenting and adjusting to their new life were only very prevalent during the initial period after the divorce and as time went by these negative aspects were managed well and dealt with in very positive and healthy ways. This is in line with the research done by Froman and Owen (1990), who found that parental self-efficacy (especially with mothers) tends to improve over time, which was the case with all of the participants. As time went by and they began to settle into their new lives, they reported feeling less overwhelmed and more confident in their ability to be able to parent.

With all the negative consequences and the huge life disruption that came with the divorce the participants still managed to engage themselves and their children in many positive behaviors and activities. This would turn out to produce many positive outcomes and thus lead

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participants to feel much more positive about their ability to handle being a single parent as well as their parental self-efficacy. One of the four main sources of self-efficacy information in an individual is performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1977) which can be seen to be at work in the lives of the participants. Participants indicated feeling very confident about their parenting and parenting style because of the fact that it had been working and that their children had been responding positively to their method of parenting as well as them having a closer more intimate bond with their children. Participants indicated that they started to draw strength from their children and their wellbeing motivated them to be better parents.

In terms of the positive coping mechanisms that were engaged in, these were engaged in much more than the negative coping mechanisms. This indicates a great degree of control and discipline on the side of the participants in that they were able to maintain many positive and uplifting behaviors and activities in a time that they were experiencing emotional pain and the stress of being a single parent. This speaks largely to the quality of their parenting and their parental self-efficacy being very high because they were able to engage in positive behaviors, believe that they are able to carry it through and that it would have a positive outcome on their children as well as maintain it over a routine period of time (Bandura, 1993; Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2009; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002). There were several factors that contributed to this as well, namely: openness and honest communication, and importance of discipline. These positive methods of coping were engaged from the onset of their new lives of being single parents, even during the emotional pain and going through their own processes of dealing with their divorces, indicating an ability to put their own needs aside and still be able to engage in parenting and activities that would have a positive role to play in the lives of their children.

4.3.3.2. Openness and honest communication

As the study done by Amato and Booth (1996) indicated, the quality of parent-child relationships often decreases after divorce, leading children to drift further away from their parents, which could then lead to them engaging in some of the high-risk behaviors mentioned above that are associated with divorce. In order to prevent this from happening, participants started to be more open and communicative with their children. This was seen as a very important factor because the values of truth and honesty were greatly emphasized in their homes and therefore this brought the family closer together as a unit. Participants became more engaging and attentive to their children's needs and the processes that they are going through. Participants also indicated a certain degree of change in their parenting style from very strict and somewhat bossy one to a more friend-like and lenient one. Understanding the importance of building a good healthy relationship with their children and how this would impact their children's emotions and whether or not they would open up to them about issues that they were going through was crucial. The participants, in addition to this, became very emotionally aware of the developmental stages that their children were going through and how they were dealing with things.

> Participant 6: *"I am a strict parent, but I'm also a fun parent… where I welcome emotion in the relationship."*

> Participant 4: *"No, because he often said I'm very strict so just decided, "maybe I must more move towards the way her dad…" Now that I'm talking to you I'm thinking that maybe I thought, "I must now win her over now." You know and make this the place for her where she feels happy, where she feels safe uhm, so that she doesn't choose… because that was one of my biggest problems was, "won't she go to him?"*

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Participant 3: *"I also say if there was a divorce, they need to be honest… why we got divorced, you know. Don't play blame game, 'your father was busy jolling'. Maybe he wasn't jolling, or the mother had an affair, maybe she didn't… but you want to blame. Say, "I had an affair". Or the mother must say, "I did this and and I did that." So that the children can learn how speak the truth also as they grow up."*
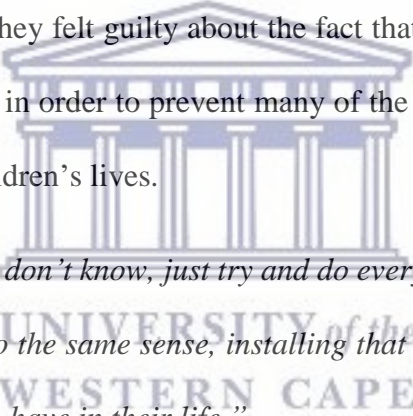
Participant 1: *"So I think my parenting style is to be engaging, to be practical, to talk through matters and to just prioritize our relationship with the issues that come about with parenting."*

