A narrative analysis of young black South African women's stories about the recent divorce of their parents

By: Jaclyn Lotter

Supervisor: Professor Lindy Wilbraham

Rhodes University

December 2010

Thesis submitted in partial requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology (Cwk/Thesis).

Abstract

The global rise in divorce since the 1960s has brought into question the idealised view of the nuclear family which has for centuries been awarded special status in western societies and has been regarded as the primary social institution. According to contemporary research parental divorce has become a reality for every one in six children in South Africa. Until recently, little consideration had been given to how divorce affects black South African families, as it was considered to be an occurrence which only took place in white, mainly middle-class, families. The proportion of black South African couples divorcing has been increasing over the past decade, and in 2008 was said to contribute to 35% of all divorce in South Africa. Most research to date on the children of divorce has focused on young white children and adolescents and is largely concerned with those who have found parental divorce particularly difficult, and are manifesting adjustment and other behavioural problems. The research which has been done on the effects of parental divorce on young adults focuses mainly on clinical studies with middle-class families based either in the United States or in the United Kingdom. This research, using an experience-centred, life-story narrative approach, explores the stories which young black South African adult women between the ages of 18 and 25 tell, to give account to the ways in which recent parental divorce has affected their lives, views on family life, and what it has meant to them. The use of an experience-centred, life-story narrative approach allows for a process of rupture, acceptance and re-storying to be accounted for, as the participant‟s narrative shifts from past, to present and the future. Five young black women from a South African university each participated in two narratively sequenced semi-structured interviews based on McAdams‟ personal narratives protocol, which includes six core themes, namely: Key Events, Significant People, Stresses and Problems, Personal Meanings and Life-Lessons, Future Script, and Life Theme. Crossley‟s narrative analysis was then used to identify emergent themes and images in each individual narrative, after which they were woven together into a coherent story linked to previous literature. This study found that divorce involves a highly complex transition and reconfiguration process perhaps not fully accounted for in the existing idea and images associated with it. Despite being young adult women who had moved away from home and were engaged in their own lives, it became apparent that parental divorce was still a difficult and complicated experience, but that it is possible to tell both pessimistic and optimistic stories of parental divorce and its consequences.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the many hours of hard work and support from my supervisor, Professor Lindy Wilbraham. I would like to convey my deepest thanks for willingly taking me on for a second year. Thank you also for always believing in me and continuously encouraging me to do better. Your support has been indispensable throughout this process.

I would also like to give special thanks to the five participants for their time and openness in sharing their stories with me.

Contents

A narrative analysis of young black South African women's stories about the recent divorce of their parents

1. Introduction

Frequently in discussions about family systems from different cultural backgrounds, assumptions are made in the usage of terms which presumes a shared understanding. Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) suggests that in western society the term "family" is generally understood as referring to the conjugal pair who maintains a household and their offspring, while anyone outside of this arrangement is considered to be "extended family". However in many black South African cultures the term "family" refers to a much wider circle of people. Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) further suggests that while much has changed in terms of what constitutes marriage in many black [(1)] South African cultures, a major difference that still exists is that while western marriage is based on individualism and interdependence, marriage in most black cultures is still based on the principle of collectivity and interdependence. Yet, in spite of these fundamental differences black South African families continue to be uncritically compared to the western nuclear „nom".

For centuries the nuclear family has been awarded special status in western societies and has been regarded as a primary social institution (Ziehl, 2003). However many critics are beginning to suggest that this idealised view of the family is in fact far from the truth and does "not reflect the lived experience of family life" (Ziehl, 2003, p. 195). The prevalence of divorce can thus be seen as breaking up the traditional assumptions of nuclear families and this can be argued as being both good and bad. Some critics argue that the global rise in divorce since the 1960s and the accompanying disintegration of the family unit has lead to many other negative social consequences (Ziehl, 2003). In opposition to this, ideas about a postmodern family characterised by diversity of form and function, have emerged, "raising questions about the redundancy of the traditional nuclear family as a universal norm" (Chambers, 2001, p. 17).

[(1)] Assumptions are often made about what specific terms in a research study refer to and include/exclude. Therefore it is essential at the outset of this study to specify that the term "black", when referring to people in the context of this study, makes reference to black South African people of African descent and does not include coloured and Indian people. The apartheid-nomenclature based on racial classification is offensive, but unavoidable in a study which focuses on experiences – due to transitions from apartheid – of a particular grouping of previously disadvantaged South African people.

No matter whether we choose to agree or disagree with the arguments put forward, family structure is changing, with the Judeao-Christian assumption of marriage as a permanent institution fading, as both law and custom make it increasingly easier for couples to dissolve unsatisfactory marriages. While divorce has traditionally been considered a white middle-class phenomenon, evidence suggests that the proportion of black South African couples divorcing has been increasingly significantly over the past decade. Statistics South Africa (2009) suggests that while the proportion of black couples divorcing has been on the incline, the converse is occurring in white South African families, with an overall decline in divorce rates. In 2008, black couples divorcing are said to have contributed to 35% of all divorce in South Africa. While the divorce statistics of the developed world are still somewhat higher than that of South Africa‟s, the divorce trend is said to be growing and affecting South Africans of all races and cultures.

While divorce impacts all members of a family in some way, children are often the least responsible for the parting of their parents, but are influenced by it the most (Emery, 1999). While most research to date on the children of divorce has focused on young white, middle-class children and adolescents affected by parental divorce, little attention has been paid to the outcome of parental divorce for young adult children; with almost no literature focusing on the experiences of black children or young adult children of divorce (Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987). Therefore this research aims to explore the stories of young black South African adult women between the ages of 18 and 25, to give account of the ways in which recent parental divorce has affected their lives, view on family life and culture, and what it has meant to them.

2. Literature Review

DIVORCE

2.1 Systems theory

Psychoanalysis, Object Relations, systems theory and feminism are all influential theories which can be used to gain a better understanding of the effects of divorce on a family from various perspectives. According to Wetherell (1995) the core assumptions which psychoanalysts hold in terms of family life can be divided into three categories. First, is the argument which highlights the role of the unconscious and the impact of contradictory experiences within a family. Second, the family is seen by psychoanalysts as the mediating space between the child, society and culture and therefore is the formative influence in the creation of each individual. Finally, Wetherell (1995) suggests that families include adults whose identities have already been constituted through previous familial experiences and their relationships. Thus, the histories of the individuals impact on the changing family patterns in the present. Object Relations theory is interested in the relationships which infants build up with the objects/people in their lives, which are generalized to their wider interactions in the world (Wetherell, 1995). Thus, an individual‟s sense of self and being-in-the-world, made up of conscious and unconscious experiences, is formed through early relationships with family or family substitutes. Thus, the family according to psychoanalytic theory might be seen as the micro-system which most directly impacts and influences the development of an individual, and as such is nested within broader social systems (see systems theory model below).

Like many other modern reform movements, it is difficult to classify feminism as one theory, as it is made up of many complex and contradictory schools of thought and social movements. Overall however, feminist theory about the western nuclear family has played a significant role in raising awareness of women‟s oppression through domestic labour and childcare in the home (Ferree, 1990). Di Leonardo (1987) suggests that feminist scholars made great strides in formulating new theories and understanding of the relationship between kinship, gender and the greater economy, which has resulted in women becoming more audible and visible in public and familial life, and are seldom submerged within their families. Feminist theory considers family households as loci for political struggle, inseparable from larger society and the economy (Di Leonardo, 1987). Thus, feminist scholars advocate greater diversity in family practices and form of modern families, and take

the „nomal" nuclear family to task, arguing that it is this patriarchal, westernised and isolated family unit that is the most oppressive for women (Scott, Treas & Richards, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner"s ecological systems theory accords relatively equal importance to both the developing person and the environment of development. This model prioritises the reciprocity of relations, through an emphasis on the interplay between the individual and environment (Hook, 2002). Bronfenbrenner defines development as an individual"s "evolving conception of the ecological environment, their relations to it, as well as their growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (Hook, 2002, p. 313). The ecological environment is made up of widening systems – the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem – in which a child/family is situated. A microsystem can be described as a smaller subsystem which has the most direct interaction with an individual, such as a familial, peer or school subsystem, while a mesosystem is the set of dynamic linkages between microsystems in an individual"s life; it refers to the relations between microsystems or connections between contexts (Cox & Paley, 1997).

Systems theory uses a systems metaphor in order to better understand how families work and is based on four principles which clearly explain why the family can be seen as an organised system (Cox & Paley, 1997). The first principle is that of wholeness and order, meaning that the family cannot be understood by simply combining the characteristics of each individual. Second is the hierarchical structure of the family, which means that it is made up of subsystems, such as parental and sibling subsystems, which are rooted within larger subsystems, such as the community. The principles of adaptive self-stabilisation and self-organisation, which represent the third and fourth principles, are complementary as the former reacts to external changes, while the latter means that change in one component of a system or family causes all others to adapt (Cox & Paley, 1997).

Systems theory is based on the premise that "marriage and divorce can best be understood in the context of family relationships" (Brenato & Clarke-Stewart, 2006, p. 24), so that when a couple decides to divorce more than just the couple divorces. The family is viewed as a social system of interdependent relationships resulting in the actions of one member affecting all other members of the family. Thus the process of divorce involves circular causality between the family system"s various levels, so that the behaviour of any individual family member must be understood "according to their functioning within the network of interpersonal relationships" (Cox & Paley, 1997, p. 255). Kaslow and Linzer Schwartz

(1987) go on to suggest that the ripple effects of divorce extend far beyond just the nuclear family, but go on to include extended family, social situations, and school and work environments. Not only are there changes in the family structure and the various roles and relationships within it, there are often "changes in residence, income, and kin relationships" (Cox & Paley, 1997, p. 255).

This ties in closely with a narrative approach in that a personal narrative of parental divorce is more than just an individual story of an experience told from a particular subjective perspective, but is also a story of a family, a life-world, a society and a set of ideological, cultural and economic conditions (Kruger, 2003; Day-Sclater, 2004). Thus stories of divorce are not only understood in terms of "how they recapitulate past events, but also in terms of how they negotiate the present and future" (Kruger, 2003, p. 199).

2.2 Research focused on children

The term „children" in this context generally refers to boys and girls under the age of 18. While the existing research on the children of divorce is methodologically limited as it deals mainly with statistical aspects of divorce and is largely concerned with children who find parental divorce difficult to cope with, most research from the developed world agrees that parental divorce has some negative consequences for children (Amato, Booth & Spencer Loomis, 1995). Amato and Keith (1995) completed a meta-analysis of ninety-two studies done in the United States comparing the children of divorced families with those of constantly intact two-parent families and found that the former group scored "lower on measures of academic achievement, psychological adjustment, social relations, self-concept, and the quality of mother-child and father-child relationships" (as cited in Amato et al., 1995). Brentano and Clarke-Stewart (2006) go on to suggest that while the differences between these groups are not that large and necessarily permanent, nor are all children of divorced parents affected in the same way, the differences across research remains consistent and statistically significant. According to Emery (1999) the clinical accounts of children of divorced parents reveal painful psychological experiences which include amongst others, feelings of "fear of abandonment; grief over the loss of the family; anger at their parents; secret irrational hopes for reconciliation; and anxiety about balancing divided loyalties" (p. 16).

2.3 Research focused on young adults

Much of the research discussed has focused on the experiences of younger children and adolescents who are, of course, dependants within custodial relationships and immediate domestic arrangements with parents. This raises the question then about how recent parental divorce affects young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, who are at a crucial stage in their development which involves critical experiences and decisions such as moving out of the parental home, studying at university, career choice, marriage and the first years of parenthood (Amato et al., 1995). While the lack of research focused on young adults seems to imply that parental divorce does not affect this group as much as it may affect younger counterparts, critics suggest that although reactions may differ with age, young adults are still deeply affected by their parents divorce (Brentano & Clarke-Stewart, 2006). While it has been argued that young adults react differently because of their more emotionally mature developmental level, the developmental tasks pertinent to this age, such as the formation of an independent identity and the establishment of intimate relationships as described by Erikson‟s psychosocial stages of development, could be severely affected by stresses associated with parental divorce (Hillard, as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987; Weiner, Weiner, Harlow, Adams & Grebstein, 1995). While the little available research concerning the experiences of young adults is somewhat inconsistent and incomplete there is agreement on some of the effects of parental divorce. These include concern for the well-being of parents after the divorce, particularly mothers; feelings of pressure to actually "parent" their parents after the divorce; the development of psychological symptoms such as depression and the increased likelihood that their own marriages or intimate relationships may break-up (Brentano & Clarke-Stewart, 2006).

2.4 Divorce vs. marital conflict

In a study conducted by Wheaton it was discovered that the consequences which life transitions have on mental health depend upon the levels of stress before the transition takes place (as cited in Amato et al., 1995). Amato et al. (1995) suggest that in order to fully understand how parental divorce will affect children‟s lives, it is necessary to pay attention to what is happening in the family prior to the separation. Therefore the level and intensity of parental conflict before the divorce takes place will determine the long-term effects for children of divorce. Where conflict between parents is continuous and explicit the consequences of divorce may well be positive for the children. In their research, Kaslow and Linzer Schwartz

(1987) suggest that for some university-going adult children of divorce the "separation may come as a relief from parental bickering and the intensely conflicted family and home atmosphere of their growing up years" (p. 180). In an instance where there is little or no explicit conflict between parents, divorce may come as an unwelcome shock for the children and is therefore more likely to have negative consequences.

2.5 Resilience

There are several other „conditions" which could assist children and young adults in dealing with difficult experiences, in this instance specifically parental divorce. These could include: intra-individual skills, such as IQ; interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate well with others; and the degree and duration of stress or trauma prior to the experience of parental divorce (Killian, 2004). Previously, much research was focused on the negative consequences of divorce for children, adolescents and young adults from a deficits perspective that idealized nuclear families as environments for healthy development. However, more recently researchers have been interested in the positive factors that help individuals to overcome potentially traumatic experiences from a strengths perspective (Kelly & Emery, 2003). One specific condition particularly pertinent to this instance is the level of resilience which a child or young adult displays. Resilience can be defined as "the process of, or capacity for, successful adaptation despite challenging or even extremely threatening circumstances" (Killian, 2004, p. 42). In other words, resilient individuals have the capacity to recover, cope and do well in life even when confronted with profound problems. The universal strengths model argues that varying degrees of resilience in a range of contexts and at different times are displayed by different people, but that "this capacity needs nurturing and support" (Killian, 2004, p. 44). Killian suggests that every layer of society has a role to play in aiding the development of a child or young adult"s capacity to display resilience and in "increasing the chances of vulnerable children developing into competent, caring and confident citizens" (2004, p. 34). Therefore despite the effects which parental divorce may have on a child or young adult"s microsystems, a beneficial mesosystem "has a number of strong, positive connections that can offset the negative influence of other aspects of children"s lives" (Killian, 2004, p. 36). Therefore a beneficial mesosystem for a young adult at university, for example a network of interconnecting relationships between a student and her various family members (from wherever they are), and between a student and her warden, her lecturer and her peers, can have a positive impact which offsets the impact of parental divorce. The ability to be resilient also depends on whether you have someone to tell your

stories of coping to, highlighting the importance of a narrative approach for the particular research at hand. Gender is also said to play a role in moderating resilience. While pre-adolescent boys are said to be less resilient, the pattern is reversed in adolescence where girls experience more distress and are seen to be less resilient (Killian, 2004).