4.3.3.3. Importance of discipline and routine

Although it was mentioned that the participants became more lenient and adopted the friend role as well as the parent role, this was not done without a strong emphasis put on discipline and routine. All of the participants indicated that they are very lenient and friendly with their children but with the balance of knowing when to be disciplined and strict. The importance of having a set routine and instilling proper values and morals was also emphasized. Although it was fairly difficult to play both 'good cop' and 'bad cop' the area of discipline was not one that participants would compromise on. This was a very important factor in their parenting and being able to parent and raise their children well. This indicates that they have good expectations of their parental self-efficacy based on Bandura's three aspects that their efficacy expectations would influence: initiation of coping behavior, expended effort, and duration (Bandura, 1977). Participants would initiate the discipline practices with their children. They would then expend their effort in making sure that their children have proper discipline and routines and this was kept up for a long duration of time in that all participants indicated the

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importance of having proper discipline and routine in place for their children, even when the children were not happy about it.

In addition to knowing when to discipline their children, the participants also placed a strong emphasis on instilling proper values and morals into their children in order for them to be able to grow up with a healthy mindset, healthy relationships and knowing how to treat people and respond to various situations in life. A significant amount of importance was placed on this as participants' indicated that they did not want their children to turn out to be another divorce statistic of having bad behavior in school, getting caught up with the wrong friends, engaging in substance abuse and other high risk behaviors. Participants even admitted to overcompensating somewhat; they felt guilty about the fact that they were divorced, and thus they would go out of their way in order to prevent many of the negative outcomes mentioned above from impacting their children's lives.

> Participant 5: *"I don't know, just try and do everything in a fun way in a loving way without also the same sense, installing that discipline and the borderlines that they need to have in their life."*

> Participant 5: *"well now any sort of discipline that I would do I would do it with god in my life. I would discipline them in a godly manner, I would do everything out of love."*

> Participant 1: *"Uhm, I'm a cool disciplinarian. I think uhm, I've always uhm engaged my children's thoughts on any issues, so uhm, one, is that I've modeled a lifestyle for them, 2, I've been real."*

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4.3.4. Understanding parenting and being emotionally aware

In this theme, how the participants went about understanding and being emotionally aware of their children better will be discussed. Participants put a great deal of emphasis and focus on their children's developmental and emotional well-being after the divorce. This was done in order to be aware of what their children were going through, and how best to deal with various issues that arose as they grew older. This was achieved through various activities and routines set in place and engaged in by the participants for and with their children. Once these were integrated into their routines, they conveyed a positive effect on the lives of the participants and the children. Participants indicated feeling much more confident as a parent and in their parenting ability once they saw the positive outcomes that their parenting was producing (Bandura, 1977). Within this theme, five sub-themes were identified, namely: seeking professional help, listening to and knowing each child individually, allowing them to make their own decisions, constantly learning and growing their parenting style, and child outcomes.

4.3.4.1 Seeking professional help

Going for counseling, parenting work-shops and parenting courses has good potential to help single parents to be better able to understand and parent their children (Hamid & Salleh, 2013). Seeking professional help included participants going to parent/child psychologists as well as taking part in parenting courses. The knowledge and understanding gained from this was then integrated into their parenting style, which helped to produce several positive outcomes. This proved to be a significant factor in helping participants understand themselves as well as their children better.

> Participant 9: *"I said I'm worried about the influence that Carl has over their lives because he's with them half of the time, 40% of the time and I'm worried that they not getting parented and he's gonna influence them negatively with*

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the way he behaves. You know, not set a good example. And he words were,
"Don't worry about him, they've got you." And that was a commitment point
for me, I was like, "right. I am mommy, I've got to be the best possible mommy
without help and I've also got to cover things that daddy should have covered.
So it made me double up on my efforts."

Participant 2: *"So I've gone on parenting workshops, and there's my diploma*
(points at diploma) of completion. Uhm, so I try to do things to better myself in
being the best mom I could possibly be for him, and support him on every level."

The help that this brought the participants was very significant in that they were now able to practically better themselves as well as their parenting. They knew what they needed to do as well as how to execute it.

4.3.4.2. Knowing each child individually

This was a vital element in producing positive parental outcomes and increasing parental self-efficacy. This gave the parents the opportunity to bond on an individual level with each of their children, enabling them to better understand where their children were in their emotional process. A further benefit that this element had was to help reduce sibling rivalry, which can become aggravated between siblings when there is jealousy or unfair treatment involved (Isaacs, 2016).

Participant 3: *"I treat my children individually. So I know, "you like appetizer*
and that chips, you like that cooldrink." You know… because you want to bond
differently with children because they are going to be individuals."

Participant 7: *"So, I'm a constant one for taking my kids out for a coffee or a*
burger. One on one, just one at a time not altogether. We have that too but I'm

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a believer in the one on one and then we just chat. We just chat, uhm, what's happening, what's going on, how was your day? Who's your friends? What are they doing, what's the things? Obviously not in a prying kind of manner, but you know how to have a conversation with each of your children to draw this information out so you can suss out where they are and where they just need to be guided."

4.3.4.3. Allowing them to make their own decisions

Participants, although strict when needed, indicated that they included their children and allowed them to make their own decisions while still maintaining a careful watch from a distance, fostering a closer parent-child relationship while creating a degree of respect between themselves and their children as well.

Participant 7: *"My kids are leaders, because I've taught them, "make your own decisions but you gonna have consequences if you choose incorrectly."*

Participant 3: *"…and I speak to my children not as children but as teens, as potential adults. I always spoke to them, "you gonna be an adult one day, so make this decision"."*

Participant 8: *"for example, tomorrow he's celebrating his birthday with his friends. "what do you want my son?" They all, all his 10 friends, I don't know what I was thinking, they're going to the, I had to pay for the movie for all of them and then they're going to have dinner at spur. And I'm just gonna leave them, they're teenagers so like I said that's being nice and fair and not… so go and do your thing, I will drop you guys and your parents must pick you up."*

Participant 8: *"I chose. Well I don't choose, well then I try to steer him on the right direction and if I see, "that one? No no, let him go." So that's the way I*

am. Uhm, I say I can be strict, I know where to draw the line I can be firm, but

at the same time I know how to relax."

4.3.4.4. Listening to their children

This sub-theme made cooperation between parent and child smoother, as the relationship

contained balance by listening to their children, rather than dictating or forcing things upon

them. This went further than just considering the child's opinion on certain topics, but meant

listening to their emotional language, feelings and thoughts regarding the journey after the

participant's divorce. Participants indicated that it was important for them to listen to their

children in order to understand where they were at emotionally and how they were dealing with

adjusting to their new life after the divorce.

> Participant 8: *"Ya I think so because uhm, I think I wanted to be close to him
>
> because I wanted to know how he was dealing with this, how is he really
>
> handling it and the best way to know is to become his friend and have dialogues
>
> and he would talk."*
>
> Participant 2: *"Uhm, but he dealt very well with it, like I say, if things don't sit
>
> well with him we would talk about it he would ask questions. Like his one
>
> concern now is me getting a boyfriend"* (laughs).
>
> Participant 5: *"Be communicative, as soon as the communication falls apart
>
> then the life falls apart because then you don't see, you don't hear and as much
>
> as your kids don't want it, they do want it."*

4.3.4.5. Constantly learning and growing their parenting style

One of the key factors in the participants' (parenting would be constantly learning and growing

their parenting style. As it is was found that parents become better at parenting over time

(Froman & Owen, 1990), similarly, participants indicated that they would try their best to always be adding to their parenting style and learning new techniques as their children progressed through the various developmental stages. This included admitting mistakes and being open to constructive criticism about their parenting. In order for them to have positive parental outcomes, their parenting style had to be dynamic and fluid rather than rigid.