The concept of resilience was developed by Rutter in the 1980s to explain the positive adjustment of adolescents who had been through difficult experiences (Shin, Choi, Kim & Kim, 2010). The beginnings of the concept focused on the personal qualities of an individual. Recently however, the theory of personal resilience has been extended to include family systems. Family resilience is defined by Shin et al. (2010) as a family‟s ability to "successfully cope with adverse events together that enables them to flourish" (p. 1697) in terms of communication and support. Family resilience has been studied in families dealing with tough situations, in order to identify elements which may cushion the impact of the situation and help the family to recover from crisis. To date family resilience studies have been focused mainly on families‟ experiences of violence, poverty or illness, and less on the influence of family resilience in divorced or single-parent families (Shin et al., 2010).

2.6 Gender differences

There has been considerable variety in the findings of studies which aim to determine whether there are significant differences between male and female children of divorce. In psychoanalytically orientated research which tends to focus on gender difference, conducted in the UK and the USA, Emery, Hodges and Bloom all found that adolescent boys react more poorly to divorce with intense feelings for a longer period of time, while Farber suggests that their female counterparts suffer a great deal more stress during the experience of parental divorce (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987). In a study conducted by Hagestad, considerable differences were found between genders of adult children of divorced parents. Women were more concerned about taking sides in the dispute, which Hagestad attributed to the view of women as "family peacemakers and kinkeepers" (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987, p. 181). Women were generally angrier, with their anger usually being directed at their fathers and they also reported more emotional distress during the divorce period (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987). More recent research conducted by Weiner et al. (1995) found that while short-term differences between genders were evident, no differences in adjustment to parental divorce were found between genders in the long-term. Furthermore, Shrifter (2007) suggests that while earlier studies found more deleterious

effects of parental divorce on adjustment for men, more recent research has provided results suggesting that often the results of parental divorce are more detrimental for women and result in more adverse consequences in the long-term. Thus, as in earlier studies aiming to determine gender differences in response to divorce, there seems to be little agreement between studies in terms of which gender is most adversely affected, but rather that men and women respond differently to parental divorce and are affected in different ways.

In a study conducted by Cooney (1994), adult daughters of recently divorced parents "spoke of extreme empathy towards their mothers and their experiences with divorce" (p. 52). There is also some evidence to show that parents sometimes manipulate these alliances. In an American study, Kaslow and Linzer Schwartz (1987) found that some students had to drop out of college in order to go back home and take care of a parent who appeared to be too distraught to manage on their own. From a psychoanalytic perspective, they go on to suggest that this arrangement sometimes continues for years, as the parent becomes more dependent and the young adult feels guilty about wanting to leave because "the parent has subtly or overtly communicated that this would be perceived as a second abandonment *and would be intolerable*" [original emphasis] (Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987, p. 181). In terms of methodological limitations, all of the above mentioned studies were conducted either in the United States or the United Kingdom, using a university-going population as the sample. In light of the concept of resilience it would be important to consider things like the impact of the financial resources or the family communication patterns between parents and children before the divorce. Therefore, extending these findings to the South African sample used in this study would need to be done tentatively, as although the situation in South Africa might well mirror this trend, this is an area that has not yet been researched.

2.7 Post-divorce family relationships

A divorce which takes place in a family with young children is often marked by changes in the parent-child relations because of the common practice of awarding sole physical custody to one parent (Cooney, 1994). Hillard suggests that while parental divorce may have a negative impact on adult children, the total effect is often not as bad as it is on younger children due to the fact that they are often geographically removed from the situation, are involved in their own social and academic endeavour and do not have to go through the battle of choosing or having chosen for them, one parent as legal guardian (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987). While much research documents the patterns of changes associated

in a divorce involving young children, Cooney (1994) states that what is not clear is "whether parent-child relations are similarly affected when parental divorce occurs to adult offspring who are not subject to custody decisions" (p. 46). In a meta-analysis of divorce studies conducted mainly in the Unites States during the 1980s, Amato and Keith (1991) found that one of the most prominent effects of parental divorce for children involved reduced paternal contact. Cooney (1994) conducted research with 485 white young adults using quantitative measures, in order to try and understand the effects of recent parental divorce on contact and affective relations between parents and young adult children. She suggests that reduced contact with fathers similarly occurs in instances of recent parental divorce involving adult children. While post-divorce relations between adult children and their mothers vary, Cooney (1994) suggests that mother-daughter relations are often characterized by "a unique closeness and empathy" (p. 52), while this same-sex loyalty is often absent in father-son relations. We must take into consideration the idea that because adult children of divorce have usually already left home and are not in the custody of one parent, it is indeed possible to have independent relations with both parents. Adult children are more emotionally mature and able to make their own decisions, which may result in a choice to reduce contact with both parents or they may choose to continue to conduct relations with each parent individually.

2.8 University students

To reiterate an earlier point, all of the studies concerning the effects of parental divorce on young adults were conducted either in the United States or the United Kingdom, using a university-going population as the sample. Thus in many of these instances, as in the instance of this specific study, the research participants were away from home at the time of the research, which occurred after the divorce had taken place.

According to Young (2009) there is growing evidence to suggest that mental health problems are common amongst students at higher education institutions, and that the number of students seeking help from university counselling centres is increasing internationally. Young (2009) goes on to suggest that although the South African university setting is likely to mirror this trend, little research has been done to support this notion. While coping with the usual challenges faced during young adulthood, university students must also cope with many other transitions, such as moving away from home, leaving their existing social support networks behind and demanding academic workloads, not to mention the added challenge for some of having to deal with a recent parental divorce.

While access to university has become more inclusive since the end of apartheid, deep inequalities remain a feature of the South African education system (Young, 2009). While many black families have secured places for their children in previously white, Indian and coloured schools, those children whose families do not have the financial means have had to stay in former DET schools, where Msila (2005) suggests the quality of education has deteriorated in recent years. Thus while access to historically white universities is now open to black students, many have had to overcome both educational and financial obstacles to obtain and keep their places at these universities (Msila, 2005). Enormous expectations are placed on many black South African students, as they may be the first in their family to attend university and therefore may experience even greater challenges in a context of widespread poverty and unemployment (Young, 2009). Gwele (2002) suggests that in South African universities there is often a tacit acceptance of a predominant white, male culture that is alienating for anyone who does not fit into this category. Furthermore, the medium of education in South African universities is either English or Afrikaans; further alienating students for whom neither is their first or home language. Thus the university experience for a young black student may be an isolating one, in which individuals feel caught between two worlds, neither of which they fully belong to.

Using a quantitative questionnaire, Young (2009) conducted research in a South African university counselling centre in order to compare South African norms with counselling service data from the United Kingdom. Of significance was Young‟s (2009) finding that compared to the UK data, South African black female students generally had scores (based on presenting symptoms and accounts) indicative of greater distress in terms of well-being, depression and social relations. Furthermore, there were some differences between black and white students in the South African study, suggesting that black university students generally reported greater levels of distress than their white counterparts (Young, 2009). These findings may be suggestive of a dissonance between policies implemented to include black students in historically white South African universities and the practical lived experience of economic, cultural and educational hardships for these individuals. Thus in addition to the many difficulties faced by young black women in a university setting, the experience of parental divorce adds additional emotional pressure with few opportunities available for these young women to tell their stories or get support.

SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

2.9 What constitutes marriage?

South Africa has a wide range of marriage practices with many different cultural and religious understandings as to what constitutes marriage and which affect marriage (Budlender, Chobokoane & Simelane, 2004). Budlender et al. (2004) suggest that over time people‟s perceptions of what constitutes marriage and even divorce may change and differ between individuals and various groups. This study is particularly concerned with what constitutes marriage and divorce in various black cultural norms and community/family relations in South Africa. The Marriage Act of 1961 was the only law in South Africa recognizing marriage prior to 1998 and did not recognize customary marriages. Customary marriage is defined as a marriage "concluded in accordance with customary law", while customary law is defined as "customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa and which form part of the culture of those people" (Budlender et al., 2004, p. 3). Budlender et al. (2004) suggest that while customary relationships were legally recognised, they were not recognised as true "marriages" and therefore did not have the same legal implications or results of a marriage. In 1998 the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act was passed, recognising marriages formalised according to indigenous African rites, significantly changing the situation for many black South Africans. Hindu and Muslim marriages remained unrecognized however. This Act improved the situation for some black women specifically with "respect to inheritance, pensions, medical aids, child maintenance, and divorce settlements" (Budlender et al., 2004, p. 3). When the Act was implemented the registration for customary marriages was R10, making it financially viable for most. One benefit was that marriages concluded after the implementation of the Act were in community of property, providing some assurance for women (Budlender et al., 2004).

There is however recent evidence, such as that produced by Hunter (2006) and Bozalek (2006), to suggest that black marriage rates, particularly in poor socio-economic and working-class circumstances, are declining in South Africa. Hunter‟s (2006) research was conducted in an informal settlement in Kwazulu-Natal and shifts the focus away from the effects of apartheid on sexuality and marriage, to more recent changes in the political economy of sex. Through his, and others‟ work, it is suggested that black marriage rates are declining due mainly to economic pressures and that practices such as co-habitation,

networks of concurrent sexual partners or „extended" custodial arrangements where biological parents live away (separately) from children are becoming more prevalent (Hunter, 2006).

2.10 Urban black families

Within black South African families, divorce appears to be most prevalent in urban mainly middle-class families. Russell (2003) conducted research with three groups of South Africans, namely: urban white, urban black and rural black people. A set of statements about general family behaviour were devised and the responses of these three groups compared. The disparity in class between these three groups needs be taken into account when considering Russell"s (2003) findings. While it is clear that the rural black sample came from an extremely impoverished socio-economic class, and the urban white sample can be identified as being middle-class, the socio-economic status of the urban black sample is unknown, highlighting the difference between the various groups. Through her research comparing black and white South African family norms, Russell (2003) suggests that the differences in normative expectations around marriage between urban white families and rural black families are vast. She goes on to suggest that urban black families live according to principles very different to both urban white families and rural black families. They are influenced by the western culture within which they find themselves, while still "linked by ties of kinship, descent and domestic responsibility to rural communities" (Russell, 2003, p. 163). Russell goes on to speak about the "fission and fusion", (2003, p. 167) which characterises contemporary black urban families. While fission means splitting into fragments, fusion refers to merging together; a scientific term used to describe the different reactions which urban black families may experience because of the influence of a cultural approach to kinship, combined with new urban experiences. What struck Russell (2003) was how divided in opinion the urban black population was when it came to deciding upon norms generally favoured by the rural black group or those favoured by the urban white group. Russell (2003) thus provides a critique of the stereotype suggestive of similarities between all black people, and suggests instead that there are many cultural norms/practices that are in transition and hybrid. She also suggests that improving one"s socio-economic status gives people the choice about which ideas and practices of their culture they would like to keep and which they would like to change. Russell (2003) may however be criticised for her lack of effort in analyzing the various black South African family forms beyond comparing them to the western nuclear „ideal" (cf. Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). Siqwana-Ndulo"s (1998) critique suggests that while research such as Russell"s is mainly concerned with the significant shifts

in black family forms in South Africa, it fails to recognise that the western nuclear family form is similarly undergoing significant changes.

Sam, Peltzer and Mayer‟s (2005) research, aligned with psychoanalytic ideas, on preferences regarding family size in South Africa reveals that there has been a steady decline in black families across generations, both urban and rural, in terms of their family sizes. Their research assumes that the desire to have a child is based on the values one assigns to children. While their study was only conducted with *Sesotho* women, Sam et al. (2005) suggest that black South African couples are consciously choosing to have fewer children for economic, psychological and social reasons. Furthermore, they found that there were large variations in the number of children born to black South African women, as well as variations in their reasons for having children and family size preference. However there generally seems to be a steady decline in the number of children from one generation to the next. Sam et al. (2005) suggest that if the current trend continues South Africa may find itself within the next fifty years with the same poor fertility rates which are evident in many western countries.

Many authors have made the point that some urban black families‟ move away from cultural forms of kinship is not a move towards the nuclear family structure (Bozalek, 2006; Hunter, 2006; Russell, 2003; Ziehl, 2003). Here it is reiterated that the western notion of the nuclear family forming the foundation of modern democracy within industrialized capitalism is questionable, as it has at times been as oppressive and rigid as any other „traditional‟ kinship system, and should be considered as just another possibility amongst many possible family systems. Russell (2003) suggests that South Africa‟s current situation of unmarried mothers, absent fathers and female-headed households that emerges in public health literature, which is based on epidemiology that connects features of sexual and reproductive health and domestic life to deficits among black/poor communities, is not an incomplete or flawed transition towards the nuclear family. Despite similarities between white and black families, such as a need to reduce family size because of costs of living and education, a greater amount of women in paid jobs and the pressures of rampant consumerism and establishment of status through access to goods, black South African families “retain their distinctiveness, which is rooted in a different past and a different set of inherited household practices and shaped by a different experience of history” (Russell, 2003, p. 170).

In an overview of published and unpublished literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa from 1970 to 1997, Macleod and Durrheim (2002) suggest that although overt racism has

disappeared in scientific discourse, a „new racism" has emerged in which „culture" and „tradition" achieve the work previously done by the category of race. They speak of the double-bind created for black families through the racialization of „tradition" and „culture". Even though the traditions of black people are portrayed as breaking down, this does not mean that black people become more urban or modern. Rather there is a "simultaneous depiction of „black people" as advancing to a more developed state of being and as floating in a sea of culturelessness" (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002, p. 797).

2.11 Female autonomy

Drawing on feminist theorization, a key area in family studies literature recently is the impact which female autonomy has on familial processes, structures and outcomes. Takyi and Broughton (2006) define female autonomy as improvements in women's socioeconomic circumstances. According to Takyi and Broughton (2006) female autonomy has traditionally been measured, by feminists in developed contexts, through indicators such as paid employment outside the home and education. From a cautious standpoint, Takyi and Broughton (2006) questioned the applicability of American trends in an African setting when considering that improvements in the socio-economic circumstances of women have a positive, empowering effect of familial processes. In line with American research however, this increase in outside employment and education has resulted in shifting gender roles, allowing African women, specifically Ghanaian women, to be more economically autonomous and therefore more independent from male dominance (Takyi & Broughton, 2006). The authors go on to suggest that because of the change in gender roles and an increased ability to be economically self-reliant to an extent, African women now too have options other than marriage. Takyi and Broughton (2006) suggest that women's self-reliance allows them the opportunity to leave unfulfilling or abusive marriages. They provide an example from anthropological studies done in Sub-Saharan Africa which suggest that whether a woman would consider divorce or not is reliant upon her sense of financial security for her and her children. Despite family life being central in most African cultures, there is growing evidence to suggest that contemporary marriages in Africa are becoming more unstable (Takyi & Broughton, 2006). According to Statistics South Africa (2009) the proportion of black South African couples divorcing have been increasing over the past decade, while the proportion of white South African couples divorcing has been on the decline. In 2008 black divorces in South Africa contributed to 35% of all divorce in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2009).