> Participant 5: *"No, I think what people also need to realize if you have kids that are going through the divorce with you, and I think something that I didn't pick up on is when my eldest daughter went through a lot and she, when she went through a troublesome time, you know these teenage years, 15, 16, 17... she kept pushing me away and instead of me trying to draw her in and be that strong support for her like my folks were for me, I sort of thought, "Okay no, she wants to do it on her own. She's a strong child, she'll come to me when she wants to." And I should have been more supportive for her and I wasn't and think therefore even now today, she keeps on thinking she's got to do things on her own."*
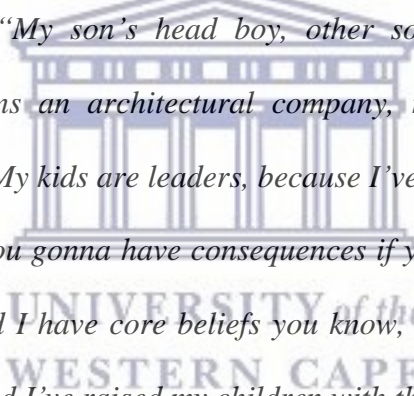
> Participant 4: *"... when I changed that, I think our relationship started growing as well."*

> Participant 4: *"... when she was younger, much more autocratic, but I think I've changed my view as well. Much more democratic uh, she can make her own decisions. I will give guidance if I feel its not the right thing she's chosen."*

4.3.4.6. Child outcomes

Finally, with regards to child outcomes, this was the factor that contributed most to the participants' parental self-efficacy. To a large degree, participants indicated that they measured their parental self-efficacy on the outcomes that their parenting had on their children. Participants felt good about themselves when their parenting techniques were working and

were producing positive outcomes in their children. Conversely, in cases or circumstances where their children showed negative behavior, acted out, or were not listening to the parent, they would begin to doubt themselves, their parenting styles and their ability to parent. These instances were few and far between and more positive parenting moments were reported than negative ones. Indicating a general sense of the participants believing in their ability to parent, they often stated that it is what has been working and therefore there is no need to change it. Some of the positive outcomes mentioned included having good manners, getting good grades in school, being sociable and popular with other children, receiving positive feedback from educators, and being part of other extra activities that allow them to contribute productively to society.

> Participant 7: *"My son's head boy, other son just got married. Owns a restaurant, owns an architectural company, my daughters' 14, baked his wedding cake. My kids are leaders, because I've taught them, "make your own decisions but you gonna have consequences if you choose incorrectly and I'm a Christian and I have core beliefs you know, honesty, loyalty, honor. All of those things, and I've raised my children with those core beliefs. Uhm, and it's paying off, I mean teachers call my son in to speak to uh, like the grade 7's and grade 8's if they naughty or things like that as head-boy."*

> Participant 8: *"I'm happy with it, it's working, ya. The reason is, I've always gotten good reports about him, about his demeanor, about his manners, about his… from the teachers, and it's been consistent ever since, that, "mommy you are doing a great job. You are raising a gentlemen." So I think it's working, yes. So I'm happy with what I'm doing, let's leave it at that"* (laughs).

When their children did well in these areas, the participants would feel that they were doing a good job at parenting and would feel that they were able to continue to parent well and produce positive outcomes, thus having high parental self-efficacy.

4.3.5. Support structures

Individuals who have a good deal of support after the divorce are found to adjust better to life after the divorce and show fewer negative outcomes than those who do not (Oygard, 2004). A study conducted by Colletta (1979) emphasized the importance of having support structures in place for parents who have been divorced. It was found that parents who indicated they had very little support would tend to be harsher and more restrictive with their children. The opposite was found to be true for parents who indicated that they were happy and satisfied with the support that they had been receiving. This introduces the next major theme that was prevalent. In this study, participants' support structure turned out to be one of the most important factors in their lives after their divorce. Participants found that the greater the support, the lighter it made the load they were experiencing and the less overwhelmed they felt. These support structures varied in the degree to which they were available to the participants. They included parents, church, friends and colleagues, the ex-partner and their children.

4.3.5.1. Parents

After the divorce participants turned to their parents, if they were able to do so. Eight of the ten participants moved back into their parents' homes with their children. In all of these cases their parents would provide emotional as well as financial support to the participants until they were able to provide for themselves and their children. This proved also to be an important source of comfort as the grand-parents' involvement in the children's up-bringing took some of the strain and negative emotion such as loneliness and depression that is often experienced

by single parents (Hamid & Salleh, 2013). The presence and help provided by the parents of the participants helped them feel less lonely and overwhelmed.

Participant 10: *"Definitely, support structure is, if you don't have that… I mean there's days where jade would cry for 2, 3 hours about the smallest thing and you don't know what's wrong, what's going on and you don't know what to do and then my mom would just calm me down and she would say, "you go and sit there and I will take Jade.""*

Participant 8: *"The first few months we lived with my mom in Pretoria and she supported me and my son 100% financially, like she provided for everything."*

Participant 5: *"I started losing weight and looking after myself again, staying with my parents. Them telling me it's not true and all this type of thing and helping me get back on my feet again."*

Participant 2: *"Uhm, I moved back home, it wasn't a problem for my parents to take us because my mom's always been a mother hen so she would, she's always happy to have her kids around her. Uhm, and I found that the structure worked very good for when I would work and he'd come home from school, there'd be someone here for him. So it was a good arrangement, it still is."*

Participant 2: *"… because I have that safety of knowing there's someone for him now after school, so then my mom's here. Uhm, but the shifting to get here, I guess was, a gradual adjustment of my parents just making it comfortable for us."*

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4.3.5.2. Church

As was mentioned previously, religion is a source of emotional well-being and support for many (Van Cappellen et al., 2016). Because all of the participants were religious, they sought guidance, comfort and council in their faith. This caused them to engage in many church-based activities and support groups for women who have been through similar experiences. They would also use the fundamentals of their religion, Christianity, to instill and teach their children core values and morals, such as loving one another, being honest, sharing with others and helping those that are less fortunate. This proved to be fairly effective in that the participants' children grew up placing importance on these values.

Participant 9: *"I had a new church which become my family and they still support me in a thousand ways uhm, if I need anything there's someone in the church that will do it for me (laughs). Uhm so they really came around me and I joined their womens prayer group as well and each of us being female had our day to have our cry and and everybody supported us and when it was my day to have my cry, they supported me. So we were really really close like that."*

Participant 5: *"Uhm, you never actually a single mother. There's always someone there to support you and if you can turn your life to god, god can fill that void for you. And that you don't have to be a single parent, there's always someone."*

Participant 6: *"I would pray and the other thing that the lord said I must do is, I started to sing over them, I would sing scripture over them, I sing the scripture, I declare the scripture. And god was faithful, he came and he just brought peace over them night after night after night after night."*

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4.3.5.3. Friends and colleagues

Support can often take the form of family members, but this also extends outside the family to friends and colleagues. This form of support can prove very helpful in alleviating much of the emotional stress that is accompanied with going through a divorce and being a single parent (Hamid & Salleh, 2013). Once the participants had settled into their new lives, often in new residential areas, new friendships were formed with the people around them. This was often women who have been through similar circumstances. This proved to be very helpful to the participants in that they could share experiences, and learn and exchange parenting advice with each other. This reduced anxiety as the participants realized that they were not alone in their experiences.

Participant 7: *"I got a whole new circle of friends when I was staying in my own flat and uhm, I started dating my current husband. It was all his friends and their wives and things like that, they became my new friends."*

Participant 2: *"… and definitely good friends that I could call on in times of need. Just to have conversations with, to breakaway those kinds of things… So I've had a good support structure, they still a good support to me and my son."*

Participant 9: *"They knew when I was going to court the day and so on. He told me I could have I day off if I wanted, uhm, they all offered support. Anything they could do to help, Amy was one of the most fantastic supports. There were just so many people who said, "we've seen this happen before. You need to have your sisters around you."* - Participant 9

4.3.5.4. The ex-partners

In cases where the ex-partner remained an active parent in the children's lives, i.e. making financial payments on time, spending time with their children, being available to pick up and

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drop off children when needed, participants found the weight of single parenting to be lighter. An added benefit to the lives of both the participant and the children was having a friendly and amicable relationship between the adults. In most cases, this was discussed and decided upon for the sake of their children.

> Participant 4: *"We can be friends for our daughter's sake, you are my daughter's dad and that's where it stops. I think that's the biggest achievement because I never thought I'd be able to cope without him."*

> Participant 2: *"... his dad is a good support on every level. He's definitely a present father, uhm, it would still be a point as I'm his sole provider, so it was about making sure I have certain things set in place so that if anything happens to me he is seen to."*

> Participant 7: *"I think if he never went to his father maybe I would have felt differently because then it's just me, but I got money from his father, I got support. His father drove me to the courthouse. We went together to go get divorced and then I had a cup of coffee afterwards and he bought me a bunch of flowers... He was supportive of our son uhm, as I say, we're better friends divorced than we were married."*

4.3.5.5. Children

Out of all these helpful and beneficial support structures, none proved to be more powerful and present than the children of the participants themselves. Participants indicated that even though they felt overwhelmed, confused, lonely, and emotionally distraught, their children would provide them with the motivation and support needed to better themselves as parents. Their children inspired and motivated them to push through the most difficult of times. The children of the participants turned out to be the greatest source of emotional support.