Independent partner selection is another factor influencing family structure and process in South Africa. Traditionally, marriages were considered to unite families and even communities through kinship, rather than to meet the expectations or choice of the individuals involved (Takyi, 2003). This meant that the families of both the bride and bridegroom would be involved in selecting a suitable partner for marriage and brokering this as financial commitment and arrangement. However, with the migration of many black South Africans to cities the traditional role of the family in partner selection was made difficult because of the geographical distance of family members from one another, education and the influence of western norms. Takyi and Broughton (2006) suggest that "urbanites and educated folks tend to emphasize western notions of romantic love, to the detriment of traditional normative practices" (p. 120). Thus, the influence of modern western values and the informal nature of the urban environment have resulted in the reduction of traditional norms, which used to keep marriages together even when couples were less compatible, and have increased the likelihood of divorce (Takyi & Broughton, 2006). However, while western notions of love may increase the likelihood of divorce, it allows women to have greater freedom and responsibility in choosing their own partner and also provides women with the opportunity to leave unsatisfactory or abusive marriages. Furthermore, it appears as though increased female autonomy is influencing the outcome of premarital births. Kaufman, de Wet and Stadler (2001) suggest that although some premarital births still result in marriage, in Southern Africa this increasingly appears not to be the case. Even when a young adolescent girl falls pregnant and has a child, she is no longer forced into marriage or subsequent childbearing, and often has the opportunity to continue with her education.

2.12 Bridewealth and sexual fidelity

Despite much change in South African family life in general, far from disappearing the system of bridewealth or lobola continues to operate in some cultures and families. Lobola can be defined as "an economic exchange joining two families, as well as the transfer of rights over the labour and potential childbearing capacity of the woman" (Kaufman et al., 2001, p. 153). In their research Kaufman et al. (2001) conducted focus-group discussions with young black men and women, as well as the women"s mothers, in urban and rural settings in order to explore adolescent parenthood in South Africa. Their evidence suggests that traditionally lobola would be paid in cattle, with the standard cost paid to a bride"s family being twelve cows, worth approximately R10 000. However, more recently the economic exchange has changed somewhat, from a transfer of property to a transfer of cash. Somewhat

sentimentally, Kaufman et al. (2001) suggest that this may be an exploitation of the symbolism of joining families. According to Kaufman et al. (2001), lobola and education are closely linked in terms of price. If a woman is educated then it means that she potentially has access to fruitful employment and will therefore fetch a higher price at lobola negotiations. Often, a bride‟s price is reduced if she has given premarital birth, especially if the groom is not the child‟s father (Kaufman et al., 2001). Thus it becomes clear that marriage is both expensive for the potential husband or his family, and dependent upon having an education, employment and resources to pay the negotiated fees. Marriage can only occur after elaborate social negotiations joining two families, and thus it becomes very difficult to undo and difficult for either party to leave when partners are abusive or marriage is unsatisfactory. Of course, not all black people get married through cultural arrangements, nor do all buy into its ideas and practices. Through a powerful stereotype much of the literature assumes all black people to be "cultural", when the same is not assumed of white people. Many black couples engage in Christian/legal ceremonies, and use Christian objections to infidelity to leave a marriage.

In stark contrast to Kaufman‟s ideas, Macleod (2002) suggests that early reproduction in a South African context often represents a rational choice for many young women. Macleod (2002) goes on to suggest that pregnancy outside of marriage now holds little stigma and may be functional in many ways, such as creating a "pathway to adulthood where marriage is delayed through the necessity of amassing bridewealth" (p. 648). Early reproduction also has the added possibility for a woman to receive child support from the baby‟s father, as well as providing access to a state supplied child support grant. In order to understand the meaning behind sexual exchanges for material gain, Leclerc-Madlala (2003) conducted interviews with a group of young men and women from an urban township near Durban in South Africa. One of the themes captured in her discussion with these young women was the idea that things in today‟s world are expensive and sex could therefore be instrumentally used to engage in relationships that are financially rewarding (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Leclerc-Madlala (2003) argues that young women are exploiting their desirability in order to attract men who can supply them with expensive commodities such as cellular phones, fashionable clothing and jewellery, in order to satisfy „wants‟ more than „needs‟. A second theme which emerged was that the young women were eager to portray their engagement in transactional sex as commonplace for women of their generation in urban environments and believe that young women in rural areas are also engaged in similar sexual relations. Many of these

women had little interest in marriage and those who were interested believed that it was very unlikely (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Thus women and men are fulfilling their financial, sexual and even emotional needs outside of marriage and are thus less likely to get married. If marriage is less likely to occur amongst working-class black South Africans then divorce is also less likely to take place. Therefore divorce within the variety of black families seems to be confined to the middle-class who can afford it; similar to that of divorce in white South African families.

The social reality that only the most successful (wealthy) men in society are likely to achieve the polygamous ideal makes it all the more acceptable. Russell (2003) suggests that "no matter how rare the practice, its official legitimacy permeates relations between the sexes" (p. 159). Thus, in some black cultures in South Africa men may present their sexual infidelities as a legitimate search for further brides, leaving the wife with no legal or other grounds for complaint. She believes that women are not permitted the same sexual freedom. While polygamy as an official practice still exists in some South African cultures and families, it cannot be seen as a uniform practice upheld by all black men. Here the dramatic effects of apartheid on sexuality through racial segregation and male migration must be taken into consideration, as men often had women in urban areas with whom they engaged in sexual relations, while their wives were banished to the rural Bantustans (Hunter, 2006). Perhaps the „polygamous ideal" referred to by Russell should be thought of less as polygamy in its true sense, but rather the practice of sexual concurrency, with some men simultaneously having a wife as well as various girlfriends (Russell, 2003; Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre & Harlow, 2004). In her research, Russell (2003) discovered that her black participants, male and female, were more tolerant of the notion that men are sexually promiscuous. These sentiments are echoed in Leclerc-Madlala"s (2003) work through the female participants" narratives on relationships clearly articulating expectations of men"s unfaithfulness. This is not to say that the women were happy about it, but just that it was spoken about as something inevitable that required tolerance, and was non-negotiable with male partners. Leclerc-Madlala (2003) suggests that while many local studies have revealed similar stories of tolerance they have failed to reveal the extent to which women position themselves in order to exploit this situation. In her investigation of exploitation in relationships, Leclerc-Madlala (2003) suggests that, "most women maintained that exploitation was a two-way process, with men exploiting them as much as they exploited men" (p. 222).

2.13 Comments on existing research on divorce

It is thus evident that while some research has been done on the effects of parental divorce on young adults internationally, nationally there is very little literature available on the topic. While divorce may be a readily available option for couples in unsatisfactory marriages in the developed world, it may not always be as easy for the great majority of South African families which are struggling financially (Takyi & Broughton, 2006). Women of low socio-economic status are often forced to stay in an unhappy marriage as they are completely financially dependent on their partners. Leaving her husband may mean that she and her children are left with no home or food and may be forced to move back in to her extended familial network (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). The divorce process can also be costly and so is not an option for families with economic troubles. Shared custody arrangements for a wealthy family are far easier than for a poor family, in which a divorce may result in children breaking off ties with one parent completely.

It is worth mentioning again that most of the evidence provided in the research on divorce discussed is based on both clinical and empirical literature. Because of their need to assist those who are not coping, Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) suggest that clinicians often only focus on the distress children undergo as a result of parental divorce and overlook the positive success stories of coping, resilience and opportunities for re-storying familial networks. Often these findings are compared with children from consistently intact two-parent families, instead of with those children from divorced families who are coping well without the need for therapy (Amato et al., 1995). Also, the empirical literature is based mainly on quantitative studies, which is slowly changing with a shift to focusing on qualitative studies in order to better understand the circumstances of the divorce, and experiences and sequelae for both parents and children.

Rather than a psychological assessment approach, the aim of this research is therefore to attempt to understand the context and meaning produced in the autobiographical narratives of young black South African women about their specific experiences of parental divorce and how it has affected their own lives and the lives of their families. This takes the double-sided feature of a narrative approach into account: firstly, contextual particularity in that “no two divorces are alike, because no two families are alike, and that every situation is special for members of that family” (Goldstein & Solnit, 1984, p. 3); secondly, that there are commonalities among the stories at a broader social level (Kruger, 2003).

A NARRATIVE APPROACH

2.14 A narrative approach to divorce

In a British study conducted with three recently divorced women Shelley Day-Sclater (1997) suggests that the traditional approach, which seeks to measure the effects and symptoms of divorce, takes people‟s experiences out of context and ignores personal meaning. She rather chooses to employ a narrative approach, which she suggests, allows us to "reconceptualize the human subject as a narrator" (p. 425) and so in her research she treats interview transcripts as texts which must be interpreted and believes that language cannot merely be seen as a transparent vehicle for communicating information (Day-Sclater, 1997). Day-Sclater (1997) focuses on how people construct meanings around experiences such as divorce in order to make sense of and interpret their lives. Similarly, Riessman (1989) conducted narrative interviews with three divorced individuals in the United States and found that despite having all been through what appears to be the same experience – divorce in the context of marital infidelity – the meaning of this life-event were constructed in radically different ways by the different individuals.

Through a narrative analysis of the transcripts of the interviews conducted with three divorced women Day-Sclater (1997) came to realize that while divorce is certainly traumatic for the family members involved, the process of divorce is far more complex than existing images of outcomes allow. Her research has revealed that not all stories about divorce are "doom and gloom" (p. 426) and that although often accompanied by emotional pain, divorce can also be a transformative and positive experience. Stories about the experience of divorce, whether for the parents or the children, are told as part of a continual interpretive process, in which people seek to make sense of what has happened in the past and how this will affect the future. Day-Sclater (1997) suggests that in talking about the experience of divorce it "leaves the world of private sorrow, and enters the public world of stories, where it intersects the current debates about the „crisis‟ in „the family‟" (p. 432). Through her interviews about infidelity and divorce, Riessman (1989) suggests that individuals use storytelling to develop new meaning when they lose a crucial attachment that used to give purpose to their life. She suggests that the interviewees interpretations of the events of the divorce were "not static but emergent, perhaps reworked once again even as they participated in the research interview" (Riessman, 1989, p. 749). Thus the interviewees were active agents who were affected and changed by their circumstances, but who in turn affected and changed their circumstances.

Through her findings, Day-Sclater (1997) wishes to suggest that it may be time to change the way we think and speak about divorce and to move away from the ""disaster" model which pathologizes the experience for adults and children alike" (p. 435). While she acknowledges that divorce is an emotional experience for all involved, she suggests that emotions are part of the grand narrative of divorce and should not carry pathological connotations with them. She goes on to suggest that positive stories of divorce are not easily accepted in a world that idealizes nuclear family life, and views divorce negatively; and thus there is a need for a space in which both negative and positive stories can be received, reviewed and accepted (Day-Sclater, 1997).

2.15 The turn to narrative studies

A narrative approach involves the study of an individual's stories about her/his experiences as told to a researcher (Creswell, 1998). In order to bring the various parts of our selves into a "purposeful and convincing whole" (Crossley, 2000a, p. 67), each of us assembles a story known as a personal narrative. This turn to narrative studies is an interdisciplinary approach to research used in various fields as a "useful corrective to the reductive tendencies that other analyses rooted in individual disciplines, can manifest" (Day-Sclater, 2004, p. 115). The narrative approach was first developed in opposition to the dominant quantitative approaches prevalent at the time. These approaches sought to quantify human experience through statistical procedures and as a result, Crossley (2000b) argues, ignored the individuals „story" and "lost any sense of the „lived" nature of human reality and identity" (p. 533).

Narrative approaches may straddle various paradigms, and depend on the aims and theoretical lenses brought to particular studies and questions (Squire, 2008). Crossley (2000b) finds that narrative approaches tend to be classified as social constuctionist as they set out to "examine the cultural structuration of individual experience" (p. 528). However, while some narrative approaches may indeed be based on certain social constructionist assumptions, others differ in fundamental ways from social constructionism's assumptions in their study of human experience. While it is undeniable that the discursive aspects of the self and an experience are important to grasp, Parker (as cited in Crossley, 2000b) argues that one of the critiques levelled against social constructionism is that it does not allow us to see what is going on inside of an individual's head when they use discourse. Parker (as cited in Crossley, 2000b) goes on to argue that our ability to be reflexive is what links the individual and the social, and social constructionism is often accused of choosing to ignore this. Thus, language

is emphasized to such an extent that the individual seems to disappear or in Dunne"s stronger sentiments is "annihilated" (as cited in Crossley, 2000b, p. 530). A narrative approach is suggested by Crossley (2000b) as an alternative which appreciates the "discursive structuring of the „self" and „experience" but also maintains a sense of the essentially personal, coherent and „real" nature of individual subjectivity" (p. 530).

According to Squire"s (2008) classification of different approaches to narrative theory/research, Crossley (2000b) adopts an "experience-centred" life-story approach to accounting for experience in a way that makes sense, and in a way that upholds that agency of the story-telling subject. This interpretive paradigmatic approach uses stories as a thematic hermeneutic to ordering experience.

Activity, which incorporates both time and sequence, is the principle humans use to understand and interpret all experiences (Crossley, 2000b). Authors, such as Carr and Sarbin, have proposed that human psychology has a fundamentally narrative structure, which means that "human beings think, perceive, imagine, interact and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (Sarbin as cited in Crossley, 2000b, p. 532). It is a human tendency to want/need to impose structure upon the flow of experience and is the reason why Sarbin terms narrative the "organizing principle for human action" (as cited in Crossley, 2000b, p. 532). Crossley (2000b) goes on to suggest that this type of narrative principle appeals to a humanistic representation of the individual as a teller of stories. From this it leads on that the stories which young women tell about their experiences of recent parental divorce are "acts of self-representation" (Kruger, 2003, p. 198) which are assumed to represent reality as experienced by them. What these women say in their personal narratives is believed to openly and honestly represent their experiences. It must however be taken into consideration that the stories people choose to tell about themselves are often greatly affected by the context in which they are being relayed and by the specific person who is listening. Kruger (2003) suggests that it is important to keep in mind that storytelling occurs in a greater social context "between social actors under particular social constraints" (p. 198).

Crossley (2000b) suggests that when a potentially traumatic event occurs, such as parental divorce, it can be seen as a "biographical disruption" (p. 539). In such an instance, the coherent stories which people have constructed about themselves, their lives and their families are suddenly thrown into disarray. The individual is then faced with an array of trials regarding their "interconnected conceptions of self and world" (Crossley, 2000b, p. 539). It is

in such an event of seeming disorganization and confusion that narratives play an important role in rebuilding the meaning of our lives through stories. Broyard suggests that in times of emergency we invent narratives and "describe what is happening as if to confine the catastrophe" (as cited in Crossley, 2000a, p. 21). Kruger (2003) suggests that in such an instance, narrative is used by individuals to actively attempt to understand and give meaning to their experiences, and is often a social way of coping and making sense of an experience, so that people can construct new stories and move on with their lives.

This research thus wishes to explore the stories which black South African young women tell about their experiences of recent parental divorce and how it has affected their own lives, the lives of their family and what it has meant to them.