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Participant 2: *"In fact, if anything we spent more time together. We spent more time together and we talked and we were each other's friends in the evenings if you know what I mean. So it was quite cool."*

Participant 2: *"... and then looking at my little girl growing up. I think she made me the strongest."*

Participant 2: *"Uhm, we, I encourage him to talk about issues. We talk about issues. Every day before we sleep we pray of course and we talk about what your day was like. So we are friends, we very close."*

Participant 2: *"So I feel that we definitely have grown closer and our communication is really amazing. Like I said, he will come every day and the first thing we'll talk about is the day, so there's always a conversation so we definitely closer."*

In concluding this section on support structures, it is not one support structure but a combination of them all that provided the necessary help that the participants needed to have good parental outcomes. Each of the support structures helped to fulfil a different need that the participants had (socially, emotionally, financially, etc.). Had these support structures not been there, it was indicated that they would have had a much harder time.
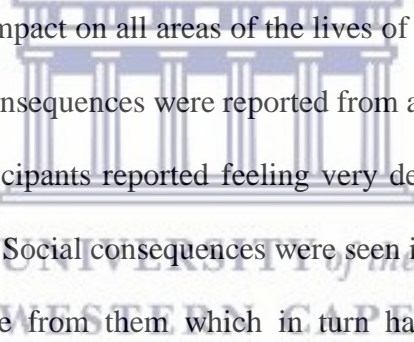
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Participants were very serious about the idea of maintaining the promise of marriage that they had made because of their religious background. Religion was the biggest factor in their views of marriage as well as how they felt about getting divorced. The more religious they were, the harder they tried to make the marriage work and the greater negative consequences the divorce had on them. This was largely to be attributed to their perception.

When it came to problems that arose during the marriage, participants were more than willing to work on these problems in order to make it work. Many months and years were spent on trying to work on the communication and to fix whatever they felt was wrong. However, the two areas that were not permissible, because of their religious background, were infidelity and one partner indicating or confessing that they were homosexual. It is important to note that the more religious the participant was, the harder they were willing to work at the marriage and even stay in an unhappy marriage, again attributing this to the strong religious motivations that the participants had.

Participants all had to change their lifestyles a lot because of having to adjust to their new financial and living situations. There was an initial very low and difficult period where parents and other friends had to be relied on for assistance; however, after settling and building themselves back up again, participants were able to stand on their own two feet and provide for themselves as well as their children.

The effect that the divorce had on the participants' children varied mostly with regards to how the divorce was handled. In cases where the divorce process was handled well, with minimum issues and fighting between the parents, the children showed minimum negative effects in their lives, whereas in the cases where the divorce process was not handled well, dragged out and was filled with conflict and tension, these participants indicated more negative effects with their children's academics, their social behavior as well as their emotions. The children's age also proved to be an important factor in how they handled and understood the divorce. Participants whose children were younger weren't able to fully understand the divorce as opposed to those who were teenagers already and because of their better understanding they showed more negative effects.

The divorce had a significant impact on all areas of the lives of the participants. There was an initial period where negative consequences were reported from an emotional, social, as well as behavioral point of view. Participants reported feeling very depressed, sad, and ashamed at having gone through a divorce. Social consequences were seen in that many friends and social circles now started to separate from them which in turn had further negative emotional consequences on the participants. After the initial 'mourning' and adjustment period, participants began in make new friends and increase their social circles. They began to take control of their lives as well as their feelings and reported feeling much better in themselves as well as their ability to parent.

Positive and negative effects on parenting varied; however, there were more positive outcomes than negative. The negative effects were mostly prevalent at the start of their new life and adjustment period and tended to fall away over time as the participants became more positive and confident in their parenting. The negative effects included participants sometimes being

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too lenient with their children, allowing them to do what they wanted for a short period of time as well as participants feeling inadequate and insecure about their parenting. Some of the more positive effects include parents making their children's wellbeing their number one priority, increased love, affection and attentiveness to their children, being open and honest in their communication and putting a strong emphasis on having proper discipline and routines. These became an integral part of their daily lives and played a significant role in increasing participants' parental self-efficacy.

Support proved to be one of the most important factors in the lives of the participants and, consequently, their children as well. All of the participants indicated that they felt strong and confident in their parenting after going through their adjustment period and one of the main reasons for this was the support that they received. This support took various forms – participants' parents, church and various church activities, ex-partners (especially financial support), participants' parents, friends and colleagues and, lastly, the children of the participants themselves. A factor that was prevalent with all the participants was the effort and degree they went to in order to make sure that they were well equipped to be able to parent their children well enough so that they would have a healthy and fulfilled upbringing. Participants further invested a lot of time and effort into understanding their children and being emotionally (as well as physically) aware and available for their children if and when this was needed. This took the form of seeking professional help, listening to and knowing each child individually, allowing them to make their own decisions, constantly learning and growing their parenting style and, lastly, child outcomes.

Finally, all participants showed an initial period of serious emotional, social and financial stress. They showed feelings of guilt and shame because of getting divorced as well as feeling

overwhelmed, inadequate and insecure about their parenting. This, however, only lasted for an initial period after the divorce and after adjusting to their new lives and receiving considerable support, significant positive outcomes and parenting techniques were engaged in causing participants to feel more confident about their ability to parent and more confident in themselves generally. Their parental self-efficacy became better over time as they started to fully apply themselves to their parenting and received significant support and encouragement around them. The positive behavioral, social and academic outcomes seen in their children also proved to be an important factor in increasing participants' parental self-efficacy.

5.2 Limitations

Although the results of the study showed that parents who have been through a divorce ended up having a very positive view of their parenting and their parental self-efficacy, further research is needed in that the sample of this study was limited to ten participants and therefore the results cannot be easily generalized to a wider population. Further, because the method of snowball sampling was used (participants recruiting other participants who meet the criteria) this meant that participants recruited other participants who had similar experiences and socio-economic statuses. Lastly, every participant in this study indicated that they belonged to the Christian faith and this played a substantial role in their marriage, divorce and parenting. Further studies should be conducted with participants outside the Christian faith in order to better understand the role that religious faith and adherence to it has on parental self-efficacy.

5.3 Recommendations

This section has been divided into two categories, namely, recommendations for practice and recommendations for research. Recommendations for practice involve how the findings of this research can be used practically with regards to family intervention programs and support groups for parents who have gone through a divorce, using the understanding and knowledge

gained through this study to guide and inform single parents as to how they can better their parental self-efficacy. The recommendations for the research category cover what further research can be conducted as a continuation of this current study, building on the knowledge and understanding that has been extracted.

5.3.1. Recommendations for practice

The results of this study have shown the process that single parents go through after they have been divorced and how they've had to adjust to their new lives and circumstances and how gradually over time, with support being offered from various sources, they've increased their confidence in themselves and their parental self-efficacy. These results can be used in practice to inform various interventions and support programs for single parents that are going through something similar. The emphasis on proper support structures should be emphasized as this was one of the main factors that has helped the participants through their divorce and helped them with their parenting as well.

5.3.2. Recommendations for research

The research that this study covered could be furthered in various ways in order to extract more knowledge and information when it comes to divorce and parental self-efficacy. As was mentioned above, the study was limited to ten participants in the Cape Town area of fairly similar class and socio-economic background. Because of this, the results cannot easily be generalized to the wider population. Further studies should be conducted using a larger sample group with participants across differing classes, occupations and contexts. In this study, all of the participants belonged to the Christian faith and this played a significant role in their outcomes and the way they felt about their parenting. Studies should be conducted with participants who are not only from the Christian faith but from various religious backgrounds as this will aid in the understanding of the role that religion plays in terms of parental self-

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efficacy, parenting practices and parental outcomes. Lastly, longitudinal studies may be very helpful in that they will present findings over a longer period of time as well as track how parents changed over time and how they went about their parenting process through the various stages of adjusting to their new lives. Finally, as stated previously, there is a significant amount of research available with regards to parental self-efficacy on its own and divorce on its own. The research on divorce and parental self-efficacy together is fairly limited. This study can be used to inform that area of knowledge and increase further research on divorce and parental self-efficacy.