3. Methodology

3.1 Narrative analysis

This research was conducted using an interpretive qualitative design, specifically using an experience-centred, life-story narrative approach. In general, a narrative approach involves the study of a person and her/his experiences as told in the form of a story (Creswell, 1998). Day-Sclater (2004) suggests that narrative analysis is a way of "finding out how people frame, remember and report their experiences", as well as a "way of generating knowledge that disrupts old certainties and allows us to glimpse something of the complexities of human lives, selves and endeavours" (p. 115). More specifically, Squire (2008) suggests that an experience-centred narrative approach, such as the one used in this study, allows one to study narratives as stories of experiences, rather than events. Furthermore, Squire (2008) suggests that this type of narrative approach rests on a "phenomenological assumption that experience can, through stories, become part of consciousness" (p. 41). It also takes a hermeneutic approach to analysing stories rather than structural analysis, thus aiming to gain a fuller understanding of stories told and heard (Squire, 2008).

Squire (2008) suggests that there are four main assumptions about narratives made by an experience-centred approach that distinguishes it from other approaches. Firstly, an experience-centred approach assumes that a personal narrative can include all sequential and meaningful stories of personal experience produced by an individual. These stories can be an event narrative, but can also be more flexible about time and personal experience, and are "defined by theme rather than structure" (Squire, 2008, p. 42). Thus an experience-centred narrative might address an experience of living through a trauma and its consequences, such as parental divorce, or it might address a life changing event, such as a realization about ones sexuality, and it could also address stories in the present and future about oneself or others (Squire, 2005, 2008). Secondly, an experience-centred approach believes that narratives are the means of human sense-making. Thus this approach assumes that "sequential temporal orderings of human experience into narrative are not just characteristic of humans, but *make* us human" [original emphasis] (Squire, 2008, p. 43). A third assumption of this approach is that narratives involve reconstruction of stories across time and place. Stories are told/performed differently in different social contexts and can thus never be repeated exactly, "since words never „mean" the same thing twice" (Squire, 2008, p. 44). Narratives are thus jointly constructed by the speaker as well as the listener. Finally, the experience-centred

approach assumes that narratives represent personal change/transformation and often impels a listener to look for improvements in stories (Squire, 2008).

3.2 Research aims

The aim of this research is to understand the content and meaning produced in the autobiographical narratives which young black South African women tell about their specific experiences of parental divorce and how it has affected their own lives and the lives of their families. Firstly, it aims to explore contextual particularity in that no two divorces are alike for families and family members; secondly, to explore commonalities among the different stories at a broader social level.

3.3 Sampling and participants

This research aimed to explore the stories of young black women about their experiences of parental divorce during young adulthood. These young women are students registered for Higher Education degrees in a historically white, South African university. Because the intention was to say something in detail about the experiences of these women, rather than make more general claims, a relatively small sample size was used. The sampling strategy which was employed is known as purposive sampling (Kelly, 2006), which means that the participants were a "closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant" (Smith, 2003, p. 58) and that the selection of participants was based on the judgement of the researcher as to which subjects best fit the question (Kelly, 2006). Participants included five young black university-going women. The criteria for inclusion were that participants must be black women, between the ages of 18 and 25 and must have experienced parental divorce during young adulthood at least two years prior to this research being conducted. The reason for this was to allow for an adequate period of time to have passed so individuals might feel comfortable speaking about this potentially traumatic experience, thus allowing individuals sufficient time to rebuild their stories about themselves and their families (Crossley, 2000b). Participants were initially recruited from the undergraduate classes of the Psychology Department at a South African University. Recruitment took place through a brief e-mail sent to the first, second and third year classes via the university list-serve (see Appendix 1). Four participants were recruited. The e-mail was sent out a second time later on in the year. When no further participants volunteered, permission was granted by the Registrar to recruit undergraduate participants from other university departments. One further participant was recruited. What follows is a brief

biographical description of each of the five participants in which key features have been changed to protect their identities:

Makopane: Is an 18 year old black woman who is currently in her first year of university. Her parents got divorced when she was 1 ½ years old, got back together shortly after and finally separated when she was 16 years old. Makopane's father is of royal descent, while her mother comes from a working-class family. She describes her immediate family as being middle-class. She has a younger sister and is currently living with her father. Her father has a girlfriend, while her mother has chosen to remain single. Makopane's home language is Sesotho.

Palesa: Is a black 20 year old woman who is currently in her second year of university. When she was 16 years old her parents separated, and while they never officially ended their marriage on paper, Palesa considers them to be divorced. She describes her family as being very influential in their small-town community. She has a younger sister, and an older half brother and half sister. Palesa's father has other children whom she does not know. She describes being closer to her father. Palesa's home language is isiXhosa.

Bokang: Is a black 21 year old woman who is currently in her third year of university. Her parents got divorced when she was 18 years old during her final matric examinations. She was away at boarding school at the time. Bokang describes her family as being middle-class. She is the youngest of four children; she has two sisters and one brother. Her father remarried shortly after the divorce, while her mother has chosen to remain single. Bokang shares a close relationship with her mother, while her father no longer plays an active role in her life. Bokang's home language is isiXhosa.

Sebongile: Is a black 21 year old woman who is currently in her third year of university. Her parents got divorced when she was in her first year of university. While Sebongile's father came from an educated middle-class family, her mother came from a poor working class family and thus could only afford to complete her schooling and obtain a university degree once she was married. Sebongile is the middle child; with two older siblings and two younger siblings. While her father has had many girlfriends since the divorce, her mother has chosen to remain single. She currently lives with her mother. Sebongile's home language is isiXhosa

Rene: Is an 18 year old black woman who is currently in her first year of university. Her parents got divorced when she was 16 years old and away at boarding school. She has an

older sister and her father has other children who she does not know. While her father has a new girlfriend, her mother has chosen to remain single. Rene lives with her mother and her home language is Setswana.

3.4 Data collection

The method of interviewing used to collect storied material was based on McAdams‟ personal narratives protocol (as cited in Crossley, 2000a). Narratively sequenced, semi-structured interviews were employed in order that the participants‟ internal and social world could be entered into as similarly as possible (Crossley, 2000a). The narrative interview aims to provide the opportunity for participants to give a comprehensive narrative account of a life-experience, and what preceded and followed this and thus the interview schedule merely served as a guide (Smith, 2003). Questions were modified according to the participants‟ responses, as this allowed the researcher to probe further (Smith, 2003). Crossley (2000a) suggests that in order to have a relationship of rapport with the participant it is sometimes necessary to allow this person to lead the interview in a certain direction in order to cover topics which they may consider important.

McAdams‟ personal narrative protocol (as cited in Crossley, 2000a) involves seven broad categories of questions, which were altered to form the basic framework of the interview protocol used (see Appendix 2). Parental divorce during young adulthood was considered as a specific and significant “chapter” in a life-story, and other events, aspects or dimensions related to the experience of parental divorce were examined in narrative sequence to construct stories of past, present and future experiences. Thus, the following six broad categories of questions were put to the participants: Key events, Significant people, Stresses and problems, Personal meanings and life-lessons, Life theme and Future script.

Participants partook in two interviews, the first was a longer interview of approximately one hour and focused on the interview protocol (see Appendix 2), while the second was a shorter follow-up interview aimed at allowing the participant opportunity to add to, take back, correct or validate anything said in the first interview, whilst allowing the researcher the opportunity to ask any questions which may have arisen after the first interview. All interviews were recorded using a tape recorder because it is impossible to write everything in such an interview down without missing important nuances and losing focus on the participant (Smith, 2003).

The first step in the analysis of collected narratives was to transcribe the recorded interview. Rather than linguistic features of discourse, what is needed is the content of the interview fully transcribed, including questions and answers (Crossley, 2000a). In the interview abstracts, clarifying details were put in brackets in instances where narratives did not make sense without clarification and thus required further explanation. Smith (2003) suggests that it is important for the researcher to pay careful attention after the interview has ended and the tape recorder has been switched off, as the participant may make some additional comments that could have a substantial impact on the interpretation of the whole narrative and could therefore be brought up during the follow-up interview.

3.5 Data analysis

Experience-centred narrative analysis requires the researcher to be involved in a sustained interpretive relationship with the experiences narrated in the interview transcripts, in order to discover the meanings related to social and psychological realities in the personal narratives of others (Crossley, 2000a). Crossley (2000a) proposes what can be distinguished into three main steps or processes to be engaged in the analysis of personal narratives. In the first step, the researcher is involved in the repeated reading of and familiarization with the transcript, in order to begin to identify emergent themes.

In the second step, the researcher identifies important concepts which are to be looked for in the personal narratives or life-stories of participants. Crossley (2000a) suggests that there are three essential elements to look for, namely: narrative tone, imagery and themes. Narrative tone is described by Crossley (2000a) as the most pervasive feature of a personal narrative and is conveyed both through the content of the story, as well as the manner in which it is told. There is an identification of narrative tone, which could for instance be either predominantly pessimistic or optimistic. In this study it became apparent that the narrative tone of the young women‟s personal narratives was more nuanced and thus shifted between pessimism and optimism depending on what they were recounting. According to Crossley (2000a) every personal narrative includes and expresses a characteristic set of images or metaphors. Furthermore, in order to understand an individual‟s personal narrative, the unique way in which the individual uses imagery to make sense of who they are must be explored. In addition, Crossley (2000a) describes a dominant theme as any pattern with regard to what has motivated an individual or been particularly important to an individual. In this study imagery and themes were identified simultaneously, as they often overlap and “the use of certain

images and imagery tends to point towards, and be indicative of particular themes" (Crossley, 2000a, p. 91). This was conducted by identifying the themes and images for each individual question (in the interview schedule) separately. This means that the interview schedule worked to "structure" thematic material narratively (and comparatively) by lending an overarching progression of time, plot and characters/figures in the divorce stories.

In the third and final step, Crossley (2000a) suggests that after having constructed a rough, „working map" of the various themes and images which emerge from the interpretation of the interview data, the researcher weaves all of this together into a coherent story. Once the narrative tone, imagery and themes had been described and woven together in the Analysis section, they were interpretively linked to literature in the Discussion section.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Due to the potentially sensitive and traumatic nature of the divorce stories shared in the research process, participants" confidentiality and anonymity was considered paramount. The interviews were all conducted in a private office in the Psychology Department. It is important that the stories which participants told were not part of a therapeutic psychosocial adjustment process; therefore parental divorce must have taken place at least two years prior to the commencement of this research, which was thought to be a protective factor against the harming of participants. Despite this, there is always the possibility of re-traumatization even after an extended period of time has elapsed (Stolorow, 2003); an issue which was openly discussed with the participants. As a result of the nature of possible painful experience-centred material being dealt with during interviews and the possibility of re-traumatization, a path of referral was made available for participants who felt they needed to speak to a mental health professional at any point during or after the research process. Participants must also have been between the ages of 16 and 25 years when parental divorce occurred, as this study wished to deal with the experience of parental divorce for young adults. Participants were asked to provide written consent before partaking in the research (see Appendix 3).

Because it was made explicit in the e-mail sent out to recruit participants that the researcher was a Masters student in Counselling Psychology, it is possible that the line between therapy and research may have become unclear for some of the participants. Thus in each initial interview, I clarified my capacity as a researcher and not a therapist, but emphasised the availability of a referral source to a different mental health professional if required. While to my mind the participants remained aware of this distinction throughout the interviews, I felt

that at times I had to remind myself, as researcher, to stick to the interview questions as far as possible and not become too involved in therapeutic discussions. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge how different I, as researcher, was to the participants in terms of race and age, as well as being in a position of power as a Masters Counselling Psychology student dealing with potentially emotionally fragile, undergraduate university students. These differences, and my audiences, may thus have had a powerful impact on the type of stories told by the participants.

3.7 Validity

Yardley (as cited in Smith, 2003) offers three broad principles which can be used to assess the quality of interpretive qualitative research. The first is that of sensitivity, in which a good qualitative research study should show sensitivity to the context in which the study is situated. This study establishes sensitivity through an acknowledgement on behalf of the researcher to the differences between myself and participants, as well as not claiming to know any truths about the various cultures of the participants, but instead engaging in respectful enquiry into anything claimed to be as a result of "culture". This study also establishes sensitivity through an awareness of the existing literature on the topic of divorce and more specifically how divorce affects young adult children of divorce. The important relationship between researcher and participant in narrative research is another context which one might be sensitive to, in this instance by once again acknowledging and being sensitive to the differences between the researcher and participants (Smith, 2003).

Yardley‟s (as cited in Smith, 2003) second principle of validity is that of commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence. Rigour is indicated through the thoroughness of this study, with respect to appropriateness of the sample to the research question at hand. Transparency is enhanced through a description of how participants were selected through clear inclusion criteria, as well as through justification of the interview schedule used and the manner in which interviews were conducted. A clear description of the steps used in the analysis of narratives further serves to enhance transparency. Coherence refers to the logic of the argument put forward and the plausibility of the conclusions reached, which must be supported by evidence. Polkinghorne (as cited in Crossley, 2000a) suggests that this concept and the concept of validity in general means being „well grounded and supportable" (p. 104).

In accordance with Yardley‟s (as cited in Smith, 2003) third principle of impact and importance, this research sheds light on the existing work that has been done in the area of

divorce and specifically the effects which recent parental divorce has on young adult black children of divorce, while generating greater insight into this experience.

Reflexivity is another important principle to be considered when establishing the validity of narrative psychological research. Crossley (2000a) suggests that the narrative researcher needs to be aware that the material used in any analysis is deeply influenced by the researcher. Therefore Crossley (2000a) suggests that it is essential that rather than collecting „neutral" material the researcher frames the research question, chooses particular participants and interacts with them in order to produce narratives which are used in the analysis. There is then further selection and interpretation by a subjective researcher, of certain material which influences the eventual conclusions drawn. Thus it is important to emphasise that while this study is about the lives of young black women, it was conducted by a young white woman, with specific beliefs and pre-existing prejudices, which ultimately affect the way in which these young women"s stories are heard and conveyed. Several narrative researchers have referred to the final role of the researcher as „story-teller" – as weaving the narratives of the participants into the „bigger story" of the research study (Day-Sclater, 2004; Kruger, 2003; Kvale, 1996). Therefore the researcher must engage with the material, acknowledging the subjective views of a young white woman attempting to convey the complex stories of participants from very different cultures, classes and contexts; rather than attempt to withdraw and treat the material as if it were an objective record of „reality" (Yardley as cited in Crossley, 2000a).

4. Analysis

Following Crossley‟s (2000b) formulation of narrative rupture or breach, the participants‟ stories formed part of a greater social narrative of the breach which accompanies trauma. Initially the participants‟ accounts of their lives are ones of happiness and innocence. Their sense of coherence and cohesion is abruptly interrupted by the „narrative wreckage‟ which accompanies parental divorce and “brings with it a whole range of challenges regarding the individual‟s interconnected conceptions of…self and world” (Crossley, 2000b, p. 539). Through the progression of time in their story-telling, the participants move through a process of narrative re-configuration in which they attempt to re-establish or renew a sense of meaning and order in their lives, as well as „story‟ a new sense of identity. The following six themes serve to track this journey from narrative wreckage to reconfiguration. The first theme “key events” forms the bigger narrative in which the young women told detailed stories about their parents‟ divorce, while the subsequent four themes form the smaller stories within this bigger narrative. The final theme “future script” is concerned with the participants‟ accounts of where they see their own and their family‟s life-stories leading in the future.

4.1 Key events

The participants were all in very different phases of their lives when they found out about their parents‟ divorce. While two of the participants were away at boarding school, two were just starting university away from home and one participant was not actually living with her parents at the time, but with other family members, such as an aunt and grandmother. What became apparent was that while some participants were aware of problems in their parents‟ marriages and professed to having seen it coming, others were completely taken aback by the news of a divorce. These participants expressed that they had never seen their parents fight and if they did fight, they never fought in front of their children. These different experiences are clearly expressed in the words of Palesa and Makopane:

> “Beforehand I could see like problems between them, we didn‟t live together for long, like my whole family like me my mom my dad and my little sister, we wouldn‟t live together for more than three months. He would move out and go to Durban and work there or something, and when he comes back there‟s fighting”.
>
> (Palesa, page 1)

> "…my parents aren‟t into explaining to their kids when things are going on, like the only reason I found out that my mom was leaving was because my mom and I had a big fight…so I went and spoke to her and she‟s like chilling there in her dark room on her bed, tissues all over the place and I‟m like ok and she was like I‟m leaving your father and I was just like…WOW".
>
> (Makopane, page 2)

While Palesa may have seen the signs that divorce was imminent, Makopane was completely blind-sided by the news. All of the participants experienced the news as a shock, whether they reacted immediately or later on. Furthermore, all of the participants expressed that they had not been part of the decision-making process. Sebongile suggests that:

> "Ja you see the thing is I don‟t think we were actually given a platform to react, it‟s just how it‟s always been that ok this is happening now and everybody just has to assimilate and just be fine with it and I don‟t think you‟re even given a chance to say this is how I feel about it…and the thing is it‟s more of in the home children should be seen and not heard".
>
> (Sebongile, page 3)

While there is a narrative tone of sadness and a feeling of betrayal in Sebongile‟s story, there was a general acceptance by all of the participants that it was not their place to become involved in their parents‟ divorce and they are simply meant to adjust to a situation that is out of their control. There was also a general theme that it went without saying that all of the participants would live with their mothers after the divorce. Bokang expresses her thoughts about this saying:

> "I didn‟t have to actually choose either, I think it was just one of those things you knew. I stayed with my mother, it wasn‟t a question or anything…they didn‟t sit me down and say you have a choice to live with either one, it wasn‟t anything like that. I think it was just like automatic if I can say it like that, you know you‟re going to stay with your mom, as a woman you have to stay with your mother and there was no choice given".
>
> (Bokang, page 2)

It was once again evident that the participants had little say in how their parents‟ divorce affected them personally and yet there was very little sense from any of the participants that they found this situation unfair. Rather the participants felt that it was not their place to ask questions and they would be told what they needed to know. This was a *stoic story* where children were not meant to ask questions and women were expected to be silent and strong.

(a) Their own lives

In talking about the how, where, and when their parents‟ divorces took place, it became evident that all of the young women were facing major issues, events and transitions in their own lives before the divorce took place and as a direct result of the divorce. Two of the participants were in their first year at university away from home, while others were experiencing the challenges often associated with being a young teenage girl. Sebongile gives a storied account of her personal experience:

> "Oh it was so bad, such a bad time, because in first year I broke up with my boyfriend, I know you get over it now, but I broke up with my boyfriend that I had been going out with for like four years, so I was going through such a crazy time. And then there was first year and it was hard and I was just thinking of dropping out and all that, and then they were busy getting divorced, so it was kind of like bad timing".
>
> (Sebongile, page 3)

The most striking images evident in Sebongile‟s account are those of time. Not only had the divorce come at a very difficult time in her own life, but she had ended an important relationship with her boyfriend which had spanned over a significant period of time. Sebongile‟s account expresses what was a time of great personal struggle for all of the young women. Like Sebongile, many of the participants commented that the timing of the divorce had been bad, as it was a time when they themselves were needy and off-balance, and wanted support and attention from their parents. Palesa and Makopane told psychological stories about their experiences of acting-out directly after the divorce:

> "I did crazy things you know, just acting out, but it was all in vain because no-one saw me. So it was anguish because I really was suffering and no-one was paying attention".
> (Palesa, page 5)

The anguish experienced by Palesa and the striking image of invisibility is echoed in many of the other young women‟s accounts of their own lives at the time. Two participants openly spoke of taking to drinking and drugs, and all five participants admitted to seeing a psychologist at some point during or after the divorce. Two of the young women told of suffering serious depression that they were hospitalised for a number of weeks and suggested that this was as an emotional consequence in the narrative of their parents‟ divorce.

(b) Parental marriage

The participant‟s parents were married according to varying arrangements, involving either a traditional African or Christian ceremony, or both. Despite the disapproval of Makopane‟s mother by her father‟s side of the family, her parents chose to marry in a traditional Christian ceremony. Makopane feels that she and her siblings have always been treated badly by her father‟s extended family because of their disapproval of her mother. Bokang‟s grandfathers both had more than one wife. She suggests that while her father only had one legal wife, he was similar to her grandfathers in that he always had a wife and girlfriends at the same time. Her parent‟s divorce meant that Bokang cut off all ties with her father and his extended family. Sebongile‟s and Rene‟s parents were married in traditional African ceremonies according to *isiXhosa* and *Setswana* customs respectively. Both women stayed in their marriages for many years despite being aware of their husband‟s infidelity, suggesting that this was what was expected of them according to their culture. Sebongile feels that when her mother became more educated later on in her life she became brave enough to go against cultural norms and file for divorce. Palesa‟s parents had been separated for many years but were never legally divorced, as she suggests that this would mean that her father would lose his position of status in their community and culture. What became apparent was that all of the participants‟ extended families were involved in the lobola negotiations, and that lobola was paid to the bride‟s family whether the wedding occurred in the form of a Christian or customary ceremony.

(c) Divorce as a story

Comparison of participants‟ “life-stories” exposed many similarities in their experiences of parental divorce. While the participants divided the stories of their lives into varying chapters, four main chapters were evident across all of the participants‟ stories. The first chapter for all of the young women revolved around an idyllic childhood and were

nostalgically entitled with metaphors such as “Innocence”, “Ignorance” and “The Last Child”. Bokang‟s story describes what was a generally happy time in the participants‟ lives, where they were not aware of problems between their parents; even though it later became apparent that many of their parents‟ problems had started during the young women‟s childhoods, and in some instances even before they were born:

> “I have been thinking about this and the first chapter I would call it innocence. I was so oblivious to everything and life was just about growing up and getting dirty and doing everything that a child does and I was such a tomboy, my life was just generally happy and getting hurt from bicycles and everything”.
>
> (Bokang, page 4)

The participants‟ stories evoked a kind of “calm before the storm” narrative tone of foreboding, in which they were naively oblivious to what may have been really going on between their parents at the time, and as such were simply living carefree and innocent lives.

Two of the participants spoke about a subsequent chapter in their stories, entitled “Beginning of Trouble” where they began to realise that something was out of place between their parents and they started asking questions. Makopane remembers a specific event involving her mother:

> “And then I started to ask questions like, cause at school I‟d see my friends and their parents were with each other and I remember going to my one friend‟s house and her parents were just like very loving with each other and I don‟t ever remember my parents being like that with each other. And they‟d have wedding rings and things like that, so I‟d ask my mom like mommy how come you don‟t have a wedding ring?”
>
> (Makopane, page 4)

Makopane‟s story evokes a narrative tone of uncertainty and apprehension for what is to come. While participants may not have known exactly what was happening, they knew there was something wrong, with the eventual realisation of the truth evoking heartbreaking stories of shock, betrayal and loss. These chapters were shortly followed by the more emotive and elaborate narratives of the affairs, the fights and the rumours, with chapters metaphorically entitled “Anguish”, “Downhill” and “World War I”. All of the participants‟ fathers had had

affairs with at least one other woman, sometimes starting before the young women were born. It is at this point in their stories that many of the participants found out about the affairs, as well as the children their fathers had conceived outside of marriage and thus became aware of half-brothers and sisters they had not previously known about. Palesa gives account of the events surrounding her father‟s affairs:

> "When he‟d come home he‟d have like a packet of condoms in his pocket that would fall out and I‟d be like ok. Um and then I started getting upset about it, writing in my diary, swearing at him all of that. And then at school things started becoming complicated because he actually would um have affairs with my friends, who were like 15 or 16 at the time and they would come and tell me about it. People in my town would tell me about it as well, it was like they‟d just keep coming to me and be like your dad did this and that and this and that, which got me upset".
>
> (Palesa, page 1)

While there is a theme running throughout of the acceptance by the participants themselves, fed by the stories of their mothers, aunts, grandmothers and other female family members, that it is expected that men will have sexual relations outside of established partnerships and marriage at some point, the sense of shock, pain and feelings of betrayal of the family can be heard in all of the young women‟s accounts of their fathers‟ affairs. Two participants then went on to tell stories of eventually meeting the "other woman" in their fathers‟ lives, while two participants suggested that there was not only one woman or that these women were not long-term girlfriends, and changed often. Makopane stories her experience of meeting her father‟s new girlfriend:

> "We got to Gold Reef City and then we park and then this other lady parks next to us and I was just like oh, the reason my mother left that lady she was in the car and my dad gets out and greets her and I‟m like thinking what the flip is going on and out comes little daughter and my sister greets the little girl like like they‟d met before and I‟m thinking ok so clearly my sister has been seeing this kid more than I have. So then I‟m like so this trip, the only reason I have friends here, is because you actually are doing a little mini family thing with her and you wanted me to have friends here [so that I would not be in your way]".
>
> (Makopane, page 5).

Makopane‟s narrative tone of anger and confusion is clearly evident. None of the participants went on to speak about actually having any form of relationship with the "other woman", but

rather spoke about having to tolerate her and show her respect as a person older than them because of the way they were raised in their family/culture. While two participants had formed lasting relationships with their "new" siblings, two participants had never met them and were not even sure what their names were or where they lived.

The final chapters of the participants‟ stories about divorce were entitled with slightly more upbeat metaphors, such as "Self-discovery", "Acceptance", "Letting Go" and "Looking Forward to Better Things". While most of the participants felt that they were still struggling through this chapter presently, they were resolute in highlighting that despite all of the heartache and confusion which they had endured, they were determined to move on with their lives. For example, while Renee recognised that she needed to move away from home, start university afresh and focus on her studies, Bokang spoke about needing to let her relationship with her father go in order for her to move on. While many spoke of the negative events which had accompanied the divorce, most suggested that overall it had been a positive experience and that they were glad their parents were separated and did not want them to get back together. Rather than passive resignation, these upbeat storied endings may be considered a form of re-storying the traumatic breach in the participants‟ narratives which parental divorce had presented.

4.2 Significant people

(a) People who played significant roles in the divorce

Crossley (2000a) suggests that every person‟s life is occupied by a few significant people who have a considerable impact on that person‟s personal narrative. All the participants told stories about the role which their immediate and extended families played in the divorce, in both a supportive and a negative manner. Rene, Sebongile and Makopane told of how their fathers‟ families had a significant impact on the development of the particular plot-structures of their divorce stories. Following on from the stories about the cultural arrangements around their parents‟ marriages, here was a theme of family discord that began or was explained through (or was exacerbated by) apparent tensions between the extended families (of "in-laws") and/or the participants‟ mothers. Thus, while Sebongile suggested that "my dad‟s family really doesn‟t like my mother", Rene said that her mother‟s and father‟s families "were not united from the beginning" and Makopane stated that "you know how rich snooty people would see trailer trash, like that‟s how they would see my mother". Participants told stories on their mothers‟ behalves of a young woman getting an education and working her

way up in the world, only to be told by her "in-laws" that she is still not good enough to marry their son. Two of the young women described themselves as "my mother‟s child" and so there was a sense that the rejection of their mothers was also a rejection of themselves by the father‟s family. Most significantly, most of the participants explained that divorce was not a decision made only by the individuals in the conjugal relationship, but that the extended families on both sides were called upon to discuss it, as through marriage these families had been united and therefore all had a say. Sebongile recounted her experience of her extended family‟s involvement:

> "I think lots of black people are just so scared of coming out of marriage , they‟re like terrified because, it‟s because in the beginning when you get married all the old people come and they tell you what to expect and like you know they kind of like tell you about marriage and stuff. So one of the most important things they tell you is that you have to be tolerant, submissive and just hold on, that‟s the biggest thing they tell you, hold on no matter what. Most people are actually scared of coming out of a marriage because people are going to think they‟re weak, they‟re weak because of their marriage". (Sebongile, page 4-5)

The theme of women having to be submissive to and tolerant of men‟s infidelities in particular, comes to the fore in Sebongile‟s account. The elders explain what is expected from a woman in marriage, while the same is not told to men going into marriage. Sebongile‟s story captures the experience for many of the participants who were quite sceptical of the role of the extended family in a divorce. The young women seemed torn between wanting to tell a traditional cultural story about marriage and family, and wanting to tell a more western individualistic story about love and commitment, in which decisions concerning a union are made by the partners themselves. The participant‟s were in disagreement with what the elders were saying, but hesitant to openly state this, thus causing tension in their stories at this point. However, there were also many stories about the positive roles which the extended family, particularly on their mother‟s side, played during the divorce. These characters who were clearly privy to the narrative details of marital tension, played supportive roles in terms of catalysing, facilitating or just "being there" through certain experiences and decisions. Sebongile explains:

> "Her family, very supportive, my aunt was very supportive…and actually surprisingly my mother‟s mother, my grandmother, she‟s very hectically Xhosa so you wouldn‟t expect that from her but she was like if you have had enough just leave, so my mother‟s family was very supportive".
>
> (Sebongile, page 5)

Thus in Sebongile‟s account there is a striking contradictory image of a character who is expected to be stereotypically traditional, reacting in a more „modern‟/western manner, by advocating divorce for the sake of her child‟s happiness. For many of the young women it was a relief to know that even if one had to make very difficult decisions that may go against traditional cultural beliefs, there would always be someone in one‟s corner supporting one. Besides family, it was mainly friends who were mentioned as playing a significant role, while interesting enough only one participant mentioned the "other woman" as having a marked effect on the divorce plot.

While most of the participants spoke about not being able to tell the story of their parents‟ divorce without having received personal support from either a close female friend or a sister, Sebongile suggested that she had not needed that kind of support because it was not her story to tell and she was merely there as a "witness". Sebongile seems to be making a distinction between her external (parental) story, and her inner (personal) story. Through her character position in this story she is placing her parents‟ story before her interior narrative of her own feelings. Besides a select few close family members and friends, what became apparent was the lack of personal and/or emotional support which all of the participants received during the time of the divorce. All of the participants had been seeking a sympathetic audience willing to listen to their tragic story but had not found one in their parents, in particular, as they were engaged in their own tragedy at the time. This may have possibly lead to all of the young women seeking out a counsellor or psychologist willing to pay careful and sustained attention to their stories in the detailed ways that were helpful to them. All of the participants saw a psychologist or counsellor during the time of the divorce or in its aftermath in the year following the divorce. Thus while the participants wanted their close family to have played the role of significant people who supported them during the aftermath of the divorce, they were forced to seek comfort in a psychologist or counsellor, a relative stranger.