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Appendix A (Interview Guide/Schedule)

1.   How long have you been divorced?
2. How long were you married before you got divorced?
3. When you first married, were you somewhat cynical about the relationship between marriage and divorce rates, or did you think your marriage would never end up in divorce? Please elaborate, what influenced your view?
4. What are your views regarding divorce and what shaped these views?
5. How long into the marriage was until marital discomfort arose, and how long until divorce became a likely outcome?
6. How many children do you have and how did they handle or understand the divorce?
7. What was your relationship with your child like before the divorce and what is it currently like at the moment?
8. Have you found that your friends have divided into camps that see one partner as the villain and the other as the victim, or have they been more neutral? How do you feel about this?
9. How has the divorce affected you financially, elaborate?
10. How has the divorce affected your living arrangements?

| |
|---|
| 11. What do you want others to understand about your experience of divorce? |
| 12. What are you most surprised about yourself in the experience of getting divorced? |
| 13. Explain what your parenting is like? What is your parenting style? |
| 14. How do you think your parenting style was affected by the divorce? |
| 15. How do you feel about your parenting style? |
| 16. How do you currently feel about your ability to be a parent? Your parental self-efficacy |
| 17. Did the divorce affect your relationship with your child? If so, how? |
| 18. Did the divorce affect the way that you see yourself as a parent? If so, how? |
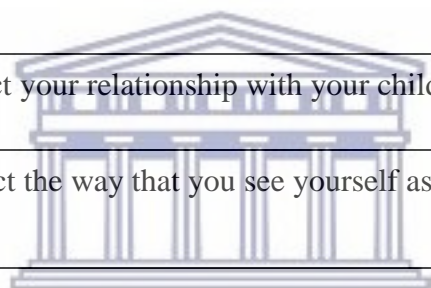
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Appendix B: Consent Form

(English Version)

Title of Research Project: **Parental self-efficacy and divorce: The impact on parenting, A qualitative study**

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

This research project involves making audiotapes of you while doing the interviews. The reason for this is because the interviews will be transcribed at a later stage and this will then be analysed and written up in terms of what was provided in the interviews. They will be kept safe and confidential and will only be accessed by the principal researcher.
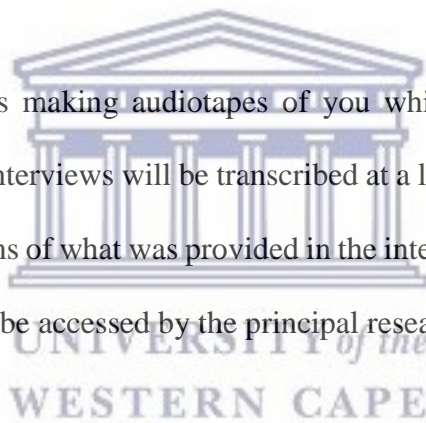
____ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

____ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature……………………….

Date………………………

(Afrikaanse weergawe)

Ingeligte toestemming vorm

Titel van navorsingsprojek: Ouerlike selfdoeltreffendheid en egskeiding: Die impak op ouerskap, 'n kwalitatiewe studie.

Die studie is al vir my beskryf in 'n taal wat ek verstaan. My vrae oor die studie is al reeds beantwoord. Ek verstaan wat my deelname sal betrek en ek stem saam om deel te neem van my eie keuse en vrye wil. Ek verstaan dat my identiteit nie aan enigiemand bekend gemaak sal word nie. Ek verstaan dat ek kan ontrek uit die studie te eniger tyd sonder 'n rede en sonder vrees vir negatiewe gevolge of verlies van voordele.

Hierdie navorsingsprojek behels die maak van oudiobande van jou terwyl die onderhoude plaas vind. Die rede hiervoor is omdat die onderhoude getranskribeer sal word op 'n latere stadium en dit sal dan ontleed word en geskryf word in terme van wat voorsien is in die onderhoude. Hulle sal veilig en vertroulik gehou word en sal slegs verkry word deur die hoofnavorser.

_ Ek gee toesteming om opgeneem te word tydens my deelname aan hierdie studie.

_ Ek gee nie my toesteming om opgeneem te word tydens my deelname aan hierdie studie nie.

Deelnemer se naam ....

Deelnemer se handtekening ....

Datum ....