(b) Role models

Crossley (2000a) makes use of the "role models" people choose as part of their stories, to provide a significant narrative anchor for a different (more positive) story. People‟s role models often inspire them to see their own stories in a different light and think about their own stories in another way. These characters are thus pivotal in allowing people to re-story following a narrative breach. When asked to think of a particular role model, either real or fictional, four of the five participants‟ chose an important woman in their lives. While

Makopane spoke of her current girlfriend who had overcome many hardships, Sebongile chose a close friend whose mother had passed away. The young women spoke of being able to identify with and admire the inspirational *'survivor stories'* of strong women of any age overcoming many hardships and adversity:

> "I would probably say my grandmother because she had it tough. She got married as well, she had nine children and he [grandfather] had two other wives and out of all his other wives he never saw her, she supported them [her children] all by herself. And my grandmother she taught me so many morals and everything and she said it in the most subtle way ever, but you knew what she was saying, you must always make sure there is food on the stove even for the neighbours who you really don‟t like…She taught me so many things and she was so caring and loving…but she was happy she was never like why me or anything like that…she just carried on day to day…for her it was like you take what life gives you and you deal with it".
>
> (Bokang, page 13)

> "My current girlfriend is pretty much my role model, she is like if I could tell you what she has been through in her life I just feel like I‟m some ungrateful little girl because she‟s been through things that will actually make you cry…she‟s amazing, she‟s just so flippen determined, I‟ve never met someone who‟s so determined".
>
> (Makopane, page 11)

While Bokang‟s grandmother supported nine children alone on an unstable income whilst always remaining positive, Makopane‟s girlfriend had lost her father and been abandoned by her mother and fought to ensure that she received a school and university education. These *survivor stories* represented the experiences of real women of all ages overcoming sickness, infidelity, death, abandonment and loss. Except for one participant who chose a male fictional character who uses supernatural forces to overcome many challenges while always being true to himself (*Harry Potter*), all of the participants chose real women in everyday life circumstances of adversity, hardship and struggle, perhaps alluding to the lack of media representations of an older child (and particularly a *black* older child) having to go through parental divorce.

4.3 Stresses and problems

(a) Conflicts, issues and problems

For most of the participants the obstacles faced in their lives as a narrative consequence of their parents‟ divorces were all centred on relationships with their own parents, and with current/potential romantic partners and friends. The participants used psychoanalytic Object Relations narratives in therapeutic contexts to explain how their parents‟ relationship woes affected their own relationships through damaged trust. The young women recycled psychological stories about "having trust issues" since the divorce and spoke of their "fears of getting hurt" again. Makopane and Palesa recaptured their difficulty in accepting emotions shown towards them by others and allowing people to get close to them. Makopane describes her experience in terms of self-protection, thus:

> "I guess I had to start accepting emotion that was a big thing for me during that time of indifference, I wasn‟t indifferent because I didn‟t care, I was indifferent because it hurt and I didn‟t want to be hurt and I did that for a good portion of my life, I just didn‟t feel anything, so when things started to fall apart I had to feel again".
>
> (Makopane, page 11)

In addition, Palesa spoke of her fear of commitment:

> "Well I guess like I said before the whole commitment thing…it‟s so difficult I mean the only thing I can commit to is something that is not emotional, my work I mean that‟s my first priority, it‟s easy to commit to, it doesn‟t hurt me…it‟s constant and it really isn‟t emotional and that‟s nice.
>
> (Palesa, page 11)

What becomes apparent in Palesa‟s account is that the divorce narratives created „story-static‟ that detracted from the participants‟ ability to concentrate on their academic work (their reason for being at university) or to concentrate on their own feelings. These young women had all witnessed intimate betrayal and seen their mothers replaced by other women in their fathers‟ lives, and so there is an anticipatory tone in their stories in which the young women are expecting to be similarly let down, disappointed and hurt in relationships. Sebongile used

the metaphor of being caught-in-the-middle to describe her place in the divorce narrative in which her parents forced her to choose one of their sides, thereby questioning or splitting her loyalty. Through these narratives it became apparent that these young women experienced a great deal of inner turmoil when having to listen to derogatory stories from one parent about the other. Some also spoke about the experience of no longer wanting to go home during vacations, because it brought up too many issues and brought back too many difficult memories; and they therefore made excuses to stay at university or to visit friends. What became apparent was that although it had been some time since the divorce, the young women were still working through many of these issues. Thus the divorce had caused a narrative breach in the participant‟s life-stories and identities; these women‟s stories about themselves and their families had been thrown into disarray and they were in the process of re-storying a new identity and a new world.

Bokang‟s obstacle was the only one to have resulted in a resolution at this point in the participants‟ narratives. Bokang‟s parents got divorced when she was in her final year of school. It had just been announced that she would be head-girl the following year and she was away at boarding school at the time. She told numerous psychological stories of her need to always be in control since the divorce. She told one story of going on a date with a wonderful man, but how the date turned into a disaster when she would not let him pull her chair out, pay for her meal or walk her home later that night. She had such a need to be independent, in control and not to have to rely on a man that it started to affect all aspects of her life. Unlike the other participants‟, Bokang‟s is an *epiphany story* in which she found insight into and a resolution to her problem through a Christian movie which she watched:

> “Yes I think I‟ve come a long way, I really have…but I think one movie I watched that really helped was *The Family That Prays.* It‟s about this woman that becomes so controlling and it was so bad when I watched it I was thinking to myself I never wanted to be her ever in my life. She gained so much [financially] but she never amounted to anything. In this instance it wasn‟t the woman that was being the vulnerable one, she was actually the one being mean and terrible with the guy, and the guy was the one that left and I was just thinking I don‟t want to be like that, I really don‟t and I think that was a wake-up call for me”.
>
> (Bokang, page 16)

In that moment of watching another woman‟s story on a screen, Bokang was able to see herself reflected in the movie-image of the controlling woman, and was able to make a conscious decision to avoid this plot and re-story her life through a deliberate change in behaviour and attitude.

4.4 Personal meanings and life-lessons

(a) Beliefs about marriage and family life

The personal meanings and life-lessons for participants consisted mainly of conflicting stories about the meaning of marriage, as well as *before-and-after* stories of transformation, describing the changes in beliefs about marriage, life and love before and as a result of the divorce. Bokang, Palesa and Sebongile used traditional cultural stories to describe the views they grew up with about the importance of marriage and family life. Sebongile described her family‟s view that a man is head of the household and that a woman should stay in the marriage no matter what, as "a cultural thing"; while Bokang grew up believing that "marriage is a very important thing for a woman". Palesa described her family‟s beliefs in this way:

> "Ok…marriage is sacred, ok this is from the Xhosa culture from what I know, marriage is sacred, marriage is important, family is important, many kids is important, having lots of kids. That‟s the idea, but in practice, keep your family and have your fun elsewhere, that‟s how it works, that‟s it in a nutshell for me".
>
> (Palesa, page 12)

Palesa‟s cynical narrative tone describes a story of disappointment in which she is let down by those she is closest to, which has caused her to doubt the beliefs and values she held true for many years. In contrast, while Rene described her mother as holding these same traditional values she describes that for the rest of her family "marriage means nothing to them anymore", as time and time again it has been proven that marriage is not predictable or permanent. Following a recurrent theme of socio-economic class and the precarious financial status of women in marriage, Bokang and Rene also spoke about their families beliefs that it is important for a woman to be educated before she commits to a marriage, possibly pre-empting the need for a woman to be able to stand on her own two feet in the unfortunate instance of divorce. Differently to everyone else, in Makopane‟s family, marriage and relationships were never spoken of. This narrative silence is closely related to Makopane‟s story of her own lesbian sexuality, which has never been openly acknowledged or spoken about in her family:

> "My dad knows about my sexual orientation. We've never discussed it but he's a smart man he's just a quiet man, um he's fine as long as I'm ok as long as I'm happy…there's no discussion".
>
> (Makopane, page 13)

While Makopane insisted that her parents' divorce had little effect on her sexual orientation/preference, Palesa (also a self-identified lesbian) felt that her lesbianism was a direct result of her father's sexually promiscuous behaviour with many women and her subsequent generalised mistrust of men.

Many of the young women spoke of still holding the core values of their traditional cultural upbringing, but perhaps not as strongly as before the divorce. For instance, Sebongile told of her changed beliefs since having left home to go to university in another city:

> "Some things have changed, like I don't believe I should respect someone who doesn't respect me, like in my culture…but now I can't I can't do it, I think it's just because I have been exposed to many people…and it's just I think I don't have to respect someone who doesn't respect me".
>
> (Sebongile, page 8)

Thus Sebongile and the other young women's are stories of growing autonomy in which they choose which values and beliefs from their upbringing are still relevant for them and which they would like to personally transform or replace. All of the participants' felt that despite having lived through their parents' divorce, they would still like to get married, but not necessarily in the traditional sense. For Makopane and Palesa, a rejection of the traditional form of marriage had two meanings; firstly a rejection of old, established cultural practices/norms of marriage and secondly a rejection of the heterosexuality entrenched in marriage and nuclear families. Sebongile suggested that despite her mother's "anti-marriage meetings" with her friends, "I definitely think I would get married, but under different circumstances not the whole traditional thing". While Palesa felt that a long-term relationship in which a degree of independence can be maintained was what she wanted for herself, Makopane suggested that despite being "anti-marriage" after her parents' divorce, her views had changed since she started dating her current girlfriend and she now believed that if you meet that "one special person" then you can make it work. Bokang was adamant that she wanted to raise children in a home where there are two parents. All of the young women

knew they wanted to get married but in a situation that differed to that of their parents. Despite living through their parents divorces they believed that for them things would be different and therefore had not yet lost faith in the idea of marriage.

(b) Love, life and yourself

The participants also described what they had learnt about love through the experience of their parents‟ divorce. Rene‟s story was something of a romantic fairy-tale, suggesting that she had not been put off love by her parents‟ divorce and still really believed in it, saying "some people really love each other, it‟s so amazing". The rest of the participants told somewhat more cautious and realistic tales of the precariousness of love. Far from a romantic fairy-tale these young women spoke about love in a very matter-of-fact manner, with a realistic and somewhat pessimistic narrative tone. Sebongile felt that it was important to keep a clear mind and not "lose yourself in love or a relationship", while Makopane and Bokang both discovered that love was not easy and that you constantly had to work at it. Makopane suggested that she believed that "love can be very fickle", while Bokang strongly believed that sometimes the best thing you can do is to let love go:

> "I think the biggest thing I have leant is that, you know like in this culture [Xhosa] you always stay in your marriage, no matter what happens you always stay in your marriage and people always tell me you have to keep fighting for the guy, and I believe that I‟m not saying give up when things go wrong, but I think there comes a time when you must face the fact that maybe it‟s better …you‟ve got to make something perfect by letting it go".
>
> (Bokang, page 19)

In a story of heart-break and a loss of faith in love Palesa suggests:

> "I‟ve never admitted this to anyone but I guess I long for the whole happily ever after thing, deep deep down inside somewhere deep I want everyone to be happy and have someone they love, I want to be loved, I want to love back, but I think I‟ve realised that isn‟t possible, it‟s nice in theory but in practise the idea really isn‟t".
>
> (Palesa, page 12)

From a somewhat more positive point in their stories, the participants‟ felt that through their parents‟ divorce they had learnt that life can be “unpredictable”, but that you “can always start over”. From a position of wisdom gained in hindsight Makopane suggested that:

> “I‟ve learnt that sometimes things just don‟t work out and that‟s just how life is and that everything happens for a reason, everything. I don‟t necessarily believe in fate because that means we don‟t have any control but the fact that you know all that stuff happened to me, it brought me here and it‟s made me who I am and all those things had to happen so that I can be who I am now”.
>
> (Makopane, page 14)

Makopane‟s account ties in closely with Crossley‟s (2000a) idea that narratives and story-telling not only help us to organise and make sense of our experiences, as well as attach meaning to our experiences, but in these very acts of meaning-making, the human subject sculpts a narrative identity. In addition to this Sebongile, Rene and Palesa suggested that what they had learnt about themselves was that they are far stronger and far more determined than they thought they were and that if they had not been tested through the difficult experience of their parents‟ divorce then they would not have known this. For Bokang it meant that for the first time she was able to admit that “I‟m not perfect and I don‟t have to put this perfect face on”, a truly liberating realisation for her personally. Therefore there is a sense that these young women‟s stories have moved from a state of confusion and heartbreak, to one where they have learnt and are still learning, meaningful lessons about life and themselves.

(c) Working through the tough stuff

Bokang, Makopane and Sebongile suggested that in order to make sense of the difficult things that happened to them in their lives they would speak about it. Bokang and Sebongile suggested that speaking to “professionals” helped:

> “Talking, and not talking to friends or someone I know, someone who‟s going to make me stay in a place where everything is so sad and bad and I really feel sorry for you, but talking to someone professional”
>
> (Bokang, page 20)

Against this professional distance, Makopane found that speaking to her mother was most useful. Therefore the ability to tell stories and re-story the trauma caused by the divorce is used by these young women as a way to overcome and mend the narrative breach. Narratives are thus seen to have the capacity to restructure the incoherence and rebuild the brokenness through the use of personal and social stories. Rene suggested that her story was still clouded with incoherence. She believed that she was still working through the confusion and trying her best to find meaning in the divorce, while suggesting that she was most concerned with trying to figure her father out.

4.5 Life Theme

When asked to look back over the entire experience of parental divorce and provide a central theme, image or tone, the participants managed to sum up their individual experiences and in a sense provide a „genre" or tone for their particular story. While these tones or genres varied somewhat it seemed as though all of the young women were actively struggling not to have their story classified as a „tragedy" for themselves. While there was much drama evident in their stories, they set out to re-story their narratives in order that they could continue in a more optimistic light, or allow their own sense of agency to direct their story in a more positive light.

Sebongile chose to classify her story as a "learning experience". She felt that for her and her family, every step of the divorce was a learning experience that allowed everyone to learn about themselves, their lives and their family. She believes that because of this learning positive change was allowed to take place. This ties in closely with Sebongile"s explanation of the dynamics in her parents" relationship changing as soon as her mother went from being uneducated to finishing school and getting her degree. The „learning" which took place for her mother, allowed her to make decisions which Sebongile felt lead to positive change in her life.

Palesa chose the central theme of "fighting" in her story. While the fighting started out as the negative fighting between her parents when she was younger and before the divorce, it has developed in to a positive form of fighting for what she believes in. Palesa suggested that Jane Eyre once said "if you want equality you have to fight for it", a motto which she now lives by. Palesa suggests that on a daily basis she is fighting to get an education and become successful, she is fighting for those she cares about and she is fighting to not become like her father. This is closely related to her fight for equality in terms of her lesbian sexual

orientation/preference and the prejudice and stigma which is sometimes directed towards her as a result of this.

Bokang‟s genre can be described as consisting of *‘transformation stories’*, told to capture a sense of character development through gaining wisdom of experience. She characterised the experience of her parents‟ divorce through two themes: “letting go” and “new beginnings”. Just as she believes there comes a time when you have to learn to let love go, Bokang feels that you need to learn to let all the bad things that have happened in life go. She believes that keeping these things “close to your heart” and allowing them to remain part of your storied self only causes more pain. This is most evident in her relationship with her father which she has “let go”. She narrates him mainly as an authority figure and felt that he never really understood her. While in her external story (the one she chooses to share with the world) Bokang claims that she is comfortable that they no longer have contact and is happier without him playing an active role in her life, her internal story (characterised by emotions she wishes to hide from others and even herself) is one in which he is still a painful figure in her life-story and can never be completely erased from it. Her second theme was more closely related to her mother. Bokang said that people labelled her mother as a divorcee and in a sense made suggestions that her life-story was coming to an end and would stay that way forever. Bokang suggests that while her mother has stayed single what was most important for her and for her children to learn from, was that she never stopped living.

Makopane chose the central themes of “talking” and “don‟t judge”. Through her theme of “talking” she suggests that children should be taught to speak about how they feel no matter how difficult it may be from a very young age and to “sometimes challenge things” and not simply do things because your parents and grandparents did it that way. This theme is closely linked to Makopane‟s feelings during the divorce that “children should be seen and not heard” and the fact that she was never given a voice during the divorce process. It is also linked to her current manner of speaking to her mother when she needs to work through something tough or challenging in her own life. Makopane‟s second theme of “don‟t judge” is linked both to the experience of people judging her mother during the divorce process, as well as her feelings of being judged about her sexuality.

4.6 Future script

In this final theme there is a shift from the stories of the past and the present to those of the future. In these forward-looking narratives there is a tone of acceptance of past events and a re-negotiation of a new identity in a new world in the future.

(a) Success

Some of the participants spoke about what it was they wanted for themselves in the future. Bokang spoke about her need for independence in the near future, where she would be able to stand on her own without having to rely on family members and especially without having to rely on a man in the more distant future. Palesa and Makopane spoke in detail about their prospective careers and their need to make a success of their lives. For Palesa success entailed having a family of her own one day.

(b) Reconcile damaged relationships

For Sebongile, Makopane and Palesa it was important that their parents could make peace and "just get along" for the sake of their children. Makopane wished that her dad would "open up" to his children and stop keeping things from them, while Palesa hoped that her dad would finally acknowledge that he was wrong in order to make peace with his children:

> "My dad…I just want him to have an epiphany one night, you know just this sudden realisation that…I was wrong, I still am wrong and maybe I should have given more than just money to my kids and I want him to pay attention to my little sister…I really want him to make peace with his kids".
>
> (Palesa, page 14)

There is a feeling that since the divorce, or perhaps even before, many of the participants feel that their fathers were neglecting their children and were more involved with their „new" relationships, children and families. There was a need to re-connect with their fathers and get over the past through forgiveness.

(c) Mom

As did others, Sebongile felt that her mother's narrative was still one of intense anger saying "she's still very angry about everything that happened…she can't believe she stayed that long, I just want her to let go of her anger". Many of the participants also expressed a hope

that their mothers would find love again, or at least someone special to share their lives with. There was a feeling of injustice in their reflective stories in that while their fathers were just starting new chapters of their lives often with new women and families, their mothers were destined to a life of loneliness, as they had already had the happiness which society allows for a woman their age. Bokang also wished for a happy and relaxed retirement for her mother in which she could begin to take care of and focus on herself for the first time in many years.

5. Discussion and Concluding Comments

5.1 Overall theoretical and methodological contribution

While one cannot assume that the narratives collected from a small sample of black university going women is representative of the experience for all young black adults recounting recent parental divorce, it is a useful start to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, within a South African context. This study critically addressed the rapid increase in divorce rates globally and locally, and the dominance of clinical psychological studies intent on assessing and treating the predicted negative outcomes for children and young adults of experiences of their parents‟ divorce/s, from a different theoretical and methodological perspective. The narrative research approach used in this study could usefully be employed to track the experiences of children and young adults in South Africa in the future.

This narrative study, in accordance with Day-Sclater (1997) and Riessman (1989), suggests that while divorce is most certainly difficult for all of the family members involved, the existing ideas and images - and narratives - of divorce do not fully account for this highly complex transition and reconfiguration process. While it cannot be denied that parental divorce is often accompanied by a great deal of emotional pain and suffering, the transformative and positive experiences which form part of the divorce process must be taken into account. The use of an experience-centred, life-story narrative approach allows for a process of rupture, acceptance and re-storying to be accounted for, as the participant‟s narrative shifts from past, to present and the future. This type of approach also makes accessible Killian‟s (2004) belief that people have the capacity for successful adaptation and resilience despite very difficult experiences or circumstances.

Day-Sclater (1997) goes on to suggest that while one cannot ignore the emotional experience of parental divorce, emotions should not carry pathological connotations with them as they are normal. Strong emotions drive the re-storying process which allows one to critique and formulate the story you want to „tell‟ and what you want to do differently. Stories have the transformative potential not only to restore the narrative breach, but to resist the existing restrictive views about both traditional cultural forms of marriage and individualistic western ideas of romantic love and familial nuclearity as the only way to ever-lasting bliss (Kruger, 2003). A space is needed where both the pessimistic, as well as the positive transformation stories of divorce can be told and accepted. An obvious increase in divorce, remarriage,

single parenthood and post-divorce families means that society may need to begin to recognize and accept the postmodern family, characterized by diversity of form and function, as the new universal norm and thus new narratives which depathologize divorce are needed (Chambers, 2001).

5.2 Children, young adults and the particular, messy stories of divorce

According to Emery (1999), research has shown that painful psychological experiences are revealed in the accounts of young children who have lived through the divorce of their parents. While some of the feelings reported from research with children, such as anger towards their parents (particularly fathers) and anxiety about divided loyalties, have similarly been established as relevant to young adults who have undergone the divorce of parents, there are other narrative features unique to the experience of older/adult children. This narrative study, like that of Amato et al. (1995), suggests that parental divorce affects young adults at crucial stages in their own life stories and developments; and it unsettles their taken-for-granted stories about themselves, their culture, family and their places in the world. Consequently, this often influences their decisions about "marriage" - in its broadest sense of an anticipated goal - and their sexuality and sexual preferences, establishment of intimate relationships and the formation of an autonomous self.

In contrast to younger children, young adults have a greater awareness and understanding of the events surrounding their parents‟ divorce. In this study the women‟s stories about their parents‟ divorce revealed their shock at finding out that their parents would finally divorce; and that they became/were privy to the intimate narratives of their fathers‟ extra-marital affairs and were fully cognisant of expectations of them in meeting „the other woman‟. They were able to narratively imagine what betrayal of trust, loss and disappointment felt like for their mothers, as they were themselves at an age where they were negotiating sexual/intimate relationships. The stories told to participants in this study by their grandparents and parents are in agreement with Russell‟s (2003) and Leclerc-Madlala‟s (2003) findings that there is an expectation of black South African men‟s sexual promiscuity, which is said to be inevitable, sanctioned by their (traditional, patriarchal) „culture‟ and requires tolerance. However, the stories of the participants in this study about their fathers‟ unfaithfulness do not support suggestions that this is culturally expected behaviour of all black (African) men. Perhaps drawing on western discourses of modernism, feminism and/or Christianity, and/or local discourses of liberation and equal rights enshrined in South Africa‟s new Constitution, this

younger generation of black South African women are dissatisfied with and challenging, previously taken-for-granted, traditional cultural assumptions about sexuality, relationships and marriage (Wilbraham, 2008).

Cooney (1994) suggests that, following divorce, there are often marked changes in the parent-child relationship in a family with young children because one parent has sole (or more responsibility) for custody. However, this narrative study suggests that in a family with older young adult children, it is often knowledge surrounding the events of the divorce, and coming to know the „whole-story" from various story-tellers" perspectives, which results in a change in parent-child relationships. Hillard (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987) suggests that the impact of parental divorce on young adults is mediated by their geographical removal from the situation. However, this narrative study suggests that „distancœ" is in itself an exacerbating factor in stories about parental divorce, which left the women feeling helpless, out of touch and not in control of a story which had profound consequences for them. What became apparent in this study was the lack of platform given to young adults to react to their parents" decision to get divorced, despite its effect on them. This idea was captured in the metaphor "children should be seen and not heard", used by some of the participants to describe their marginalized position in the divorce-plot. At times it appears as though the participants were struggling between telling their expected traditional cultural story and wanting to tell a more emotional story about themselves and their feelings about and inner experiences of their parents" divorce (Carr, 1998). This narrative study, like Cooney (1994), found that initially reduced paternal contact occurs as a result of divorce, even in instances where relationships with fathers were close; while relationships with mothers were often strengthened as a result of the divorce. Because of an empathetic understanding of their mothers" situation as a character in a narrative plot about marriage in which they (as women) were also implicated, the mother-daughter bond was seen to become uniquely intimate and caring. However, this narrative study found that, while immediately after the divorce it was expected that a young woman lives with her mother, it later became possible for the participants to choose to live with their fathers if they wished. This highlights the narrative possibility for young adults to maintain independent relationships with both parents after a divorce.

5.3 Divorce stories as gendered stories of survival and empowerment

While a comparison between genders is beyond the reach of this study, in support of Hagestad‟s (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987) findings, young adult women generally expressed a great deal of anger during/after the experience of parental divorce; and their anger was more often than not directed at their fathers. It was noted that all participants‟ stories about divorce in this study centred around fathers‟ infidelities with other women. The participants‟ mothers were clearly identified as the victim or wronged party in the narrative plot of sexual infidelity, and all had initiated divorce proceedings against their husbands. However, Hagestad‟s (as cited in Kaslow & Linzer Schwartz, 1987) findings eclipse the narrative details of the divorce and merely assume that men/fathers are always to blame in instances of divorce and are thus always the target of their children‟s anger. It must be acknowledged that different divorce stories would result in different kinds of emotions, directed at the different characters involved, and that feelings of identification with one or the other parental figure might vary given the central story-line of divorce.

In some of the divorce stories, the participants in this study reported being caught-in-the-middle between warring parents and having to play adult roles in the narrative like „negotiator‟, „peacemaker‟ and „protector‟. The women expressed concern and protectiveness for the financial welfare of their mothers in the future, and this placed huge pressure on them as university students, attempting to successfully educate themselves to hold professional positions of employment and thus, "provide for" their mothers/siblings (Young, 2009). What became evident in these stories of divorce was that many of the participants‟ mothers had come from a socio-economic class lower than that of the participants‟ fathers, and had „married up‟. Thus, the participants‟ mothers may perhaps have been financially able to divorce their husbands much later on in their lives than they would have personally wished, as they had to first acquire relevant education and employment and work their way up the career ladder to be able to afford to stand on their own. These mothers were further represented in the stories of divorce as "single" following the divorce-event. Although all the participants in this study were proud of their mothers‟ resilience in coping with adversity, and were inspired by their strength as role models, many participants told of their mothers‟ initial financial struggle after the divorce, where they had to move into a much smaller home and generally live a much humbler lifestyle.

5.4 Marriage, divorce and extended families in black communities/cultures

An interesting finding of this narrative study on young black women‟s stories about their parents‟ divorce concerns the role of the extended family in the divorce narrative. As suggested by Takyi (2003), the influence of an individual‟s geographical distance from their family of origin and western norms emphasising romantic love, meant that the traditional cultural role of the family in partner selection did not occur; yet all of the women interviewed said that „in their culture‟, marriages – including their own parents‟ marriages – were considered as a cultural practice of kinship by which two families (or „blood lines‟) were united (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). Thus, the participants‟ mothers‟ and fathers‟ extended families (and most notably their "in-laws") were formally or informally implicated in the decision to get divorced. It was not a matter to be decided by the two individuals constituting a married couple. Russell‟s (2003) suggestion that urban black families live according to (hybrid) principles and values very different to both white families and rural black families, holds true for the participants in this narrative study. Thus, the women interviewed appeared frequently to be caught between two story lines; the traditional stories of their various cultures, and the western/modern stories which abound in their new university contexts (Wilbraham, 2008). The participants suggested that while they still lived by the basic principles and practices expected in/by their various cultures, and participated in the necessary ceremonies, they indeed lived very different lives and told different life-stories to those of their parents and grandparents. This meant that they lived by traditional norms and principles, combined with those from the west. Thus many of the women‟s ideas about marriage were vastly different from those of their parents. There is a suggestion that this is not a "watering-down" of their respective cultures, but the formation of a newer version thereof (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). Thus what becomes most apparent through this narrative study is that cultural practices and beliefs may powerfully influence the experience of parental divorce and shape the story that is told.

5.5 University students and psychological support – telling new stories and selves after breach

It is important to point out that Crossley‟s (2000a) is a life-story research approach and as such is advocating the use of stories in general to re-story one‟s self/world following a trauma and not suggesting that the mere act of telling stories in an interview can heal the narrative breach of trauma. Thus, Crossley‟s (2000a) ideas might be explored therapeutically in an

approach such as narrative therapy, pioneered in large part by Michael White, with the ability to provide a supportive space for re-storying for the young women in this study (Carr, 1998). In this approach, human problems are viewed as arising from and being maintained by oppressive stories which dominate a person‟s life. Carr (1998) suggests that people‟s problems are brought about when the way in which their lives are storied by themselves and others "(do) not significantly fit with their lived experience" (p. 486). Thus, within this narrative frame, therapeutic solutions to problems involve creating a space for the authoring of alternative stories, which have been previously marginalised by the dominant oppressive narrative maintaining the person‟s initial problem (Carr, 1998).

In line with Young‟s (2009) findings that many more young university students are seeking psychological services, all of the participants were involved in a counselling process at some point after their parents‟ divorce. Young‟s (2009) study does however not differentiate between which black university students would readily seek help and those that would hesitate in seeking psychological services. Perhaps black students from poorly resourced, former DET schools and rural backgrounds would be less likely to seek help at historically white universities due to alienation from „white Eurocentric‟ culture on university campuses; whereas psychological services may not seem as foreign to more resourced black students from ex-model C schools or middle-classed backgrounds. In support of this idea, all of the participants in this study seem to have generally come from middle-class backgrounds. While some participants had little choice in being taken to see a mental health professional by their parents, others had actively sought this help out. These autonomous acts were part of the active re-storying of their lives in order to heal the breach/damage caused by their parents‟ divorce. Through their various experiences the participants had learnt to tell „psychological stories‟ which allowed them to express emotions like anger and sadness, but also gave them the ability to talk themselves through their re-storied identities and lives to get to the positive stories of resilience.

Success stories of coping and resilience are helped to emerge when given an accepting space to be told. Like Day-Sclater (1997), this research suggests that because society views divorce in such a negative light, a space where both negative and positive stories can be told and accepted is necessary. There is evidence of the idea that parental divorce as a narrative event brings a life-story into perspective, allowing young adults to learn a great deal about themselves and prioritize those relationships which are considered important. In this narrative study, there was also the possibility for some participants to forge new and special

relationships with a half-sibling they would not have known about had it not been for the divorce chapter. Despite parental divorce being represented as a „difficult time", intense feelings of relief were often experienced as a result of the divorce, bringing to an end the conflict which surrounds problematic relationships, and opening up a future of narrative possibilities that were more hopeful. Similarly, in her research on the narratives of chronically ill individuals, Charmaz (1990) found that an illness experience provided a narrative space/moment in people's stories to be able to question, alter or negate their former identities or future plans; thus providing an opportunity to re-story a meaningful life, reshape their identities, as well as reconfigure relationships and their new place in the world.

Like Crossley (2000b), this research suggests that the fragmentation manifest in traumatic experiences, such as parental divorce, serves to highlight the narrative configuration of unity and coherence usually taken-for-granted on an everyday level. In instances of trauma many of our taken-for-granted assumptions about the world, ourselves and our families are shaken at the very roots, which is when stories become important for narrative reconfiguration. The participants used stories not only to "confine the catastrophe" (Broyard as cited in Crossley, 2000a, p. 21), but to attempt to regain a sense of order and rebuild their broken sense of meaning, identity and relatedness to others. While Crossley (2000a) somewhat simplistically suggests that the overall tone of a life-story is either predominantly optimistic or pessimistic, this narrative study found that often there may be more complicated and nuanced shifts in tone throughout the narrative as the story unfolds. Bearing in mind that these research interviews were conducted in a non-therapeutic context, the participants' stories (told for my benefit as the researcher rather than their own) displayed shifts in tone from pessimism to optimism, and many shades between. Rather than exploring only sadness and loss, the research-audience required through its very precise interview-questions (e.g. obstacles overcome, lessons learnt, future script), a story about „transformation" – narrative emplotment and tone that shifted from one form to another (Squire, 2008). Thus McAdams' (as cited in Crossley, 2000a) suggestion that early insecure or secure attachment relationships have the most formative influences on narrative tone seems unlikely in this particular research context of story-telling, but might feature in psychodynamic therapeutic contexts of story-telling.

As briefly mentioned, a possible limitation which must be recognised is that the use of McAdams' (as cited in Crossley, 2000a) personal narrative protocol served to structure the participant's stories in a very specific way. While the benefit of this is that similar experiences of parental divorce are explored for all of the participants allowing for a

comparison of similarities and difference, it means that participants were not given narrative freedom in structuring their stories the way they wanted to.

5.6 Reflecting on audience and othering

Sass (as cited in Crossley, 2000a) suggests that "if meaning is social, if it exists in the dialogue, then it legitimately depends, to a significant extent, on the person who listens" (p. 68). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the stories which the participants tell about parental divorce are deeply affected by their audience, in this instance the (white) researcher. The stories which participants tell do not simply exist out there in reality; they are constructed through the collaboration between participant and researcher. While the participant is telling her story, the researcher is constantly constructing her own story about the participant‟s story. Therefore the final analysis and interpretation of the participants‟ narratives consists of a combination and collaboration between the stories of the participants and the researcher – as story-tellers (Elliot, 2009). Elliot (2009) suggests that there is a need for the researcher to critically examine and "reflect upon the nature of research and the role of the researcher in carrying out and writing up empirical work" (p. 153). Thus the racial differences between the researcher (a white young woman) and participants (black young women) in this study, affects the researcher‟s construction of the participants‟ cultural beliefs and practices and shapes the stories which are heard and told about their experience of parental divorce.

This research is limited to some extent in that it only focused on the young black adult woman‟s experience of parental divorce – or, in narrative terms, it privileged one side of the story. Therefore, future research might productively include a comparative analysis of the stories told about parental divorce between young adult men and women in various South African contexts. This study made use of a small sample of participants within a university context, who had all (fortuitously, rather than by design) experienced similar divorce-plots – a father‟s infidelity with another woman, and leaving the mother/children as a single-parent.

Therefore, while divorce can be difficult for all the family members involved, it involves a highly complex transition and reconfiguration process which the existing idea, images and narratives of divorce do not fully account for. Even though parental divorce is often accompanied by much emotional pain, there are also encouraging and transformative experiences that need to be taken into account, which form part of the divorce process. Stories have the transformative potential not only to restore the narrative breach caused by

parental divorce, but to resist the existing restrictive views about romantic love and familial nuclearity as the only way to ever-lasting bliss (Kruger, 2003). As previously suggested in this study, a space is needed where both the negative, as well as the positive transformation stories of divorce can be told and accepted. It may also be necessary to consider the traditional nuclear family in a different light and begin to recognise and accept the postmodern family, characterised by diversity of form and function, as the new universal norm and in so doing create new narratives which depathologize divorce.

6. References

Amato, P. R., Booth, A., & Spencer Loomis, L. (1995). Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring well-being during early adulthood. *Social Forces, 73(3), 895-915*.

Amato, P.R., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and adult well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53, 43-58.*

Bozalek, V. (2006). Analyzing a text of the prevailing paradigm of „family" in the „psy" Professions. In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaaier & P. Kiguwa (Eds.), *The gender of Psychology (p. 151-164).* Cape Town: UCT Press.

Brentano, C., & Clarke-Stewart, A. (2006). *Divorce: causes and consequences.* New Haven: Yale University.

Budlender, D., Chobokoane, N., & Simelane, S. (2004). Marriage patterns in South Africa: Methodological and substantive issues. *Southern African Journal of Demography, 9(1), 1-26.*

Carr, A. (1998). Michael White"s narrative therapy. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 20(4), 485-503.*

Chambers, D. (2001). *Representing the family*. London: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (1990). „Discovering" chronic illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science Methods, 30(11), 1161-1172.*

Cooney, T. M. (1994). Young adult‟s relations with parents: The influence of recent parental divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56(1), 45-56.*

Cox, M. J., & Paley, B. (1997). Families as systems. *Annual Review of Psychology, 48, 243-267.*

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crossley, M. L. (2000a). *Introducing narrative psychology: self, trauma and the construction of meaning*. Buckingham: Open University.

Crossley, M. L. (2000b). Narrative psychology, trauma and the study of self/identity. *Theory & Psychology, 10(4), 527-546.*

Day-Sclater, S. (2004). Narrative research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice (pp. 109-124)*. London: Sage.

Day-Sclater, S. (1997). Narratives of divorce. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law, 19(4), 423-441.*

Di Leonardo, M. (1987). The female world of cards and holidays: Women, families, and the work of kinship. *Signs, 12(3), 440-453.*

Dowling, E., & Gorell Barnes, G. (2000). *Working with children and parents through separation and divorce*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Dunkle, K. L., Jewkes, R. K., Brown, H. C., Gray, G. E., McIntyre, J. A., & Harlow, S. D. (2004). Transactional sex among women in Soweto, South Africa: prevalence, risk factor‟s and association with HIV infection. *Social Science & Medicine, 59, 1581-1592.*

Elliot, J. (2009). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: Sage.

Emery, R. E. (1999). Postdivorce family life for children: an overview of research and some implications for policy. In P. R. Amato, & R. A. Thompson (Eds.), *The postdivorce family: children, parenting and society (pp. 3-27*). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ferree, M. M. (1990). Beyond separate spheres: Feminism and family research. *Journal of Marriage and family, 52(4), 866-884.*

Goldstein, S., & Solnit, A. J. (1984). *Divorce and your child: practical suggestions for parents.* New Haven: Yale University.

Gwele, N. S. (2002). Racial relations in selected faculties in English language historically white universities in South Africa. *Society in Transformation, 33, 134-151.*

Hook, D. W. (2002). Critical issues in developmental psychology. In D. W. Hook, J. Watts & K. Cockcraft (Eds.), *Developmental psychology (pp. 343-366).* Cape Town: UCT Press.

Hunter, M. (2006). *Aids and the changing political economy of sex in South Africa: From apartheid to neo-liberalism*. Unpublished seminar paper, History Department, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Kaufman, C. E., de Wet, T., & Stadler, J. (2001). Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood in South Africa. *Studies in Family Planning, 32(2), 147-160.*

Kaslow, F. W., & Linzer Schwartz, L. (1987). *The dynamics of divorce: a life cycle perspective.* New York: Brunner/ Mazel.

Kelly, J. B., & Emery, R. E. (2003). Children‟s adjustment following divorce: Risk and resilience perspectives. *Family Relations, 52(4), 352-362.*

Kelly, K. (2006). From encounter to text: collecting data in qualitative research. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim & D, Painter (Eds.), *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences (pp. 286-319)*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

Killian, B. (2004). Risk and resilience. In R. Pharoah (Ed.), *A generation at risk? HIV/Aids, vulnerable children and security in Southern Africa.* Institute for Security Studies, Monograph 109 (Chapter 3).

Kruger, L-M. (2003). Narrating motherhood: The transformative potential of individual stories. *South African Journal of Psychology, 33 (4)*, 198-204.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews*. Sage: London.

Laumann-Billings, L., & Emery, R. E. (2000). Distress among young adults from divorced families. *Journal of Family Psychology, 14(4), 671-687.*

Leclerc-Madlala, S. (2003). Transactional sex and the pursuit of modernity. *Social Dynamics, 29(2), 213-233.*

Macleod, C. (2002). Economic security and the social science literature on teenage pregnancy in South Africa. *Gender and Society, 16(5), 647-664.*

Macleod, C., & Durrheim, K. (2002). Racializing teenage pregnancy: „culture" and „tradition" in the South African scientific literature. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 25(5), 778-801.*

Msila, V. (2005). The education exodus: the flight from township schools. *Africa Education Review, 2, 173-188.*

Riessman, C. K. (1989). Life events, meaning and narrative: The case of infidelity and divorce. *Social Science & Medicine, 29(6), 743-751.*

Russell, M. (2003). Are urban black families nuclear? A comparative study of black and White South African family norms. *Social Dynamics, 29(2), 153-176.*

Sam, D. L., Peltzer, K., & Mayer, B. (2005). The changing values of children and preferences regarding family size in South Africa. *Applied psychology: An International Review, 54(3), 355-377.*

Scott, J., Treas, J., & Richards, M. (2004). *The blackwell companion to the sociology of families.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Shin, S. H., Choi, H., Kim, M. J., & Kim, Y. H. (2010). Comparing adolescents" adjustment and family resilience in divorced families depending on the types of primary caregiver. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 19, 1695-1706.*

Shrifter, M. R. (2007). Adjustment to Parental Divorce and Remarriage: An Examination of the impact of gender and temperament in children. *School of Professional psychology.* Retrieved September 3, 2010 from http://commons.pacificu.edu/spp/5

Siqwana-Ndulo, N. (1998). Rural African family structure in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29(2), 407-417.*

Smith, J. A. (2003). *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Squire, C. (2005). Reading narratives. *Group Analysis, 38(1), 91-107.*

Squire, C. (2008). Experience-centred and culturally-orientated approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research (pp. 41-63)*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Statistics South Africa. Retrieved April 2, 2009 from http://www.statssa.gov.za/PublicationsHTML/P03072007/html/P03072007_6.html.

Stolorow, R. D. (2003). Trauma and temporality. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 20(1), 158-161.*

Takyi, B. K. (2003). Perspectives on family and marital process in Ghana. In J. J. Ponzetti (Eds.), International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family Relationships (2nd edition). New York: McMillan Press.

Takyi, B. K., & Broughton, C. L. (2006). Marital stability in sub-Saharan Africa: Do women‟s autonomy and socioeconomic situation matter? *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 27(1), 113-132.*

Weiner, J., Harlow, L., Adams, J., & Grebstein, L. (1995). Psychological adjustment of college students from families of divorce. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 23(3/4), 75-95.*

Wetherell, M. (1995). The psychoanalytic approach to family life. In J. Muncie, M. Wetherell, R. Dallos & A. Cochrane (Eds.), Understanding the Family. Sage/Open University Press: London.

Wilbraham, L. (2008). Parental communication with children about sex in South African HIV/Aids epidemic: Raced, classed and cultural appropriations of loveliness. *African Journal of AIDS research, 7(1), 95-109.*

Young, C. (2009). The CORE-OM intake norms of students attending a South African University counselling service: a comparison with UK counselling service data. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 37(4), 473-483.*

Ziehl, S. (2003). The family and social cohesion. In D. Chidester, P. Dexter & W. James (Eds.), *What holds us together: social cohesion in South Africa (pp. 195-223)*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Recruitment E-Mail

ATTENTION WOMEN STUDENTS: DIVORCE RESEARCH

My name is Jaclyn Lotter and I am currently completing my Master‟s degree in Counselling Psychology at Rhodes University. I am looking for women student volunteers to participate in my research project, which is about the stories that young black South African women tell about their experience of recent parental divorce. Participants must be black, female, between the ages of 18 and 25, must have been at least 16 at the time of their parents‟ divorce and it must have taken place at least two years ago.

Volunteers will be asked to take part in two interviews. The first interview will be approximately 1 hour long, while the follow-up interview will last approximately 20 min. All interviews will be conducted in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University. While you may be asked questions of a personal nature, you may choose not to answer any questions about aspects of your life which you are not willing to disclose. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time. All correspondence will be treated with the strictest of confidence and while the report on the project may contain information about your personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, it will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

My supervisor is Professor Lindy Wilbraham. The ethics of the project have been passed by the Department of Psychology‟s Research Project and Ethics Review Committee and permission has been obtained to conduct the research on the institutional premises from the registrar. If you are interested or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail (j.lotter@ru.ac.za/ jaclynlotter@yahoo.co.uk).

With thanks,
Jaclyn Lotter

Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. Key events – *key events which may have occurred before, during and after the experience of parental divorce.*

- When, where and how did your parents‟ divorce take place?
- How old were you at the time, where were you, and what was happening in your own life?
- Think of your parents‟ divorce as a story (e.g. expressed as a book or a film), divide your experience of the divorce into "chapters" (e.g. focus on the chapters before, during and after the divorce).
- Give each chapter a name and describe its general contents.
- Comment on what allows for the transition from one chapter to the next.

2. Significant people – *a few significant people who have had a major impact on the experience of parental divorce*.

- Who are the people who played important roles in your parents‟ divorce, and in what ways did they have an impact on what happened?
- How did those people impact on your experience?
- Can you speak about one of two significant people, without whom you feel you would not have been able to tell the story of this experience?
- Did you receive any (other) significant forms of support? For example, from your family, church or university.
- Do you have a particular role model or hero/ine – for example, a character in a book or film, or a celebrity, who has told a story about surviving divorce – that motivates or encourages you?

3. Stresses and problems – *issues which the experience of parental divorce may have caused at the time, as well as the issues provoked in re-telling the story.*

- What conflicts, issues and problems have you faced as a result of your experience of your parents‟ divorce?

- Could you recall one "event" (or story) that happened to you in detail that highlighted for you the kind of issues/ problems you faced as a result of your parents‟ divorce? What happened, and how was the event handled or resolved (if it was)?

4. Personal meanings & life-lessons – *the participant's fundamental beliefs and the values concerning divorce and family life, and what she has learnt about herself from this experience.*

- What were the fundamental beliefs and values about "marriage" and "family life" that were held in your family – before your parents‟ divorce or when you were growing up?
- Do you still hold these beliefs and values?
- What did you learn about love, life and yourself through the experience of your parents‟ divorce?
- What did you do (or still do) to find/ make meaning through the tough stuff?

5. Future script – *how it may affect her in the future.*

- After speaking about your past and present situation, what are your plans for the future? Do you have plans or hopes for your family, and for yourself?

6. Life theme – *a central theme, message or idea that runs throughout the participants' experience of parental divorce.*

- Looking back over this entire experience, including its unique chapters, episodes and characters, is there a central theme or idea that runs throughout this story?

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Rhodes University

Department of Psychology

Agreement Between Student Researcher and Research Participant

I (participant‟s name)_____ agree to participate in the research project of (researcher‟s name)_____ on the stories which young adult women tell about their experiences of recent parental divorce.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for an Honours degree at Rhodes University.

2. The researcher is interested in the stories which young women between the ages of 18 and 25 tell about their recent experience of parental divorce and how it has affected their lives.

3. My participation will involve two interviews. The first will last approximately one hour, while the second will last approximately 20 minutes.

4. I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life I am not willing to disclose.

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (date):

Participant:

Researcher: