

**FACTORS INFLUENCING RESILIENCE IN MEN  
AFTER DIVORCE: EXPLORING PASTORAL  
METHOD OF CARE TO AN  
AFRICAN SITUATION**

**By**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
degree of Philosophiae Doctor**

**In the faculty of Theology**

**At the University of Pretoria**

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**April 2011**

## DECLARATION

I Gift Tlharhani Baloyi hereby declare that this research is my original work, and that it has not been submitted to any other University.

Signature (**student**) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 2011

Signature (**supervisor**) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 2011

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this research is to explore a mode of resilience within the context of the traditional African divorced men. A qualitative methodological design was followed, allowing unique experiences to emerge. Four men were interviewed and an in-depth qualitative analysis undertaken, in order to explore the subjective experience of resilience during and after the period of separation and divorce. The study's results were presented in the form of integrated and descriptive text. The participants stories were re-encountered through the researcher's own frame of reference in which common themes of the divorced process were constructed. These were elaborated on and a comparative analysis was undertaken to link them to the available literature. This information gained from the research could contribute to the existing research on the impact of divorce and the ability to bounce back positively aftermath of divorce by offering this new perspective from traditional men.

This project was done within the selected areas of Vatsonga speaking tribes in the Limpopo province. It was found that the most pivotal aspect of resilience as reported were social support, family support and new environment. Apart from this, the research further explored the biblical teaching on the phenomenon and discovered that:

- The prevalent universality of marriage seems to confirm the biblical traditional marriage as the divine way of recreating humanity. Furthermore, the bible in both the Old and New Testaments view divorce as contrary to the divine intent. It was noted that Deut 24 does not command or encourage divorce; rather, it simply regulates divorce since it was already happening.
- After a thorough exegesis of the passage and survey of the relevant interpretations in (Matthews), it is clear that Jesus forbade divorce for any reason except adultery. Divorce is unthinkable because it destroys the intended order of creation and God's creative act in bringing a man and a woman together in accordance with his order. God is the author of marriage; therefore, he inscribed the call to marriage in our very being by creating us as male and female. Marriage is governed by his laws, faithfully transmitted by his bride, which is the Church.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following persons for their support and encouragement that enabled and inspired me to complete this research project:

- My supervisor, Prof Maake Masango for the constructive criticism and sincere guidance throughout the research project.
- All post-graduate students (masters and PhD) who contributed in shaping my research topic and guidance throughout the entire research. From this class I learned and received valuable lessons, critical comments and encouragement that shaped who I am.
- All my friends who encouraged and supported me to go forward with my studies in order to change the house of the Lord.
- I thank my beloved mother (Annicky Shalati Ngobeni) for everything she has done for me, and all the prayers she dedicated to me in ensuring that I succeed in my journey of education.



## KEY TERMS

Divorce

Divorce adjustment

Resilience

African men

Qualitative research

Grounded research

Pastoral care

Hermeneutical methodology

## ABBREVIATIONS

|            |   |                            |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| A.D        | - | Anno Domini                |
| BCE        | - | Before Common Era          |
| C.E        | - | Common Era                 |
| Deut       | - | Deuteronomy                |
| NT         | - | New Testament              |
| OT         | - | Old Testament              |
| PAS        | - | Parent Alienation Syndrome |
| Stats S.A. | - | Statistics South Africa    |

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction to the research

### Prologue

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to present the research problem and provide some background to the study. It also outlines the aims, objective and relevancy of the study. The final section of the chapter contains a brief overview of all the chapters in the thesis. This research paper explores a traditional mechanism used by divorced men within the African context. The methodologies to be followed are both quantitative and qualitative in orientation and involve in-depth interviews with participants. The participants in this research are five (5)Tsonga speaking divorced men aged between 30 and 55 from different places in Limpopo Province, specifically from the Mhinga, Makuleke, Kurulen, N’wamitwa, Elim and Ngove villages (outside Giyani). Community members who witnessed the men’s struggles in terms of adjusting to divorce will be interviewed also. The research questions involve exploring the participants’ experiences and will focus specifically on their point of view, ideas, motives, beliefs and feelings.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Any study focusing on divorce must remain aware that divorce cannot be understood in isolation but must always be considered in the context of the institution of marriage. A clear understanding of the institution of marriage is therefore essential. In the case of this research marriage must be understood from a traditional African point of view, as the research focused on divorced African men.

## 1.2 THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Most people enter into a marital union with the idea of forming a firm union and family. Marriage and family are among the oldest human social institutions. In most cases when people enter into a marriage they do so without any intention of ever getting divorced. John Gottman , defined the institution of marriage as “*the most commonplace of human social relationships*” (1994: 1). “*It is a union, permanent at least by intention of a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and the rearing of children and mutual assistance*” (Hastings, 1973: 27). These definitions provide a broad overview of marriage but it should also be noted that the institution of marriage is a highly scripted relationship with culturally defined expectations for husbands and wives. Marriage can thus be seen

as “*a focus of existence*” (Mbiti, 1969: 133). Spouses interpret their daily experiences in reference to their marital role. Within this context societal or cultural expectations exist that dictate that marriage should be respected until death. However, this is not the case in most marriages. Many marriages end in divorce, which is seen as a failure of marriage. Mbiti , writing from an African perspective, stated that, “*A man or woman would not be socially recognized as a grown-up without being married; no matter how old he or she might be chronologically*” (1969:148). Marriage thus plays a pivotal role within the community and is vital in maintaining the consistency of the society.

From this viewpoint marriage is a sign of maturity, normality and success. From an African perspective divorce is seen as shameful and divorced men often feel uncomfortable in the company of other men. However, as Dorit Eldar-Avidan pointed out: “*the role of marriage in coordinating social life has eroded*” (2009: 30). As a result of this erosion an alternative setting of social life has developed, and this alternative setting may have a negative impact on family members. Many children are being raised and cared for by single parents, and in most cases these single parents are women.

This increase in single parent household is the result of numerous consequences relating to the failure of marriage. Divorce is a complex transition that affects the

lives of individuals, children and families at large. Coontz described divorce as “*a complex event and a diversion in the life course with personal, social, legal, and financial short- and long-term effects for adult and children*” (2007: 7-8). Divorce calls for the development of new roles and relationship patterns as well as an integration of various emotional events. The experience of divorce thus involves dramatic change. Divorce results in the revelation of new character traits and in behaviours and actions that have an impact on the lives of many individuals.

Kitson stated that “*although divorce is thought of as an event, it actually entails a pileup of events, each of which may contribute to wrenching series of losses: loss of friends and family, loss of status, possible loss of one’s children, and sometimes loss of financial security*” (1992: 18). In accordance with Kitson’s (1992) statement some African men lose their status as real men within the community due to their failed marriages. In other words, Kitson connote well with what African traditional viewpoint says about a man who losses his credential in the community when facing process of divorce and hence the emphasis on “*loss of status*”.

Lee (2006) echoed Kitson’s viewpoint and recognised that “*the break-up of the couple subsystem affects all individuals and subsystems in the family and its relationship to all other systems*” (1992: 37-38).

Divorce thus involves a huge transition and is a very stressful life event. Divorce also disrupts the structure of marriage and ex-spouses are faced with problems and difficulties in relation to having to change their perspective on everyday life from that of a married person to that of a divorced individual.

### **1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Practical theology is a field that prides itself on taking human experience seriously. It strives to understand this experience as a place where the gospel of love towards others is grounded and lived out. Ackermann and Bons-Storm defined practical theology as a “*discipline which is essentially involved with living, communicating and practising the life of faith*” (1998: 1).

The goal of this theology is to restore the life of people of God faithfully within the community. Swinton and Mowat stated that “*Practical theology locates itself within the diversity of human experience, making its home in the complex web of relationships and experiences that form the fabric of all that we know*” (2007: 3).

In summary, practical theology therefore helps to understand and experience human experience in order to care for the individuals involved as people of God.

Willows and Gordon suggested that “*stories create order and meaning out of the scattered fragments of human existence*” (2000: 181). The case study provided below highlights some of the difficulties African men face during and after divorce.

### *Case study*

I grew up in a Christian family where going to Sunday school and church was standard procedure. I personally decided that I was a Christian while attending secondary school and was then baptized at a Presbyterian church. I managed to live as a Christian throughout university. I started doing as I pleased as soon as I started working. I was married at age 33 and divorced at age 37. I have not remarried.

My marriage went sour as soon as it started and there was no peace. I tried all forms of spiritual/religious help in order to seek a solution to my marital problems. I did not find a solution. God spoke to me at this moment through my friends and relatives. I then stopped all the ‘nonsense’. My marriage finally broke down and I was divorced. Anger, pain, hurt, helplessness and hopelessness overwhelmed me.

This emotional narration epitomises the pain and disturbance experienced by divorced individuals, particularly those individuals who do not receive any counselling immediately after divorce. The use of the words such as anger, pain, hurt, helplessness and hopelessness clearly show that divorce is an emotional catastrophe that must be dealt with in many ways, including through the use of psychological, religious and traditional methods. Against this backdrop a specific research problem was formulated. The research problem is discussed in the section below.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Divorce is unfortunately an all too common experience in the present day. However, the impact and the stigma attached to divorce make it difficult for individuals to adjust and face new life successfully. Divorce involves many difficult experiences including the loss of spouse, friends, family and financial position and having to face public disapproval. This research endeavour to understand the pain of divorce and the existence of resilience amongst divorced African men. The research will be done within the context of pastoral care. The following specific research questions will be explored:

- How do men cope when they are confronted with divorce from their spouse?
- How do African men in particular understand themselves within the society of other men, especially when facing this dramatic change?
- Is there an African way of displaying resilience in men after divorce?
- Is there a theology of resilience?

It is hoped that the answers to these questions will help in addressing and understanding the pain experienced by divorced African men.

## **1.5 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this research is to empower African men to face a new life after the transition from divorce. This will be done through the methodology of pastoral care, which takes African realities very seriously. The importance of remaining a man by being strong and bold in different situations is a central reality in African society. This research thus contributes towards making pastoral care possible by helping to understand the experiences of African men going through a divorce. It contributes to the body of literature that approaches pastoral care from an African perspective as well as contributing to the existing body of knowledge that positions

pastoral care as relevant, contextual and liberating. It also makes a significant contribution in terms of the challenges of culture that must be addressed by theology in general and pastoral care in particular.

The aims of this research were as follows:

- To study divorce and resilience from the perspective of divorced men. This involved focusing on African concepts and support structures.
- To explore the ways in which men function or cope when confronted with the difficult transition and adjustment of divorce.
- To explore the ways in which family members interact with the situation.
- To explore different characteristics of resilience in order to develop a positive way of strengthening individuals.

## **1.6 RESEARCH GAP**

The psychology, sociology and social work literature contains a wealth on information regarding divorce, but very little research has investigated divorce from a theological perspective. The existing literature contains valuable information relating to the course, consequences and adjustment to divorce. The

focus of the literature is mainly on women who were divorced by their husbands and on the negative effects of divorce for children. This research thus addressed a research gap by focusing on the experience of African men who were divorced by their wives.

## **1.7 GERKIN'S HERMENEUTIC OF PASTORAL CARE METHOD**

This study will be guided by the hermeneutical model developed by Gerkin (1997). The narrative hermeneutical model was developed in contrast to the psychotherapeutic pastoral care model that was dominant and common in American and Western pastoral care. Most societies view pastoral care as a strong and priority arm of the church. It was thus considered important that this research follow Gerkin's method of the shepherding of the flock. Gerkin's biblical traditional method of shepherding involves the triological structure of priests, prophets, wise men and women and is based on an understanding of the way in which these individuals collectively took authority for shepherding God's people in the Old Testament.

This caring method of shepherding is helpful because it provides an integrated approach to healing that is inculturated in the African belief system and culture, which views healing as taking place within the community and not in isolation. Gerkin (1997) illustrated his point by stating that "*the depiction of Jesus as the*

*good shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by his sheep, has painted a meaningful, normative portrait of the pastor of God's people"* (p. 80). Gerkin's method of pastoral care will be applied as the methodology for this study because it is all encompassing. It aims to address individual and family problems within the context of lived experience. This is an ideal method of helping people who are in need of pastoral care/therapy and this includes divorced African men. Gerkin stated that a good shepherd is concerned about each member of the flocks and patiently and painstakingly ensures that each one of them is safe and cared for accordingly.

The responsibilities of pastoral care are comparable to those of the shepherd, as they involve guiding others to the spring of living water. In this respect the shepherding method has a lot in common with the African worldview, which values humane and communal life. This method of shepherding allows the pastoral therapist to enter into a caring relationship with individuals in order to explore an African method for caring for other individuals.

## **1.8 THE DATA-COLLECTION METHOD**

This research focuses on ideas of male resilience in divorce and employs qualitative, quantitative and historical methodologies. The use of the historical method involves all literature concerning the development of divorce and marriage.

This historical method will help in positioning the research as comprehensive,

critical and contextual. The historical method will also ensure that the researcher is aware of developments in the field of divorce and could position this research in terms of existing research. The research also aims to contribute new information to the field of divorce research. The qualitative research framework, which consists of six in-depth interviews, yielded important findings with regards to men's ability to reconstruct their home life outside of marriage. These in-depth interviews will focus on the behavioural distress as well as the coping mechanisms men used in the midst and aftermath of divorce. The choice of a qualitative method is based on the researcher's interest in the depth of the phenomenon of divorce. The qualitative method is pivotal for this research because it will help reveal "*knowledge of the other, knowledge of phenomenon and reflexive knowing*" (McLeod, 2001: 3). This research will also focus on particular individuals and groups of people and thus allows in-depth exploration of the ways in which these individuals view divorce and interact with the society.

The use of a qualitative methodology also allows the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and create an atmosphere conducive to the sharing of sensitive and emotional material. The methodological approach will allow participants to relate their experiences in their own words and from their own perspectives. This will enable them to offer new ways of understanding and

interpreting the world. The qualitative approach also allows participants to relate their processes and, together with the researcher, re-construct their realities. The methodology will therefore, provide participants with the space in which to explore the socially constructed meanings applied to the encountered experiences of being divorced.

The aim of the study is to investigate the diverse experiences of married men and in keeping with this aim the participants will be chosen based on their diverse backgrounds. Five men from both rural and urban areas who had attained different levels of education will be interviewed. The participants are Tsonga speaking and are drawn from the Kurulen, Ngove, N'wamitwa, Makuleke and Mhinga villages in the Limpopo province in South Africa. The participants are selected based on their knowledge of the phenomenon of divorce as well as their expertise in terms of African heritage life.

The chieftains of these villages as well as their councils will be interviewed in order to gain insight regarding the phenomenon of divorce. Chieftains and their councils have valuable insights regarding divorce because issues regarding divorce are dealt with by families and these traditional councils. Some of these traditional councils consist of old men and women who are experts in African traditional issues. Other key role-players outside of these councils will also be interviewed.

The researcher will also consult people from different discipline such as psychology and sociology. Individuals who had witnessed these men's struggles to adjust after divorce will be interviewed as well. The researcher hopes that these additional interviews will offer a more nuanced account of the experience of divorce. These different accounts also demonstrate the different strategies that these men developed and used as they reconstructed their lives after divorce. The researcher used these various accounts to diminish the subjectivity of the data.

The study will also make use of quantitative methodologies in order to obtain a broader view of men's coping mechanisms during divorce. The use of statistics will allow the research to move beyond the in-depth studies and demonstrate how divorce impacts men in South Africa. The research aimed to explain existing knowledge regarding divorce in order to ascertain how the changes relating to divorce impact individuals' ability to function and reorganize following divorce.

Finally, the research involves an in-depth investigation of archives in order to trace African men's response to divorce. Through this process the literature will interrogate and the participants' narratives will be compared and deconstructed. The literature will investigate material relating to theology, psychology, sociology and law. The aim is to arrive at a holistic understanding of all the steps and procedures involved in divorce. The literature review will also survey articles and

notices on divorce appearing in black newspapers, particularly *Abantu Batho* (*people*). These newspapers were the leading newspapers at the turn of the century and their popularity persisted until the beginning of apartheid.

Although the newspapers focused specifically on political advancement they also provide significant information concerning black social life, especially black home life, across the country. The articles often offer sensationalized accounts of marriage, but they still offer a glimpse of the process of marriage and divorce in the black South African context. This interdisciplinary approach will result in a complicated reading of divorce. The research involves the use of a theological framework and oral testimonies, empirical evidence and historical approaches to trace the silent narratives of men's resilience following the end of their marriages.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

### **Divorce:**

- Is the final and legal dissolution of the marital bond between two partners (Williams 2006). It involves both psychological and legal processes and affects both partners as part of a larger system as well as individual subsystems.

### **Divorce adjustment:**

- Relates to the developmental process following divorce. It usually takes two to five years and it involves many areas of life including daily habits, personal identity, economic status, sexual and social relationship, relationships with children and extended kin and role redefining (Raschke, 1977; Reissman, 1990).

### **Resilience:**

- Relates to people's ability to respond well to stress or to a meaningful disruption in their life course, recover from adverse events and employ positive adjustment mechanisms. The severity of the event, together with various protective factors and the person's available internal and external resources, impacts on resilience (Dorit, 2009, pp. 40-41; Luther, 2000).

### **Gerkin's narrative hermeneutical model:**

- This model was developed in response to the popular psychotherapeutic pastoral care model. The model has since become part of both western and African pastoral care. This model recognises and appreciates the importance of human needs in pastoral care. To Gerkin the "living human documents"

(1997: 97) were as important as the biblical and historical texts and then could thus also be read and interpreted.

### **Grounded theory:**

- Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that was developed during the 1960s by two sociologists named Glazer and Strauss. In this method theory is developed based on the data collected. The data from which theory emerges is obtained in a systematic manner based on social research (Glazer & Strauss, 2001, p. 1-2; Neuman, 2000, p. 146).

### **Pastoral care:**

- This is a sub-discipline of practical theology and is also referred to as shepherding and soul care (Van der Ven 1993, p. 37). Pastoral care deals with Christians caring for one another. In the past pastoral care was confined to pastors or priests based on the assumption that they were the only individuals able to take care of others. However, the discipline has developed to the extent that it is now liberated from individualism and clericalism and instead refers to the caring ministry of all the people of God (Buffel, 2004, p. 41). Hulme provided a broad understanding of pastoral

care and defined it as being “*synonymous with the entire ministry of the church*” (1970: 10).

## **1.10 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS:**

### **Chapter 2: Theoretical basis and literature review**

This chapter deals with literature surrounding the subject of divorce and resilience.

### **Chapter 3: Research method and design**

This chapter outlines the research method that was followed. It deals with the epistemology, data collection and analysis. It also describes the participants and touches on some ethical considerations.

### **Chapter 4: Exploring the reality of divorce**

This chapter explores the reality of divorce as experienced by African men. It also investigates the transitional challenges these men face in the aftermath of divorce. In addition, the chapter looks at the way in which individuals who are close to the divorced men experience the men’s divorce processes.

### **Chapter 5: Data analysis and hermeneutical pastoral care**

This chapter presents some reflections and processes experienced by individual members during the divorce transition process. The chapter focuses specifically on

the role of resilience in transitioning from one stage of the divorce process to another and looks at the role of pastoral care in the divorce process.

## **Chapter 6: Findings and final reflection**

In the final chapter the findings and final reflections regarding the research are presented. This chapter includes recommendations for further research on the phenomenon of divorce and conclusion as well.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explore the literature surrounding the concept of divorce. Several themes shall be discussed, namely the historical overview focusing on the ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish societies, both the O/N Testament's view on divorce with specific reference to the Mosaic laws, Jesus' teachings and the Pauline view of divorce are considered. In acknowledging that divorce is not only a biblical concept, this chapter aims to unpack both the psychological and sociological effects.

#### **2.2. THE DIVORCE RATE**

According to the Statistics South Africa, 183 030 marriages were registered in 2007. This number includes 438 marriages of South African citizens solemnised outside the borders of South Africa but which were registered in South Africa. From 1998-2007 the number of registered marriages increased from 146 741 in (1998) to 183 030 in (2007). In 2007, data reveal that while there were more

females (54,0%) than males (43.9%) in the African group, the men (53,1%) were more likely to initiate divorce proceedings than women (44,6%). This is in contrast to the other population groups, particularly among the Coloured (62, 7%) and the Whites (60,4%) where divorces were more typically initiated by women (Stats S.A. 2007, pp. 1-2). The above statistics reflect the rising divorce rate in South Africa, with an increasing number of people of both genders and all races initiating divorce proceedings each year. Divorce is thus becoming a strong social phenomenon in South Africa, and indeed, it is a growing trend on a world-wide scale.

The focus will now shift to understanding the concept of divorce historically, as a way of determining whether the concept existed in the ancient world or whether it is a new phenomenon.

### **2.3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The prevailing form of marriage in Greek, Roman and Jewish societies involved monogamy. However, extramarital sexual relations were readily available (at least in Greece and Rome), with prostitution and adultery rife. Moreover, since consent was necessary for the marriage, the withdrawal of it made divorce a simple

procedure. Nevertheless “*divorce remained the exceptional situation in the Semitic world*” (Grenz, 1997: 100). According to Beryl Rawson, “*the Roman ideal of marriage was that of a lasting, continuous union*” (1996:49). It was considered to be a “*partnership for all of life*” (Grubbs, 2002: 81). In addition to marriage being considered to be an enduring union, it was also considered to be a vehicle for procreation. The Greek theorists saw marriage and procreation of children as fundamental to human society (Campbell et al, 2003), and Hunter wrote that “*marriage in ancient cultures was as a rule, closely linked to the aim of producing children and the Romans were no exception*” (1992: 7). In fact, Adkins and Adkins note that “*later it become acceptable for a husband to divorce his wife for reasons such as infertility*” (1998: 404) (while previously divorces tended to be initiated due to the wife’s unfaithfulness to her husband). This is closely linked to John Mbiti’s observation from an African perspective that marriage without procreation is incomplete, and such a union may lead to divorce or polygamy (see Mbiti 1969, pp. 133-134, cf Kalu, 2005, pp. 527-528, Waruta & Kinoti, 2005, pp 101-114). In the early days of Rome, as in most early communities, the wife was considered to be the property of her husband (a belief currently prevailing in many African communities (Mbiti 1969).

Nonetheless, it is important to note that while a child could be considered to be a gift from God, scholars and traditional people (by traditional people, I mean elderly people within the community) should keep in mind that women and men do not choose to be barren, but it occurs as part of God's design. Divorce was commonplace in the Greek and Roman societies of the late ancient period, although the practice was largely considered to be an "*indulgence of the upper classes or senatorial elite*" (Scheidel, Morris & Saller, 2002: 95) and apparently did not become common amongst the masses. In fact, some Romans tended to look upon divorce as a misfortune. According to Adkins', "*divorce was granted by Roman Catholic courts for adultery, cruelty, and heresy*" (Adkins & Adkins, 1998: 404)). On the other hand "*early Roman law permitted divorce only for serious moral transgressions and punished it severely*" (Morris & Saller, 2002: 95). According to Reynolds, adultery "*was a crime that a wife and her paramour committed, and a man's infidelity to his wife did not in itself make him an adulterer*" (1994: 174-175). Constantine's law on divorce of AD 331 adopted a similar viewpoint, with men being permitted to divorce their wives on the grounds of adultery, but made no corresponding provision for women.

Ancient patriarchal societies (e.g. Amorites, Assyrian, Hebrew, Greek and Roman) did not consider extramarital intercourse to be adultery unless a married woman (or

a concubine) was the offender. This is in contrast to the Christian church's official view that adultery was as immoral for a husband as for a wife, and that a wife's adultery could not be used as a ground for divorce. However, the idea that married men should be subjected to the same restrictions as married women was never translated into the general consciousness of the Christian community (Tierney, 1999: 18).

In Greece as well as Rome, by the first century, the marriage could be terminated by the woman as well as by the man, unlike the situation in Jewish law where the right of divorce belonged only to the husband ( Bowersock, Brown, & Grabar 2000: 414; Harlow & Laurence, 2008: 87). In fact, Jewish society regulated very liberally the right of a husband to divorce his wife. Some Rabbis interpreted Deut 24:1 to mean that a man could divorce his wife if he found her unattractive! But the Jewish woman could not divorce her husband, as opposed to Roman custom, which gave such rights to women (see Stevens & Williams, 2006: 79).

According to Jewish law the penalty for adultery was death, a penalty that remained in force until A.D 30, within Jesus' ministry. In the patriarchal society of the Hebrews, divorce was primarily an option for the husband, so that the possibility of a woman instigating divorce was virtually unheard of. Religious leaders were required to oversee the divorce process, and as a result divorce was

institutionalized and codified in the Hebraic laws. With this historical overview in mind, the chapter now analyses the biblical view of divorce by examining key passages from both the Old and New Testament and considering Jesus and Paul's views.

## **2.4. THE BIBLICAL DATA**

With the historical foundation laid above, we can begin to explore in depth God's declarations concerning divorce in the Old and New Testaments through the teachings of Jesus and Paul. The most controversial statements about divorce and remarriage are those spoken by Jesus to Israelites and in order to understand those statements it is necessary to first study what God said a thousand years earlier on the same subject to the early Israelites. If we find that God's teachings through Moses and God's teachings through Jesus are contradictory, we can be sure that either God's law changed or that we've misinterpreted the lessons imparted by either Moses or Jesus. Therefore the research begins with what God first revealed regarding divorce and remarriage in the Old Testament.

The Bible first discusses the issue of divorce in Deuteronomy 24. In order to fully understand what Deut 24 says about divorce, it is necessary to understand Deut 22,

particularly verses 13-30, as this provides the context for Deut 24. In that text, the Law clearly spells out the means with which a marriage can be dissolved, which is not through divorce but rather execution. In other words, there are certain sins that a marriage partner commits against his or her mate that are so serious that the proper penalty is to terminate the marriage through the death of the offending spouse.

## **2.4.1. THE OLD TESTAMENT DOCUMENT**

### **2.4.1.1. Deuteronomy 22**

In Deuteronomy 22:13-30 the Law prescribes death upon a man and/or a woman for extramarital sexual sins. In verses 13-21, a young wife's virginity is discussed. The situation arises if her husband accuses her of premarital promiscuity. In order to defend her honour, her parents were commanded to produce a blood-stained cloth, which was considered to be evidence of a woman's virginity at the time of her marriage, as the blood was the result of the marriage consummation (see Craigie, 1976, p. 292-3). If a woman's parents could produce the cloth, her honour was protected and the husband was forbidden to divorce her (v. 19b), and he was to pay a substantial fine to her father (v.19a). However, if no proof of virginity can be

produced, then she should be put to death (v.20-21). Thus Mosaic law established that premarital sexual relations were an immoral act, worthy of death in order to safeguard the sanctity of the marital relationship (v. 21) (see Denzil, 2007). This position is reinforced in verses 23 and 24 where a young woman who is pledged to be married to one man has premarital sex with another man. The consequence was death for both parties, again with the aim of safeguarding the sanctity of marriage (v. 24b). However, the situation changes if such an incident occurs in the country (vv. 25-27), where a presumption of innocence protects the life of the girl. The law adopts the assumption that she had been raped and was unable to obtain help due to the isolation of living in the country (v. 27).

In verse 22, adulterous sex is considered to be an ‘evil’ that must be purged from Israel, and is thus punishable through death. The only place in Deut 22 where unmarried sexual contact does not result in death is if a man has sex with a woman who is not pledged to be married (vv. 28-29). In that case, instead of the man being put to death (as in v. 24), he pays a fine to the girl’s father and the couple is required to be married without the possibility of divorce (v. 29). The point of Deut 22 is to underscore the sanctity of marriage, by making violations of marriage a capital offence. Divorce is not discussed in this text, except to be expressly

forbidden in two cases (vv. 19 & 29). Deut 24: 1-4 sheds light on the concept of divorce and the way it was understood by the Mosaic laws.

#### **2.4.1.2. Deuteronomy 24**

The occurrence of divorce in the ancient world means that the authors of Biblical documents came into contact with the practice. The most prominent passage in the Old Testament appearing in recent discussions of divorce is Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. This passage is of vital importance in understanding the divine instruction regarding divorce in the OT. *“The teaching of Deut 24: 1-4 has traditionally been understood to mean that one could divorce a wife from adultery. However, it is very unlikely that this passage referred to adultery because the punishment for adultery was death”* (Instone-Brewer, 2002, p. 10). In Richard Davidson’s view, *“crucial grammatical, syntactical and intertextual features of the legislation have been mostly overlooked, features that provide keys for recognizing the implicit divine disapproval of divorce in Pentateuch legislation”* (2007: 389).

Davidson (2007) argues that the legal portion of the Pentateuch contains two major literary types of law: apodictic and casuistic. He goes on to say that, in the former, there is an absolute command or prohibition, ‘you shall’ or ‘you shall not’. In the latter, the casuistic or case laws, there first appears the protasis or

description of conditions, usually starting with Hebrew words best translated by ‘if’ or ‘when’. This is followed by the apodosis, or the legislation proper, best signalled in English translation by the word ‘then’. Deut 24: 1-4 is a case law that contains all three elements. Verses 1-3 contain the protasis, with several conditions: the grounds and procedure for divorce (v. 1), the remarriage of the woman (v. 2), and the divorce or death of the second husband (v. 3) (Davidson, 2003, pp. 289-390). It is conceivable that the whole passage may be expressing tacit divine disapproval although the divorce is tolerated and not punished. Deut 24:1 describes the conditions that lead the husband to ‘send out’ or divorce his wife. First, if it happens that she finds no favour in his eyes.

The phrase ‘to find/ not find favour in one’s eyes’ is the ordinary Hebrew expression for ‘like/dislike’ or ‘please/displease’. It describes the subjective situation - the husband’s dislike, displeasure, or lack of approval /affection for his wife (Kaiser, 1991: 200). Moreover, the Hebrew expression ‘*erwat dābār*’ may be translated literally as “*nakedness of a thing*” (Davidson, 2007: 390). The interpretation of this phrase is a widely debated topic amongst both ancient and current-day scholars.

On the one hand, according to Davidson “the word *erwat* [nakedness] elsewhere in the OT often refers to the nakedness of a person’s private parts or genitals,

which should not be uncovered or exposed to be seen by those who should not see them; and the uncovering of one's nakedness usually has sexual connotations' (2007: 389-391).

On the other hand, the notion *dābār* can mean “*word (speech, saying) or thing [matter, affair] and in the context of Deut 24: 1, surely means things or matter* (Loader, 2004: pp 71-72). The “*nakedness of a thing*” (Davidson, 2007: 391) is therefore something that is uncovered that should have been covered, something indecent, repulsive, or even shameful when left exposed. According to Genesis 3:7 human beings were introduced to nakedness through sin. “*Nakedness is, therefore, a fruit of corruption. It is itself the exposure of the physical difference and it is this corrupt awareness of the difference which is the attraction*” (Bryson, 2001: 87). Before the fall, both the man and the woman were naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25).

Bryson argues that “*the force that attracted them to each other was not nakedness, but it was the similarity and not the difference that attracted them to each other*” (2001: 87). It appears that the phrase ‘*erwat dābār*’ in Deut 24: 1 has a similar meaning to that in the preceding chapter although it refers to the ‘nakedness of a thing’ with regard to a wife. However, since adultery received the death penalty according to the Mosaic laws in Deut 22: 22 and Lev 20: 10-18, the indecent

exposure referred to here in Deut 24: 1 must be something short of these sexual activities, but does refer to a serious sexual indiscretion.

According to Kaiser, Davids and Bruce “*this text does not bestow any divine approval on divorce as such. It sought, rather, to soften some of the hardships and injustices that divorce caused for women in a society that persisted in this practice*” (1996: 24). The OT clearly articulates a marital ideal and “*this ideal includes neither unfaithfulness nor divorce*” (Grenz, 1997: 105).

Grenz goes on to say that “*the stories in the Genesis creation form the intent of God in terms of permanent relationship between husband and wife*” (1997: 105).

In concurring with Grenz, the researcher employs Kaiser who argues that “*it would be wrong to speak of divorce in the OT as a right (i.e., an intrinsic right or prerogative) or as something that has divine approval*” (1991: 200; cf Bruce, 2009: pp. 158-164). The purpose of Deuteronomy 24 was clearly “*regulative and not prescriptive and its intension was not to encourage divorce but to control its abuse*” (Helm & Trueman, 2002: 79).

Helm and Trueman (2002) clearly state that the text of Deut 24 does not give a man the right to divorce his wife. Ergun Caner established some important principles relating to divorce on the basis of the OT teachings alone:

- “God instituted and intended marriage to be permanent,
- divorce is man-made and was permitted on the ground of sexual misconduct” (2008: 177).

Caner (2008) also states that this passage does not bestow divine authority for husbands to divorce their wives. The rule simply prohibits a husband from returning to a wife whom he had divorced after she has married a second time - even if her second husband has passed away in the interim. This rule had a tremendous influence on how people viewed and practised divorce. This understanding of the Mosaic Law formed a new path to the New Testament era, where the issue of divorce was expanded upon by Jesus and many of his followers. It is important to trace the development of the concept of divorce through the New Testament in order to fully understand the biblical perceptions of the concept.

## **2.4.2. THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **2.4.2.1. Jesus’ view of divorce**

The New Testament was written in an era where divorce was readily practiced. The most explicit Gospel text concerning Jesus' view of divorce is Matthew 19: 1-9. The Pharisees, in view of different teachings concerning divorce, had asked Jesus whether he regarded 'any cause' as permissible (Bromiley & Fahlbusch, 2003). The conservative rabbinical school of Shammai (50 BCE–30 CE a Jewish scholar of the 1st century and an important figure in Judaism's core work of rabbinic literature) argued that Deut 24 referred to sexual immorality. This is in contrast to the liberal rabbinical school of Hillel (born Babylon c.110BCE-10CE, a famous Jewish religious leader, one of the most important figures in Jewish history) who argued that it referred to anything that displeased the husband, even burning the supper (Grunlan, 1999).

*“Commentators ground the force of the debate in the fact that the school of Shammai interprets Deut 24 as indicating that man could divorce his wife for unfaithfulness, whereas the school of Hillel understood the passage to mean that a man could divorce his wife for any cause” (Lawrence, 2003: 274).*

The Pharisaical position (at least that of the Pharisees confronting Jesus in this incident) is that Moses allowed a husband to divorce his wife for any reason as long as he fills out the requisite paperwork.

The interpretation of the phrase ‘a matter of indecency’ in Deut 24:1 is one of these debates. After 70 C.E. this debate was still of scholarly interest, but it was no longer of interest to ordinary Jews, who were not able to choose between the Shammaite or Hillelite courts. As the result the only type of divorce available to them was the Hillelite divorce. People therefore no longer needed to know the difference between Hillelite and Shammaite grounds for divorce. According to Instone-Brewer , “*The ground of any matter was established as suitable for every divorce, and any man could write out a divorce certificate without stating the grounds*” (2002: 239). This law promoted promiscuity amongst men and was abusive towards women they had no recourse against this certificate of divorce.

Yueh-Han Yieh argues that: “*in Jesus’ view, God’s original intention (Gen 2: 24) has higher authority than Moses’ expedient permission (Deut 24: 1), so the lasting union between husband and wife in marriage outweighs the husbands’ right to divorce their wives*” (2004: 283). In placing the discussion within the context of Genesis, Jesus reaffirmed that the divine intention entails the permanency of marriage. According to Massey, Jesus “*clearly attacks traditional divorce practices among the Jews, particularly their inclination to interpret Mosaic divorce laws for personal advantage*” (2002: 15).

Barclay cites McNeile who argues that “*each married couple is a reproduction of Adam and Eve, and their union is therefore no less indissoluble*” (2001: 233).

According to Jesus Moses’ statement was not a law but rather a concession. Moses did not command divorce, at best he only permitted it in order to regulate a situation which would have become chaotically promiscuous. The mosaic regulation was only a concession to fallen human nature (Barclay, 2001, p. 234).

The treatment of Deut 24 appears to indicate that the provisions it assumes are so much a concession for sinners that they should not be contemplated. Williams (2005) argues that Jesus speaks of permission and his questioners speak of command.

Williams also states that if the focus falls on writing the certificate, the word would need to be ‘command’, as appears to be the case in the Pharisees’ question in 19: 7 (2005:100-101). It is over-interpretation to read into this that the divorce itself is mandated, because no grounds for mandating it are mentioned. Similarly it would not make sense in 19: 8 for Jesus to have used the term ‘command’ as Moses did not command people to divorce their wives.

The variation in language is a result of two different elements, one refers to the term permitted (divorce) while the other refers to the term commanded (the granting of a bill of divorce) (Williams, 2005). Stanley Grenz argues that: “*the*

*intent of Jesus' teaching on divorce does offer a marked break with Jewish thought at one significant point. Jesus set forth the same requirements for sexes, placing men and women equally under the double law of love and thereby affirming the fidelity of both husband and wife*" (1997: 106). In other words Jesus' affirmations were intended to prevent divorce and separations. According to Loader Williams "*divorce is unthinkable because it destroys the intended order of creation and God's creative act in bringing a man and a woman together in accordance with the order*" (2005: 101). Jesus elevates the intent of God by indicating that divorce always constitutes a massive departure from the divine intent, regardless of the circumstances. The next section of this chapter analyses the way in which St Paul continued Jesus' teachings and investigates the impact of these teachings on modern society.

#### **2.4.2.2. Paul's view of divorce**

Most of Paul's teachings concerning marriage and divorce are found in 1 Corinthians 7. In this chapter Paul talks about the obligations within marriage, Jesus' teachings against divorce, the right to remarry if one is divorced against one's will and delaying marriage for practical reasons. Although Paul does not deal directly with the grounds for divorce the topic is indirectly mentioned throughout the chapter. "*He identified what the grounds for divorce were by*

*emphasizing the obligation within marriage, the neglect of which formed the grounds for divorce in Jewish law*” (Instone-Brewer, 2002, p. 189).

Paul alludes to the teachings of Jesus and reaffirms his strong prohibition of divorce. According to the teachings of Paul marriage is an aspect of Christian discipleship (see Hays, 1997). Paul distinguishes between the information he offers on his own authority and the information that is backed by a command of the Lord. In addition, Jesus’ the absolute prohibition against divorce is contained in the Gospels (Mark 10: 11; Matt. 5: 31-32; 19: 3-9; Luke 16: 18). According to Timothy Johnson, *“we do not know, unfortunately, whether Paul had that command by oral tradition from the past or by prophetic announcement in the present – or both”* (1999: 139).

Paul argues that both men and women are bound to the marriage contract while their spouse lives. Only if one’s spouse passes away is one free to remarry. According to Paul remarriage is a form of adultery, as the first marriage is considered to remain intact until one of the partners dies. Paul also indicates that this belief does not come from himself, but from Jesus. In other words, Paul cites the words of Jesus himself on the subject of divorce. Thomas Schreiner states that this is because *“remarriage after divorce was the standard of Jewish view, and*

*Paul would have needed to make it very clear if he departed from his heritage”*  
(2001: 431).

Paul shared Jesus’ abhorrence for divorce as contrary to the divine intent. He defends marriage against those who would force celibacy or separation upon would be Christians and states that where separation does occur reconciliation must take place (see Kelly, 1997, p. 227). At the same time, Paul sees marriage as a dynamic process and does allow divorce in the case of marriage between unbelievers and the believers where sanctification and freedom cannot arise.

According to Michael Lawler the actual only suggests that Paul is making an exception: “I say – I *and* not the Lord” (2002: 95). Both Mark and Matthew defend marriage against easy divorce. Mark adapts this defence to a Hellenistic environment, while Matthew allows divorce to members of his community whose first marriage did not meet the demands of Jewish law (Lawler, 2002; cf Kelly, 1997). There is a growing consensus among Catholic exegetes that both Matthew and Paul present exceptions to the absolute prohibition of divorce and thus represent adaptations of Jesus’ teaching to their own church situation.

Despite these strong prohibitions divorce is currently practiced by many people throughout the world, including Africans. Divorce remains an immense challenge in the lives of those affected by this emotional transition. This chapter has

examined the biblical viewpoint regarding divorce and now turns to a discussion regarding psychological theory related to divorce. This section aims to demonstrate that divorce is a complicated process requiring many years, steps and techniques to complete.

## **2.5. ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL DATA**

Having read the work of various different theorists regarding the biblical data (the O/N Testament), the follow summary can be made:

Although God declared His abhorrence for divorce, He gave no indication before or during the old covenant that remarriage was considered to be a sin, with two exceptions:

1. The twice-divorced or once-divorced, once-widowed woman remarrying her first husband, and
2. The case of a divorced woman marrying a priest. It should also be noted that God gave no indication that marrying a once-divorced person was a sin for anyone except priests.

This Old Testament statements stand in apparent contrast to Jesus' teachings regarding divorced people who remarry and those who marry divorced persons. Jesus clearly stated that such people commit adultery (Matt. 5:32). It is possible to argue that this is either a misunderstanding of the teachings of Jesus or Moses or God must have changed His laws. My personal opinion is that the scholars may have misinterpreted Jesus' teachings, as they contradict the earlier stance of morally acceptable behaviour that had been in practise for a thousand years.

Without Jesus' teachings concerning remarriage there would be no indication in the Bible that remarriage was considered a sin (except for the two very rare cases mentioned above under the old covenant and one rare case under the new covenant where Christian remarriage after divorce from a Christian was considered a sin). Through this understanding I have attempted to harmonize Jesus' teachings regarding remarriage with the teachings in the rest of the Bible.

In other words, Jesus was not replacing God's law of remarriage with a stricter law that forbids all remarriage in every case. This law would be impossible for people who are already divorced and remarried to obey and would potentially create unlimited confusion and lead people to break other laws of God. Instead, Jesus was helping people to see their hypocrisy. He was helping those who believed they

would never commit adultery to see that they were committing adultery in other ways, through their lust and their liberal attitude toward divorce.

The case of the twice-divorced woman mentioned in Deut 24 does not contain any information about the legitimacy of her two divorces. It merely states that her first husband found some ‘indecentcy’ in her. If that ‘indecentcy’ had been adultery, she would have been worthy of death according to the Law of Moses, which prescribed that adulterers be stoned (Lev. 20:10). Therefore, if adultery was the only legitimate reason for divorce it is possible that her first husband did not have good reason to divorce her. On the other hand, it is possible that she had committed adultery and that he, being a righteous man like Mary's Joseph, had "desired to put her away secretly" (Matt. 1:19). This understanding does not alter the divine order in marriage. The divine intent involved in bringing a man and a woman together in holy matrimony should not be misunderstood. Divorce will always remain sin according to the creation order.

## **2.6. Theology of marriage**

The chapter now moves from consideration of the Biblical material to a theological reflection on marriage from the perspective of God's nature, covenant, purposes and revelation, which all suggest that there is a spiritual foundation to marriage. Marriage, far from being a social, cultural, economic or legal response to a set of locally occurring circumstances, is deeply theological.

### **2.6.1. Marriage and God's nature**

Fundamental to the Christian understanding of God's nature is the concept of relationship, expressed not only in the Trinity but also in the knowability of God and the possibility of human-divine communion. This communion, reflected in all human relationships, and particularly in marriage, is used by Scripture as a unique way of illustrating the nature of God. In the Old Testament God uses the husband-wife image to describe His own relationship with Israel.

God is a compassionate, patient husband even in times of great stress and provocation. His sacrificial love for His chosen bride has no limits and is without qualification. The OT declaration of faith: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6f; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15) contains one of the highest statements regarding the

love of God. These words should be read alongside such passages as Hosea 1-3, which deals with an adulterous partner, and Paul's letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7) and the Ephesians (Eph 5), which set ground-rules for Christian marriage.

In addition to teaching that marriage was established by God, Brian Jones (2002, pp. 8-9) uses Genesis 2:24 to argue that marriage was preordained by God as a life commitment.

Jones is in agreement with other theorists and scholars in saying that "*marriage is made between a man and a woman*" (2002: 8-9). This is clearly expressed in the phrase a man will... be united to his wife (Gen 2: 24). This excludes homosexual relationships, which are also specifically forbidden by many other passages in the Bible. It also raises the issue of incest. Although the human race began with marriage among close relatives, this was a simple necessity that was an exception in God's plan. In support of Brian Jones (2002) Jack Dominian provides a Catholic view on marriage and divorce by saying:

*"Marriage is the central sacrament of love through which we find God. This does not mean that those who are single, separated, divorced, unloved, cannot find God, or are not in the presence of God – everyone has their way of being in the presence of God –*

*but it does mean that for the married God is found continuously in the neighbour of spouse and in children. In the presence of that love the invisible God becomes visible. However, this reflection must be continually revisited and built upon if it is to remain relevant” (1991: 6).*

As the human race grew and diversified, God clarified his will about marriage by forbidding blood relatives to marry. The issues of divorce or annulment were not intended to apply in these instances because the command to civil authorities was to forbid these perverse unions and to sever them by the death of both persons involved (see Jones 2002). Those who attempted to enter such unions were regarded as criminal offenders, and not marriage partners.

Although divorce constitutes the final dissolution of a marital bond life does continue after divorce and this raises certain essential questions. Each person proceeding through divorce faces traumatic experiences that impact on his/her personality. Njeri Mwaura in Waruta and Kinoti states that “*the human being is not fragmentation but a complete entity, needing healing for his or her whole being; spirituality, socially, physically, psychologically and in relationship with his/ her environment*” (Waruta & Kinoti 2005, p. 78). She goes on to state that “*in*

*traditional African society, health is conceived as more than physical well-being. It is a state that entails mental, physical, spiritual, social and environmental (cosmic) harmony”* (Waruta & Kinoti 2005, p. 78). Mwaura’s understanding allows the inclusion of knowledge from other disciplines in order to better understand and find mechanisms to help heal people. It is therefore, pivotal to look also at the psychological process African men face as a result of divorce.

## **2.7. DIVORCE AS A PROCESS**

Divorce is an emotional crisis triggered by a sudden and unexpected loss. Demo & Fine view divorce as a “*complex and multidimensional process that unfolds over many years*” (2010: 49). In Newman and Newman’s view “*the process of coping with divorce requires strategies devised to deal with the aspects of it that are perceived as most troublesome. Further, many coping strategies, including becoming involved in new activities, spending more time with family and friends, gaining new skills, or taking a new job, may promote new level of functioning*” (Newman & Newman, 2009, p. 250). Divorce is always a complicated psychological and social process but it is important to remember that each divorce follows a unique course. Divorce involves a process during which the members within the family system undergo a painful process of transformation and in which

each family member may experience some form of bereavement. Several theories have been based on the idea that divorce is a complex psychological and social process rather than a single event. Ferreira Da Costa, agrees that “*divorce is best conceptualized as a process rather than a discrete life event, and have identified stages within that process*” (2007: 14). Not all the phases of the divorce process are equally stressful (Ferreira, 2007). Differing responses at different stages may be explained by the passage of time in adjustment to the divorce process. Both Paul Bohannon and Reva Wiseman developed a theoretical model of divorce; both of these models of divorce are based on the premise that divorce is a process. Bohannon’s theory incorporates many different domains of life, while Wiseman theory focuses on the internal emotional and psychological dimensions of divorce and is based on her view concerning crisis theory and Kubler-Ross’s description of the mourning process.

### **2.7.1. Wiseman’s view of the divorce process**

Wiseman’s model proposes five components of the divorce process. It is important to understand these processes in order to find a sense of direction in the emotional chaos. Wiseman’s process can be described as five overlapping stages, which are as follows:

- **Denial** is the stage before the marital problems are consciously acknowledged. During this stage conflictual issues tend to be either ignored or attributed to external causes.
- **Loss and depression** follow once a crisis has set in and the spouses are forced to acknowledge that the marriage has serious problems.
- **Anger and ambivalence** are experienced during the next stage, when the interactions between spouses may turn vindictive, punitive, or even violent. This is a period of emotional purging, which eventually culminates in the decision to separate.
- **Reorientation of lifestyle and identity** is the recognition of being a single person once again. This is a time where individuals start to accept the reality of the divorce. The challenge of this stage lies in redefining an identity outside of marriage. It is also a time for considering the nature of potential future relationships.
- **Acceptance and integration** reflects the final resolution of divorce. In this stage the divorced person has accepted the self and has nothing to prove and no need to be defensive. (see Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006, pp. 23-24; cf, Everett, 1993: 1).

### 2.7.2. Bohannon's stages of divorce

One of the most widely recognized stage models of divorce was developed by Paul Bohannon and is known as the six stations of divorce model. These six stations are listed below (see Brown & Amatea, 2000; cf, Lamanna & Riedmann, 2008: 643; Segrin & Jeanne, 2005: 273):

- **Emotional divorce**, which involves the loss of affection, trust and respect.
- **Legal divorce**, which deals with the court order termination of marriage.
- **Economic divorce** is concerned with the settlement of property.
- **Co-parental divorce** involves decisions about child custody, child support, visitation rights and the various ongoing responsibilities of the parents.
- **Community divorce** involves the reduction of membership to a shared community of relatives and friends.
- **Psychic divorce** follows a period of mourning and refers to one's emotional separation from the former partner.

While the difficulties experienced are different for every individual undergoing the divorce process, some common feelings and experiences can be mentioned. For

example, Bohannon points out that “*marriage makes you feel good in part because, you have been selected by someone to be an intimate partner. Divorce, by contrast, makes you feel so awful, in part because you have been de-selected*” (1970: 33).

To some extent, de-selection occurs in each of the six different stations of divorce. A lot of stages can be experienced at the same moment, and the order and content of the stages can change depending on the person.

### **2.7.3. Explanation of Bohannon’s stages**

#### **2.7.3.1. Emotional divorce**

Emotional divorce is often the first stage of the dissolving marriage and can in fact be experienced during any period of marriage. During this stage spouses withdraw excitement from their relationship with each other as they are disturbed by emotional conflicts leading to the “*deteriorating of marriage*” (Berner, 1992: 10). Although the couple may continue to be together on a physical level the respect and confidence towards each other declines and these feelings are not compelled by love (Brian & Stacey, 2006: 475).

Their conflicts discard the possibility of finding a sound solution. This stage is a challenging one, as the individual has to overcome the conflicts. The emotional pressure from real conflicts is shifted to other areas. According to Richard Jenks

“*various behaviors such as avoiding issues, quarreling, and pretending that everything is fine are common*” (2002: 15). Spouses are often reluctant to fight about the real matter at hand and they may experience conflict regarding unrelated issues. Some couples cannot detect the real area of conflict.

As marriage progress spouses develop in different ways. In positive unions these developments are regarded with tolerance and are seen as strengthening the marriage tie. In the case of an emotional divorce the parties’ development does not strengthen the marriage tie. As the partners develop separately they become contrary to each other. Emotional divorce results from the loss of love element and is similar to the death of spouse. When the love element disappears the most natural reaction is mourning. The degree of mourning depends on the degree of emotional devotion.

### **2.7.3.2. Legal divorce**

This stage includes the bureaucratic procedures necessary for the legitimate ending of the divorce proceedings. It starts when one or both spouses initiate legal action. They might grieve for the loss of a relationship that at one point provided splendid benefits such as love, familiarity, comfort, and intimacy (Williams, 2006: 475). Behaviours such as bargaining, threatening, and attempting suicide may occur during this stage.

### **2.7.3.3. Economic divorce**

Although a family is an economic unit economic separation is never as simple as the dissolution of a company. During this period, a woman or man who is not working has to make many efforts to change her or his life. The dividing of property is often mingled with other matters. Williams (2006: 476) describes the economic divorce as being extremely painful for the following reasons:

- The threat of declining living standards, which generally occurs when there are insufficient funds and property to allow the former partners to maintain the same living standard separately that they had jointly.
- Disputes over ownership of various items/
- The loss of favourite things and the prospect of living without certain cherished items may produce a lot of sadness.

### **2.7.3.4. Co-parental divorce**

The co-parental divorce involves decisions about child custody, child support, visitation rights, and the ongoing responsibilities of each parent. This aspect of the divorce only applies to couples who have children. It is also one of the most difficult, and even tragic, areas of divorce. The lives of children change

dramatically when their parents dissolve their marriage. According to Guttman  
*“the term co-parental divorce reflects the notion that parents divorce each other  
but not their children, even though one of them will be granted custody”* (1993:  
35). In this regard, the mother is thought to have the natural qualities required for  
the proper upbringing of children. It is imperative to note that not only mothers  
have natural qualities for proper upbringing of children; fathers have those  
qualities and are also given the rights to co-parenting. Only if she is proven  
*“seriously delinquent in her behavior as a mother”* (1993: 35). Mothers often feel  
that the father attempts to undermine her authority although she is the one  
responsible for the making and carrying out of decisions (see Guttman 1993).  
Parents’ often experience feelings of suspicion and mistrust towards each other and  
these can have a serious impact on their relationship with their children.

#### **2.7.3.5. Community divorce**

Divorce is not only a complex personal life event, but also a social event. Many  
divorcees express a bitter disappointment in the relationships and friendships  
formed during their marriage lives (see Lamanna & Riedmann, 2008: pp. 422-  
424). During divorce and afterwards, people are viewed differently by their  
community, as he or she is no longer married. The social attitude towards the  
person divorcing or being divorced changes suddenly. He or she may be isolated

from the groups he or she once belonged to, or may come to feel disliked by that group.

During this period, the individual may feel lonely, and may complain about the disloyalty of friends. Some re-locate from their communities to other communities in order to regain their self-esteem. According to Guttman, “*the new community often serves not only as a new social environment, but also as a strong supportive system*” (Guttman, 1993: 38). At the end of this period the individual restores the relationships with adults around them, forming a satisfying way of living as well as a new social balance.

#### **2.7.3.6. Psychic divorce**

Psychic divorce refers to the separation of ego from the former spouse. This is the most difficult divorce period, yet it is also the most suitable restoration period. Psychic divorce involves learning how to become a whole again. During this stage individuals regain a sense of their personality and identity. This period is very hard for those who develop a sense of identity within the marriage in lieu of developing their own sense of self, for those who lose the habit of seeing themselves as individuals because of a long period of single life, and who never knew how to be an individual.

Individuals who do not place a lot of value on traditional identity roles are usually able to move quickly through this stage. *“The person gets divorced and undergoes many changes in various areas of life, and this person is bound to find solutions again, as in adolescence period, to the crises of Erikson's eight psycho-social stages”* (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:332). If favourable solutions are not obtained the problems of these stages again reappear with the shaking by divorce and can lead to an uncertainty of identity.

Much like an adolescent a divorced person needs to redefine himself or herself in the society at personal, vocational, sexual and social levels. Divorced individuals must find a way to integrate these new roles with their previous marital identities (see Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). Individuals who can combine former identity and experiences with new goals develop a new identity combination. Individuals who struggle to manage the complexities of this period frequently escape by re-marrying very soon after the divorce.

Through describing each stage of this multidimensional process, Bohannon helps to break a complex whole in to manageable and understandable segments (Gottman, 1994). Linda Rouse (see 2002: 121) summarizes Bohannon's six stations of divorce as follows:

Divorce is an institution that nobody enters without great trepidation. In the emotional divorce, people are likely to feel hurt and angry. In the legal divorce, people often feel bewildered - they have lost control, and events sweep them along. In the economic divorce, the reassignment of property and the division of money may make them feel cheated. In the parental divorce, they worry about what is going to happen to the children; they feel guilty for what they have done.

Community divorce, here, they may get angry with their friends and perhaps suffer despair because there seems to be no fidelity in friendship. In the psychic divorce, in which they have become autonomous again, they are probably afraid and are certainly lonely. However, the resolution of any or all of these various six divorces may provide an elation of victory that comes from having accomplished something that had to be done and having done it well...

Although Wiseman and Bohannon's theory are based on the western perspective their steps or processes of divorce are helpful to this research as they provide a framework for understanding how divorced African men try to bounce back and

adjust within their society. Wiseman's grieving processes and Bohannon's stages are of particular significance to this research, as they share light on the coping strategies utilized by African men during and after their divorces.

## 2.8. EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON PARENTS

*“Divorced men are eighteen times more likely to seek psychological help than married men”* (Jeynes, 2002: 22). One can argue that several people with significant psychological problems (anxiety, depression etc) are more likely to seek a divorce than those who do not suffer from such problems. When divorce occurs the spouses divide their assets and attempt to survive as two separate economic units. Divorced men may perceive themselves as having a lowered sense of financial adequacy and may also experience a decline in their standard of living if their income is still shared with their former spouse.

*“As a consequence of this economic disadvantage and decline, divorced individuals experience downward mobility that requires many to move to less desirable housing”* (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006: 68). In some families, the economic decline in divorce may even start a few years before divorce proceedings are initiated and it is likely to continue its downswing throughout the process of

disruption (see Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006:pp. 68-69). Divorced women with young children may require full-time childcare if they are employed. These childcare costs can drastically affect the household budget (Sprecher, 2009). However, Nock argues that there is no evidence that actual income declines for men as a result of a divorce (Nock, 1998: 67). However, “*some divorced men experience deteriorated relationships with their adult children*” (Schulz, 2006: 328).

According to Sprecher & Reis, “*men who are fathers of pre-school aged children have higher rate of depression post divorce*” (2009: 460). This depression may be due to the loss of daily contact with their children or to the diminished parental control they have over their children’s lives. On the other hand divorced fathers are significantly less likely than widowers to provide cash transfers to their adult children and they also receive substantially less informal care from their children (see 2009: 460-461). On the other hand divorced women experience similar exchanges of cash and informal care relative to widowed women. Gottman’s observation is that “*females appear to be put together better psychologically to deal with life’s stresses than men*” (1994: 252). Women could be perceived to be tougher, more resilient and better poised to recover from upset than their male

counterparts, who appear to be confronted with greater emotional adjustment problems.

*“Although men are not as likely as women to openly express the hurt and pain they are experiencing, divorce is not easy for them”* (Reis & Sprecher, 2009: 460).

Divorced men experience a loss of intimacy, the loss of social connections, reduced finances and interruption of their parental role. Men often re-marry more quickly than women. Research also shows that men have an increase in alcohol abuse following divorce (see Kitson & Holms 1992).

## **2.9. EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN**

Divorce is an environmental factor that can shape how a child thinks, feels, and behaves. Most of the environmental factors contributing to differences in children’s reactions to divorce are related to the amount of stress the child experiences at the time of the divorce (Worthman & Loftus, 1992: 299). Divorce can have serious emotional effects on everyone involved especially children and in extreme cases can result in parent alienation syndrome (PAS) and child stealing. PAS is defined as a “disturbance in which children are preoccupied with viewing one parent as all good and the other parent as all bad” (Williams, 2006: 498). The bad parent is normally hated while the good one is loved. One parent will criticize

the other to the child and attempt to gain the child's alliance. This is "*particularly damaging, whether in an intact family or after divorce*" (Dulcan, Martin & Lake, 2003: 229). According to Van Niekerk & Prins this develops a "*sequence of events that involves a transitional phase in the lives of children*" (2001: 330). Children are likely to experience a variety of physical and emotional problems when their parents divorce.

Some researchers found that "*women/girls (mostly in their twenties) who had experienced divorce in childhood were more likely to be severely depressed than those whose parents had not divorced*" (Eysenck, 2004: 607). And on the other hand, "*boys are more likely to be aggressive than children whose parents stayed married*" (Sadock & Sadock 2007: 34). They are also more likely to suffer from depression, react with anger or aggressive behaviour than girls who may try to please adults by suppressing feelings (see Erwin, 2006: 240).

Infants do not understand anything about separation or divorce but they do notice changes in their parents' responses to them and may experience changes in their eating or sleeping patterns, have bowel problems, and appear to be more fearful. If divorce occurs when a child is between 7 and 12 years old, school performance generally declines. "*Adolescents do comprehend the situation and believe that, they could have prevented the divorce and had they intervened in some way.... but*

*they are still hurt, angry and critical of their parents' behaviour"* (Sadock & Kaplan, 2007: 34).

*"For adults, divorce may offer advantage of new career; new hobby, new spouse or lover, but children see no benefit in divorce"* (Clarke-Steward & Brentano, 2006: 106). Divorce can have negative long and short-term consequences for children. Divorce is nearly always preceded by bitter conflicts and unpleasantness, and some of the adverse effects of divorce on children are probably due to such conflicts rather than to the divorce itself (cf Eysenck, 2004: 607).

### **2.9.1. Short-term effects**

In terms of short-term effects, there is evidence from many researchers across the world that parental divorce is associated with adjustment difficulties for their children. Short-term effects of divorce on children can *"include guilt, anger, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, less social and school competence and health problems such as eating disorders"* (Long & Forehand, 2002: 5; see Van Niekwerk & Prins, 2001; cf Williams, 2006: 498).

Moreover, Lauer & Lauer, observe that *"children are likely to be more stressed, because they have no control over what is happening to them and see no long-term benefit to the disruption"* (1997: 401; Jeynes, 2002: 20). As a result, they may also

exhibit a drop in self-esteem and self-confidence. This emotional turbulence interferes with other aspects of their lives. The stress of divorce may lead young children to regress to more “*immature kinds of behaviour*” (Clarke-Steward & Brentano, 2006:112). Divorce may also precipitate a major crisis that requires professional help (Gillis, 1992: 165). It is important to note that not all children experience these effects and may experience them at varying degrees, with some children actually exhibiting fewer problems following their parents divorce.

### **2.9.2. Long-term effects**

Hilary Hoge found that “*adolescents from divorced households are more likely to drop out of high school, engage in antisocial behaviour, associate with delinquent peers, or be referred for clinical treatment than those from intact families*” (2002: 154). Research indicates that the long-term effects of divorce may last for the decades and appear considerably more serious than originally believed (Jeynes et al., 2002: pp. 34-35).

Jeynes indicate that the effects of divorce do display certain patterns depending on the timing of the divorce, the length of the time since the separation transpired and the age of the child at the time of divorce (2002: 34). Children in single parent

home are also more likely to be “*androgynous (having both conventional masculine and feminine traits) in their behaviour*” (Lauer & Lauer, 1997: 401). Lauer and Lauer (1997) state that there may have some positive long-term outcomes for children. This is probably due to the fact that these children assume more responsibility for family life, doing something that might otherwise be done by the absent parent. In this regard they tend to be more mature and to have a greater sense of their own efficacy. In addition, depression, withdrawal and other problems are likely to be greater for children who live in a home characterised by persistent conflicts and unhappiness than for children living in single parent homes (Lauer & Lauer, 1997: pp. 401-402).

## **2.10. POST-DIVORCE RECOVERY**

As decisions are being made and changes continue, the divorce restructuring stage moves toward the post-divorce recovery period. This can be the stage of devastation or of exciting new challenges. “*Some of the personal challenges at this time include coping with loneliness, regaining self-confidence, and rebuilding social relationships*” (Hecker & Wetchler, 2003: 462). Hecker and Wetchler observe that:

*“it involves the development of an identity for oneself that is not tied to the status of being married or to the ex-spouse, an ability to function adequately in the role responsibilities of daily life, being relatively free of symptoms of psychological disturbance, and having a positive sense of self-esteem” ( 2003:462).*

The changes associated with divorce are generally regarded as negative and include changes in the size or composition of friendships networks or income. However, successful divorce adjustment takes time. According to Prices and Mckenry *“an important predictor of both women’s and men’s post-divorce psychological adjustment was their pre-divorce adjustment”* (2010: 219). These authors also note that men and women respond differently to the family experiences proceeding and following divorce.

*“Both divorced women and divorced men who are involved in relationships with new partners adjust better psychologically and emotionally than others without such relationships”* (Prices & Mckenry, 2010:. 219; cf Wang & Amato, 2000). Prices and Mckenry (2010) cite Cosy, who agrees that for men, new relationships could be considered to be a means of undoing, with surprising rapidity, the narcissistic injury engendered by divorce.

In contrast, women appear to be more affected by residual hostility from the past marital and problematic relationships between partners and children in their new marriages or relationships (Prices & Mckenry, 2010: 219). Although divorce appears to impose greater stress on women than men, researchers do not find consistent gender differences in post-divorce adjustment (see Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2008: 287). Interestingly, research indicates that the relationship between divorce and adjustment is influenced by pre-existing factors. In other words, people who eventually divorce tended to be less happy and had a weaker sense of identity than those who remain married (Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2008: 288).

## 2.11. RESILIENCE

Quinney and Fouts define resilience as “*an individual’s overall ability and disposition to positively adjust in the face of major adversity*” (2004: 57; cf McMillen, 1999). It relates to people’s “*ability to respond well to stress or to a meaningful disruption in life’s course ... and employ positive adjustment mechanism*” (Dorit, Haj-Yahia & Greenbaum, 2009: 40). Moreover, Goldstein and Brooks suggest that “*the idea of resilience has different meanings for different people*” (2006: 45).

In terms of divorce resilience can be defined as the ability to “*bounce back from the process and sequelae of divorce*” (Quinney & Fouts, 2004: 57) to a former state of positive adjustment. Castaldo found that “*midlife adults had more psychological resilience and capacity to recover from divorce than younger adults*” (2008: 67). Other factors may also predict a person’s ability to adjust positively to life after divorce. For example, the spouse that initiates the divorce is more likely to experience a higher level of adjustment than the non-initiating spouse.

Exposure to adversity (such as divorce) can result in one of four possible outcomes: succumbing (or giving up; e.g. alcoholism, suicide), survival with impairment (or long-term negative psychological effects), recovery (or the return to the previous level of positive adjustments), and thriving (or experiencing growth beyond the previous level of adjustment). The latter two outcomes are considered to be resilient in nature.

Resilience is a complex disposition that is an integration of biological predispositions, psychological traits, and external support systems. For example, most people who overcome adversity have at least a normal intelligence, have an inborn easy temperament, are curious about their environments and perceive themselves as physically strong (see Quinney & Fouts, 2009: pp. 55-57).

Boon, states that *“there is a force that drives them to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom and harmony with a spiritual source of strength. This force is resilience, and it has a variety of names depending upon the discipline”* (2005: 9).

The understanding of this force has augmented the meaning of the terms *“resilience”* and *“resilient reintegration”* to mean growth or adaptation through disruption rather than to just recover or bounce back (Richardson, 2002: 313).

## **2.12. SUMMARY**

Divorce is never to be taken lightly. Regardless of the specific circumstances divorce is always a final declaration of the failure of marriage. The community of male and female desired by God has been marred. Any divorce is a traumatic experience, which leaves hurt and scars that require healing. This healing process is often protracted and extracts energy and concerted action from the individual undergoing the process.

Divorce is not only a biblical concept; it is also a psychological and sociological one. It is a weapon that destroys the intent of God for man and women in marriage. It may have long-term consequences for an individual’s emotional, psychological and physical states. Many people who are unable to complete their psychic divorce

suffer the so-called divorce hangover. These individuals are unable to let go of the fact of their divorce and are unable to re-orient themselves as single parents or develop new relationships.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Practical theology is an intricate and complex enterprise that deals with theological and human experiences on the ground. It carries in itself the diversity of methodological and other theological approaches in dealing with human experience. The common theme that holds this discipline together is its perspective on human experience and its desire to reflect theologically upon those experiences. This understanding of practical theology makes it exciting and essential as it enables us to engage with important topics in a meaningful manner. As this chapter outlines the research method employed, it takes into consideration the depth of African people's experiences by outlining all the associated methodological concerns. Linking practical theology with qualitative research has the potential to uncover credible data on the ground.

This chapter explores the nature of qualitative research and its epistemological foundations. The sampling, data collection and data analysis methods employed by this research are detailed below. Finally, ethical issues such as the welfare of the research participants are discussed.

### **3.2. DESIGN OF RESEARCH**

It is imperative to commence a research project by detailing the research design. Buffel says “*a research design is comparable to the glue that holds a research project together*” (2007: 75; cf Trochim 2001). He continues to say that “*it can be thought of as a structure of the research, which also tells how all elements of the research fit together*” (Ibid.). This design explains the area of focus, the procedures of data collection, as well as the method of data analysis used. It also discusses the research sample and ethical issues pertaining to this research.

### **3.3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Qualitative research has a distinctive way of understanding the world, and it is therefore helpful to begin by looking at the epistemology that underlies this approach to research. Epistemology, from the Greek words ‘*episteme*’ (knowledge) and ‘*logos*’ (words/speech) “*theory of knowledge*”, is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope (including the limitations) of knowledge (Mason, 2006:16).

It therefore addresses questions such as:

- What is our knowledge of the other?
- How is knowledge acquired?
- How do we know what we know? (McLeod, 2001: 3)

The above questions bear some relevancy to the field of practical theology, as it deals directly with the pain of human experience on the ground. Knowledge can be divided into a priori knowledge, or knowledge that is automatically known apart from experience and knowledge gained from human experience. In the light of this, divorce is a well-known concept in both Western and African societies. However, the experience and perceptions of divorce differ greatly between various cultures. This study focuses specifically on the perceptions of divorce as experienced by African men, with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of their perceptions.

According to Mowat and Swinton, “*knowledge of the other occurs when the research focuses on a particular individual or group and explores in-depth the ways in which they view and interact with the world*” (2007: 33). This quotation reflects the researcher’s aim of attaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of divorce as experienced by African men through gaining knowledge of the other. The essence of epistemology is fundamental to how we think and acquire knowledge. Without some means of understanding how we

acquire knowledge, how we rely upon our senses, and how we develop concepts in our minds, we have no coherent path for our thinking.

A sound epistemology is necessary for the existence of sound thinking and reasoning. *“The centrepiece of grounded theory is the development or generation of a theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied”* (Creswell, 1998: 56). In agreeing with Creswell, the research generated a theory or model of care from data on the ground.

According to Swinton and Mowat , *“the epistemology of qualitative research relates to the particular theory of knowledge that underpins this approach”* (2007: 32). Epistemology as a scope of generating knowledge is also parallel to qualitative research in that it contributes a lot in collecting data from human experiences on the ground. It is essential in this regard to look at this mode of inquiry as a larger mechanism of collecting data for the research project.

### **3.4. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative research recognizes the world as being the locus of complex interpretive processes within which human beings work towards making sense of their experiences. This mode of data analysis was selected due to the research’s

focus on understanding both the phenomenon of divorce and resilience among African divorced men. This study consisted of two components, namely:

- A review of relevant literature in terms of : divorce, divorce adjustment, resilience, pastoral care and African method of care which an element of pastoral care can highly be enriched.
- Empirical research, which is qualitative in nature. The researcher used a grounded theory approach, which refers to theory derived from data that has been systematically gathered and analyzed.

Qualitative research methods utilize an inductive mode of analysis. This mode of analysis is in contrast to quantitative research methods, which rely on deductive thinking or a process of moving from a general theory to specific observations. This research will delve into the world of African men and poses open-ended questions with the aim of eliciting in-depth, detailed responses regarding their experiences, perceptions, feelings and knowledge on the phenomenon of divorce. As the research will enter their world, it will endeavour to understand divorce and resilience from their perspective as divorced African men. Swinton and Mowat define qualitative research as “*a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspect of social world*” (2007: 31). They continue to say that “*this definition suggests that qualitative research relates to the careful exploration of the ways in which human*

*beings encounter their world, an exposition that offers new ways of understanding and interpreting the world”* (Swinton and Mowat, 2007: 31).

Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as being “*multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter*” (1998: 3).

The above quotation is helpful to this research because it aimed to describe and explore the nature and reality of divorce as experienced by African men, and ultimately aimed to enable researchers to understand the phenomenon differently in order to add new knowledge to the field.

Qualitative research involves the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches, which enable the researcher to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the uniqueness that individuals and communities inhabit it.

Qualitative research always begins with the theory on the ground. Buffel describes this as “*what is actually happening on the ground and in praxis*” (2007: 76). In the context of this research, the focus is on divorced African men. The study was guided by Gerkin’s methodology of shepherding, which is discussed later. The methodology of shepherding will be implemented throughout the research in order to gain an understanding of pastoral care needed by divorced African men.

Qualitative and quantitative researches have distinct differences in their application and use within a holistic process.

This section seeks to highlight these differences in order for the reader to acquaint themselves with the rationale behind using a qualitative approach for this research.

Neuman (2000) describes the different principles of qualitative and quantitative research, which are presented in the following table 3.1:

**TABLE 3.1**

| <b>Quantitative</b>   | <b>Qualitative</b>   |
|---|--|
| The researcher formulates hypotheses before conducting the research and tests them. | The researcher captures and discovers meaning after becoming immersed in the data.                       |
| Concepts are in the form of distinct variables.                                     | Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalizations, and taxonomies.                             |
| Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardised.    | Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher. |
| Data are in the form of numbers from precise measurement.                           | Data are in the form of words and images from documents, observations,                                   |

| <b>Quantitative</b>   | <b>Qualitative</b>   |
|---|--|
|   | and transcripts.   |
| Theory is largely causal and is deductive in nature.  | Theory can be causal or non-causal and is often inductive.   |
| Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables, or charts and discussing how the results relate to hypothesis. | Analysis proceeds by extracting themes and organizing data to present a coherent, consistent picture |

This table elucidates the difference between the two main schools of research. It has identified some of the major differences between qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The initial differences between the two is that qualitative research uses a constructivist approach based on phenomenological and interpretive paradigms whereas the quantitative approach uses a positivist approach which assumes existing, objective truth which can be revealed through a scientific method. In understanding this, the role of the researcher will be active and participatory. The researcher attempt to develop a close relationship with the participants, since the existence of such a relationship was the key to successful data collection.

The process of data analysis in grounded theory takes cognizance of certain key analytical strategies, namely:

- *“Memoing - this is a process for recording the researcher’s thoughts and ideas as they evolve throughout the research.*
- *Coding – this refers to the process of categorizing data and describing the implications and details of the categories identified”* (Trochim, 2001: 160; cf Neuman, 2000: 420).

### **3.5. GROUNDED THEORY**

Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that was originally developed in the 1960s by two leading sociologists, Glazer and Strauss (Creswell, 1998; Trochim, 2001). According to Grove, *“grounded theory is an inductive research technique. It means that the theory developed from the research is based on or has its roots in the data from which it was derived”* (2005: 57). This mode of inductive analysis can be thought of as a theory that is derived from or "grounded" in daily experiences.

Grounded theory aims to conceptualize understanding through using empirical data. In a way, grounded theory involves the process of retrospectively formulating

new hypotheses to fit data. This theory or mode of analysis attempts to create a new understanding based on the actual experience and perceptions of the participants from the ground. The evolving theory hopes to both add to the existing body of knowledge and practice, and serve as a basis for further research.

Strauss and Corbin (1996) point out that in grounded theory the researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Instead, the researcher begins with an area of study that allows theory to emerge from available data. Similarly, this research attempted to approach the question of divorce and resilience with an open mind. The reality of divorce as experienced by African men was seen as the source of theory formulation, where the theory was generated from data or evidence collected from the participants or interviewees, rather than from preconceived theories or hypotheses.

### **3.6. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Open-ended, in-depth interviews will be conducted. These interviews will be based on previous theoretical and research constructs combined with professional experienced (psychologist and sociologist) in the field of social issues.

The primary methods of data collection in qualitative research are:

- Observations (including document/literature review)

- Interviews
- Focus Group Discussions

The in-depth interview is the most appropriate data collection technique for grounded theory research. This method is considered appropriate for the study due to the focus on the phenomenon of divorce and resilience in African men. Patton (2002) differentiates between the terms data collection method and data collection technique. On the one hand, data collection method refers to the systematic approach to data collection. And on the other hand, data collection technique refers to the art of asking, listening, and interpreting (see Patton, 2002). This study will therefore make use of a data collection technique. This technique is helpful in a number of ways such as:

- Helping the project in producing quality data from the ground.
- Helping and building the researcher's listening aptitude, in order to interpret data in accordance with the phenomenon.

The researcher believes that the chosen technique will allow the generation of valid and reliable information regarding the various strategies of resilience employed by

African men during the aftermath of divorce. During the process of data collection a few key principles will be observed:

- The fact that this method of data collection deals specifically with in-depth information, rather than numerical or statistical information.
- The data will be collected from a limited number of people or individuals, rather than from a large sample.

The data will then analysed using grounded theory. Henning defined grounded data analysis as “*a tool for constructing substantive theories*” (2004: 114). The researcher agrees with this definition, as it reflects one of the primary goals of this study in trying to discover data on the ground. The research also adopts Elder-Avidan’s definition of data analysis. He conceptualised data analysis as “*a dialogical, descriptive and explanatory, complex process aiming at creating an internal order, and searching for as many alternative explanations as the data allow, by extricating central themes, conceptualizing them into core themes and identify typology*” (2009: 33).

In other words, the process of analysing data will follow a funnel-like (see Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005, pp. 3-13), in order to attain a clear description of African men’s ability to adapt during the aftermath of divorce. “*This analysis is a process of breaking down the data and thematizing it in ways which draw out the*

*meaning hidden within the text*” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 57). The first step of analysing data in this regard will involve collecting the data from the ground. During this step in-depth interviews will be conducted with a sample that is considered to be representative of divorced African men and those affected by divorce.

The sample will be selected in order to allow for an understanding of their experiences and perspectives on adjustment to divorce or divorce recovery, as well as their need for pastoral care. *“The criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category is the category’s theoretical saturation”* (Buffel 2007: 86). This means that saturation is reached when no new data is discovered. This saturation point is reached through the joint collection and immediate analysis of data. Thus the processes of data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously.

### **3.7. PARTICIPANTS**

In the context of this study, the participants are essential as they contribute their knowledge acquired from practical experience of and exposure to the phenomenon of divorce.

In terms of selection, letters of invitation were written to selected participants, detailing the purpose of the study and requesting their voluntary participation. The letter also addressed the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity, assuring potential research participants that both would be upheld in the final data report.

The letter of invitation contained the following information:

- The topic of the research.
- The aims and objectives of the study.
- The guarantee that the researcher would maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

The final sample for this research consisted of:

- Five men from both rural and urban areas. These men had all attained different levels of education.
- Children and other family members who had witnessed this tremendous transition.
- The chieftains of the villages, as well as their council, in order to acquire additional cultural insights regarding the phenomenon of divorce.

- Professionals (such as psychologists and sociologists) who had witnessed the divorce process and the resilience strategies employed by divorced African men.

The research will take place in various villages of the Tsonga-speaking tribes in the Province of Limpopo, namely Kurulen, N’wamitwa, Makuleke and Mhinga. Participants shall be drawn from the above five villages and will be selected for inclusion in the sample by virtue of their knowledge of phenomenon as well as their expertise regarding African heritage life.

Chieftains and their councils are considered to be an important sub-sample, as both families and (on a broader level) these traditional councils handle issues of divorce. Some of these traditional councils consist of older men and women who are considered to be experts in Tsonga traditional issues. Other people who were identified outside these councils will also be interviewed. The researcher will also consult people from different disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, and various individuals who had witnessed these men’s struggles to adjustment after divorce. The researcher feels that the varied nature of the sample offered a more nuanced account of divorce. The duration of each one-on-one in-depth interview was estimated to be between 30 and 60 minutes.

### 3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are always of great importance in research. Certain ethical issues were of particular importance given the sensitive nature of this research topic. It is essential that the research participants' anonymity be protected throughout the research. This was done through the use of fictitious names. The researcher will use the principle of respect for persons when conducting the interviews and ensures that all collected information remained confidential. Murphy emphasized the importance of “*assuring the participant's confidentiality*” (1980: 88). These ethical precautions are designed to protect the legitimate rights of the participants.

All the data or information will be recorded in writing after obtaining the participants' written consent. The participants will be provided with a thorough explanation of the reasons for the study and the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher also “*pledges to be sensitive*” (Babbie, 1989: 472) and in regard to adhering to ethical standards and interpreting data collected from the participants. This sensitivity relates to participants' welfare, the community to which they belong and their voluntary participation and confidentiality. Lastly, the research endeavoured to adhere to the above mentioned ethical considerations while at the same time providing a true reflection of the data.

### 3.9. GERKIN'S HERMENEUTICAL METHODOLOGY

In addition to relying heavily on the data collection technique described above, this research found pastoral guidance from the narrative hermeneutical model developed by Gerkin (1997).

In his book, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, Gerkin (1997) refers to the pastor as a caring leader and a shepherd. In this model, care is viewed as the central metaphor of life in the Christian community. The pastor is regarded as the shepherd and the Christians are the flocks that need to be cared for. This methodology needs to be located within the hearts and souls of traditional African people. In terms of the present study this meant that the shepherd (and researcher) need to utilize this method effectively in helping people cope with any emotions experienced as a result of the research, including feelings of shame, hopelessness and despair. The researcher was convinced that this shepherding method, although it was written from a Western perspective, plays a pivotal role in approaching issues faced by African people. The researcher agrees with Gerkin's statement that:

*Our lord and savior Jesus Christ hath left us a commandment, which concerns all Christians alike - that we should render duties of humanity, or (as the scripture calls them) works of mercy, to those which are afflicted and*

*under calamity, that we should visit the sick, endeavour to set free the prisoners, and perform other like acts of kindness to our neighbour, whereby the evils of this present time may in some measure be lightened.”* (1997: 42)

This quotation suggests that the clergy or the shepherd should be concerned for those in special need. *“Shepherds were responsible for the physical survival and welfare of their own or their master’s flocks”* (Bromiley, 1995: 463).

The shepherding motif is captured in the imagery of Psalms 23 where the lord God is depicted as the good shepherd who leads the people in paths of righteousness, restoring their souls and walking with them among their enemies, even into the valley of the shadow of death. This motif illustrates that shepherding is a biblical model of pastoral care that aims at leading, nurturing, healing and protecting. According to Jacobsen, *“the shepherding perspective is founded on the basis of the gospel and so is unique to Christianity”* (2009: 30). He goes on to emphasize that *“the healing dimension of the pastoral task, rooted in Christ’s command to heal, is the central function of the shepherding perspective on ministry”* (Jacobsen, 2009: 30).

Gerkin’s approach focuses on both individual and family needs. This shepherding method is helpful to African situations in a way that:

- It equips the pastor as the shepherd of the flock in addressing challenges faced by black Africans especially in rural areas.

According to Gerkin, the pastor needs to function as the caretaker of individuals.

*Although emphases have fluctuated from time to time, the ordained pastor's care for individuals has usually been given a dominant emphasis. Furthermore, in the recent history of pastoral care, in large part because of the influence of individualism and psychotherapeutic psychology, the organizing conceptualization of pastoral care has focused on the individual care of the pastor for individual persons (1997: 92).*

The researcher agrees with Gerkin's approach to pastoral care, as it appears to be all encompassing. It addresses individual and family problems in relation to various life situations. This approach is ideal as it is able to help to heal people in need of pastoral care therapy, including divorced African men who are perhaps traumatized by virtue of being divorced by their spouses or wives.

The shepherd metaphor of pastoral care represents the way in which God cares for and supports people in distress. This is depicted in what Jesus Christ says in the gospel of John:

I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Just as the father knows me and I know the father - and lay down my life for the sheep (John 11-15).

This model provides a great challenge to pastors who serve African people with different problems in their congregations. In African societies men's dignity is linked to their ability to control their families. This approach is helpful in restoring these men's dignity within the church and the society as it removes the pain and shame of divorce. Wimberly shares that "*pastoral theologians and pastoral psychologists tell us how devastating it can be to deny and keep from our awareness our feelings of humiliation and shame*" (1999:55). Many of the problems experienced by members of congregations involve family issues. It is therefore important that pastoral care remain aware of these issues. Gerkin's model of shepherding connects with the ministry of Jesus Christ, which was characterized by compassion. Jesus Christ repeatedly displayed compassion in the face of

ignorance, hunger, sickness and even death. He was gripped by compassion when he saw the aimlessness of the common people as “sheep without a shepherd” (Mathew 9:36; Mark 6:34), the sick and the blind among the multitudes (Mathew 14:14; 20:34) and the sorrow of those who had lost loved ones (Luke 7:13; John 11:35).

Jesus Christ’s compassion also expressed itself in practical ministry. Out of compassion he raised the dead (John 11; Luke 7:14), taught the multitudes (Mark 6:34) and healed the sick (Mathew 14:14; 4:23; 9:35; 19:2). When ministering to the needy Jesus Christ was not afraid to make physical contact. He took the hands of the sick (Mark 1:31; Mathew 9:29) and the demon possessed (Mark 9:27). His fingers touched blind eyes (Mathew 20:34), deaf ears (Mark 7:33) and silent tongues (Mathew 7:33). Most astonishing of all Jesus touched the lepers - the outcasts of his day (Mathew 8:3; Luke 5:12-13).

Gerkin reminds us that:

*“Our lord and saviour hath left us a commandment which concerns all Christians alike, - that we should render the duties of humanity, or (as the scripiter calls them) the works of mercy, to those which are afflicted and under calamity, that we should visit the sick, endeavour to set free the*

*prisoners, and perform other like acts of kindness to our neighbour, whereby the evils of this present time may in some be lightened”*. (1997: 42)

In agreeing with this hermeneutical method of approach this research encompassed all issues within the sphere of Africans and their experiences. An important feature of Gerkin’s hermeneutical model is the recognition of the importance of providing care for the whole family. This concept could also be extended to the care of the larger family and even the broader community. In this respect the inclusive narrative hermeneutical model of Gerkin has a lot in common with the African worldview.

### **3.10. CONCLUSION**

Once the research method and technique were identified the next step in the research process involved collecting the data. Data collection took the form of one-on-one in-depth interviews with participants. These interviews, which constitute the empirical research component of this research study, were conducted with divorced African men, children and other family members affected by divorce, chieftains and their councils and experts in the field of psychology who have dealt with divorce. The participants were all selected from five Tsonga-speaking

villages. Following data collecting and data analysis using grounded theory, the research then made use of Gerkin's (1997) hermeneutical method to provide a context for the findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Exploring the reality of divorce**

#### **Voices of divorced African men**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents two sections of empirical data. The first part explores the journey of divorced African men and their life transition in their own words, their separation and divorce experience, as well as their individual mode of resilience. The journeys narrated by each of these men were scripted during the interview. In some cases, the transcripts were paraphrased, with their original words indicated clearly with the use of quotation marks. All names used in this research are fictitious in order to hide the participants' identities. A questionnaire was utilized for these interviews, and is attached as Appendix 'C'.

The second component reflects upon the empirical data of the series of interviews conducted with the chief and their councils, as well as few veterans within the Vatsonga communities (old men and women aged 60-89 of years). This includes the way in which the Vatsonga traditional people understood the essence of marriage and its processes. Finally, it deals with traditional influences of resilience in men after divorce.

As this project is intended to contribute to the body of theological education, all narration and analysis will be based on pastoral theology and not clinical psychology. However, several models of data analysis have been borrowed from psychological theory, and will be discussed later. Below are empirical data from the main participants in their own words.

## **4.2. HUDSON**

### **4.2.1. Background**

Hudson is a 40-year-old separated man who lives in a rural area of Limpopo Province. He had been separated from his wife, KK, for two years at the time of interview. He is a qualified teacher working in one of the secondary school in his community. He described himself as a very formal, quiet and well-disciplined person. As he grew up with a traditional mentality that a woman does everything for a man; he never learned to cook for himself, or clean his own house, as his sisters used to do this for him. The interview was conducted at Hudson's parents' residence.

#### 4.2.2. Journey to separation

Hudson described feeling overjoyed when he married KK seven years ago. Three years later, the couple was blessed with a daughter, who is now four-years-old. Hudson felt as though things were moving well. He had cherished every moment with his family in a very remarkable way. Things turned upside down when Hudson was involved in a car accident a few kilometres away from his house, where he damaged his spinal cord. He was hospitalized for a two month period. After he was discharged from hospital, Hudson was confined to a wheelchair. KK then proposed that they should get a helper to assist with house duties. The reason given was that, “she can’t do everything in the house anymore”. This, he said “included washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning and taking care of me as I could not do anything alone”.

Hudson continued to say that “I never had a problem, because I loved her, and so I understood everything. But this worried me a lot when she left my room to sleep with our daughter. I confronted her about it, and she said, “It’s the same, it won’t change the situation”. I said to her, “your presence gives me hope and courage to be optimistic about recovery”. Her response to this was, “Yes but it does not bring back what we use to have, our sex life has changed drastically”. This pained my heart tremendously as the situation got worse. Communication was getting lesser

and lesser and feelings were fading agues. I could not cope anymore and so I decided to go back to my parents' place. Though they wanted to know precisely what was going on, I was so embarrassed to tell them as this issue mortified my manhood as an African.”

#### **4.2.3. Aftermath of separation**

“As I was sitting at home, all I could think of was the way my life turned from good to bad. I have always wanted to be a father as an African man; I wanted to feel the sense of being a dad to someone. You know, I wanted to be that epitome to provide and protect for my loved ones. For a minute I thought I was a burden to my parents, but they were full of compassion towards me.

At home I would just wake up and do nothing as I could not work anymore. My two uncles aged at seventy three and seventy six, advised that I should get someone to talk to. I even longed for alcohol to remove stress, but there was no one to give me. I had to face KK in my thoughts daily. Her family tried to bring some senses in her mind but she refused, telling them the similar things she told me.

My state was deteriorating detrimentally, and I therefore, had to go and see a professional counsellor. When my friends visit, I felt like running to the house knowing that everyone must be aware of my situations. It made me feel so small and useless'. But thank God, for they become the antidote to my situations. Nevertheless, I felt uncomfortable to be around people.”

#### **4.2.4. Mode of resilience**

How has Hudson bounced back from this emotional turmoil? Throughout his narrative, he referred to his family and friends and the support with which provided him. This could be referred to as a mode of resilience.

##### **4.2.4.1. Family**

He spoke about the way his parents treated him with compassion. At first he thought perhaps they may consider him to be a burden, but he realized later that they did everything they could for him out of a sense of genuine love. The presence of his parents helped him deal with the feelings of despair and anger he had experienced after his separation. He gained additional strength through the support he got from his parents, whom he regarded as “more compassionate”. They

were his source of strength in recovering from the depression and anger he had felt when his ex-spouse was no longer in his life.

#### **4.2.4.2. Friends**

Hudson valued all his friends in a significant way, and this was apparent when he stated “but thanks be to God, for they become antidote to my situations”. He gained self-confidence due to the good friends he had. As he could not move a distance, others will push him on his wheelchair for a working distance, so he can get over the feeling of anxiety. They never spoke about rushing into marriage, but rather advised to delay it to allow for acceptance and perhaps forgiveness to prevail.

Friends going through a divorce often find their traditional support systems unavailable, apart from rushing them into starting a new relationship (especially men). Based on the fact that African men are not expected to remain single for a long period of time following their divorce, they tend to enter new romantic relationships fairly swiftly, and as a divorcee, they risk entering a relationship carrying feelings of bitterness and resentment. These unresolved feelings and issues from the past may have a negative impact on the new relationship. Even though, the culture of many African men requires early marriage following divorce, it is highly advisable not rush into remarriage. Friends and family may

(and often do) choose sides when a couple is breaking up. The support provided through positive interventions can make a real difference on how men cope successfully with a very painful process. It is thus not medication that can help people recover, but rather genuine understanding and support that can prove to be an antidote to their situation.

#### **4.2.5. Analysis of Hudson's narration**

What is notable in Hudson's narration are the two major stressful events that followed each other, namely the accident which left him on a wheelchair and the emotional turmoil in his marriage caused by lack of communication. Despite all of these challenges he found himself facing, he was able to find a sense of direction in the emotional maelstrom. This was primarily due to the support he had received from his family and friends.

He felt overwhelmed by the sudden life change, which seemed to threaten the plans he had made for himself and his family. Finding himself on a wheelchair was a devastating situation that he had to face for the rest of his life. He had to find a way of accepting his condition, and start a new chapter of life on a wheelchair which was not simple. He needed strong support from his loved ones, (friends,

parents, siblings and KK). While recovering after being discharged from the hospital, Hudson detected a change in attitude in KK, which took his emotions back to square one: a lack of communication and some “funny behaviour”, around the house. This depressed him very much, but he felt as though he could not share it with his parents due to feeling ashamed. Part of him wanted to confide in them, but another part of him battled with the cultural tradition that he should not speak about his experience as it would humiliate him.

The lack of communication clouded Hudson and KK’s marriage and contributed greatly towards their separation. This is evident in the moving of KK out of their bedroom and into their daughter’s room. It was a mechanism she utilized to avoid talking about the real problem, which was sexual frustration due to Hudson’s spinal cord injury. This is what Paul Bohannon (1970) terms “*emotional divorce*” (p. 33), because it is the first stage of the cracking marriage and can be experienced in any period of marriage. This is also acknowledged by Berner (1992) who says, “*In this stage, spouses draw excitement back from relation as they are disturbed by emotional quarrels*” (p. 10).

In agreement with Bohannon and Berner hypothesis of the genesis of emotional divorce, KK found no possibility of discarding her battle of sexual frustrations in order to find a sound solution to the problem. Moreover, the affection; trust and

respect she had felt for him were replaced by destructive emotions. Hudson had probably felt disappointed in her response to his new circumstances, but nevertheless had retained hope for improvement in their relationship. Although Hudson may still think about the suffering he's gone through in his life, he has demonstrated that his resilience and the support received from various people within the community has provided the platform from which to start a new life.

### **4.3. JOHN**

#### **4.3.1. Background**

John is a 45-year-old father of 17-year-old Stanley and Harries, who is 14. At the time of the interview he had been divorced for three years after twenty one years of marriage. During his separation he resided with his parents who lived about 35 kilometres away from his marital home. After his divorce had been finalized, John relocated to a new community, and started a new life with a new circle of friends. The interview with John was conducted at his parents' residence.

#### **4.3.2. Journey of marriage and separation.**

“The two of us were married for twenty one years. Though we did not have the opportunity for reaching our goals because of financial difficulties, life went on

without any problem. Eleven years after our marriage, I decided to take Anna, (now my ex-wife) back to school for furthering her studies, so that we can help each other over family responsibilities. Later on, she completed her nursing certificate and was employed in one of the government hospitals. Along the way, she got a friend who happened to be a male nurse and they visited each other quite often. When I come closer to them, they would speak a language (English) I would not understand in order to confuse me. After a month, she told me that, she is working nightshifts and therefore, she will not be coming home early. I didn't have a problem since I respected her and her job as well. This nightshifts issue continued for sometimes, to the degree that I was not happy any more. So many things happened that I wouldn't wish to talk about.

“I confronted her about her friendship with the male nurse and the response I got was that, ‘we’re doing work related things’. Four months later, I discovered that the two were having a relationship, but she kept on denying for several times. Our marriage ended up in a divorce which was instigated by her. I wanted things to be good between us, but she wanted nothing to do with me. The reason given was that she is tired of being suspected of having affairs.”

### 4.3.3. Aftermath of divorce

‘My dreams and expectation were shattered. As I grew up, I never predicted that my life would come to this point. I’ve always wanted to have a beautiful family and play my role as a father and a husband. You know, my friends told me to forget about all that I did for her and marry another woman. It felt like the whole world could just open and swallow me at ones. I was even afraid to go and seek for professional help in order to adjust myself after divorce. I remember taking a bottle full of hot stuff, wanting to get rid of my problems. I even lost my job due to shame, that when my colleagues look at me, what will they think of me. I just wanted to be alone. Whenever I find myself alone, my job was to flashback thoughts and that created more problems in my life.

“These traumatic memories brought a lot of symptoms in my life such as, depression, guilty, anxiety, and other health problems. Due to this, I was hospitalized for a stroke which affected my left side. My parents were extremely supportive; they gave me strength to move on with life. My siblings took me to the professional counsellors for help. On the other hand, my parents, siblings and kinds gave me a positive model of loving, sportive and caring. Things began to change when my sister moved me to her second house away from everything and everyone

I knew. I then saw new faces, met new friends and the environment was welcoming.”

#### **4.3.4. Mode of resilience**

Research has indicated that men sometimes experience some difficulty with resilience after divorce, at least on an emotional level, because they don't have confidants in their life besides their wife. On the other hand, women may have several other friends besides their spouse in which to confide their emotions. Once a divorce process is ongoing, some men thus find it more difficult to confide in others than their female counterparts, and may struggle to show their vulnerability or hurt to other men or friends.

Throughout the process, John never spoke about other people apart from his parents and siblings as being his mode of bouncing back positively. Two essential modes of resilience were identified during the process of interview, which were comprised of the following;

- The family support structure
- The new community or environment

These have combined to lend a greater and positive resilience in his life following divorce, and are explored in detail below.

John states that his parents gave him support and the sense of empowerment that he needed in order to move forward with his life. In other words, they were his pillar during this time of difficulty. He thus greatly benefited from the support he got from his parents. He describes them as being something of a ‘defensive wall around him’ and this can be seen, he said, by being welcomed, supported and empowered by them during the process of separation and divorce. He says “they are the reason I turned out the way I am today”. “Had they not been there for me, my life would have been shuttered completely”. “My mother took a huge attention and interest in me while my father was supporting me financially”. John’s parents had been the real pillars of support.

The new environment provided by his sister seems to have also played a pivotal role in emancipating his life. In addition to the tremendous support he had received from his parents, the new community also served as an antidote to his feelings of fear, shame and loneliness. He gained self-esteem and almost seemed to become a new person to these new people. This is indicated by his statement when saying “the new environment is welcoming”.

Bohannon (1970) in his stages of divorce spoke about “*community divorce*”. as stage five, where divorced spouses leave their existing membership in a community of relatives and friends in order to join another community in order to

reduce the negative impact of divorce and forge a new sense of self and relationships. In this context, the new community becomes a source of positive resilience. In John's case, it was relevant in that he exhibited both competence and good recovery after challenging conditions.

#### **4.3.5. Relationship with ex-spouse.**

John currently has no relationship with his ex-wife. The only form of communication existing between them is solely regarding their children. Apart from this limited communication, there is no genuine communication regarding their feelings. Although his ex-wife has custody of their children, they appear to have shifted all the blame onto her and view their father in a more positive light. This jeopardizes their relationship with their mother. In other words, the process of separation brought serious emotional effects on children and had resulted to parent alienation syndrome (PAS). Parental alienation syndrome is defined as a *“disturbance in which children are preoccupied with viewing one parent as all good and the other parent as all bad”* (Williams, 2006, p. 498). The data above is in line with William's theory or observation about children aligning themselves with one of their parents. John is gaining more support from his children because they witnessed almost all the steps of his suffering. This could also be one of the

reasons that, he does not want to rebuild a friendship with her due to the relationship he has with his children. It is imperative to note that this differs from studies which indicate that most men feel the desire to be with someone as well as to reconcile with the former spouse.

#### **4.3.6. Analysis of John's narration**

John had high hopes for a good future after his wife completed her studies. In analyzing this, one stressful event is based on education. At the onset of his wife's studies, he envisioned them as an investment in the family's future. He thought his wife's completion of studies would bring many things especially to their kids because of the knowledge of education she had. To him, and others, education is seen as a life time achievement and an investment for the future. He had to deal with the fact that he paid for her education and gained nothing at the end of the day. Even though their children will get something, to him, it would have been more wonderful if they were to enjoy as a fully fleshed family. Based on this type of emotional turmoil, people tend to blame themselves by making different statements such as; "If I had not taken her back to tertiary, none of this would have happened". The task of adjusting resiliently to divorce was compounded by having to adjust to emotional and physical aspects of his life.

#### **4.3.7. Economic stability**

Despite all that had happened, John managed to survive under the circumstances in which he found himself. Supporting his children was never an issue to him, because he loved them dearly. However, this never made him suffer from financially. Of course when emotional issues such as divorce occur, there will be financial changes. But this never brought any misery, because he had adjusted well financially and had dealt with the fact that things will be different now that his children are no longer residing with him.

#### **4.4. MAX**

##### **4.4.1. Background**

Max is a 51-year-old father of two boys aged twenty and fifteen. He was born and raised in the rural areas of Limpopo. At the time of the interview, he had been divorced for six years after twenty two years of marriage. He now lives in Pretoria with his two sons. This interview was conducted in his office.

#### **4.4.2. Journey of marriage and separation**

Before Max moved to Pretoria, he worked around his hometown, and travelled every day. The wife was a teacher by profession. Max took his responsibilities as husband and father very seriously, and cared for his family in a loving way. Things changed when Max was moved to another section in his department, where he was required to travel outside the country. It was a promotion everyone was happy about in the family. After a year, Max began suspecting his wife of having affairs. The reasons for these suspicions were based on the sudden change in their sexual contact. “It’s like she was not in the mood for it or never felt anything at all”. “It amazed me because such things never happened, but just though it was for that day”. “Few days it was good, and then it went back to her odd behaviour”. Max decided to confront her about this, checking if she was feeling physically healthy. His wife responded by saying that she said she will be ok. After hearing this, “I told her we must see a doctor, but she refused, saying she will be fine without a doctor”. Four months later, “I went to Botswana for a week on work-related issues. I was supposed to come back on Saturday, but came back on Friday and she was not there at home.”

Max called her, and she then told him she is out for shopping, which was ok with him. Latter on that day, Max received a telephone call from someone to tell him

that his friend was with his wife at a certain park. He went straight to the park, and found his wife behaving amorously with Max's friend. As he got closer to them, the guy ran away, and the wife just said to him, "If you don't make me happy, what must I do". When leaving the park back home, he felt like his driving thousand kilometres. He could not hold himself in front of his kids when at home, and burst into tears.

He and his wife separated and after some time had passed they divorced. Max gained custody of their children, explaining that "my two sons refused going with her, as they were so close to me".

#### **4.4.3. Aftermath of separation**

The divorce affected Max's sons also, as they were overwhelmed by shock. They felt pity for their dad, and therefore, aligned themselves with him. These disturbances preoccupied their mind, and soon they came to view their father as 'good' and their mother as the antagonist. Max found life was rather challenging after his wife had left him, and especially the way in which she had left him. He felt as though he should not marry again.

He had to adjust to so many things around the house with his sons. “I had to start some of the house duties such as cleaning my bedroom and changing linens, washing my clothes (though using a machine), ironing them (sometimes my last son would do it for me) and making myself breakfast before going to the office. This continued for some time, until my sister brought a person to help with domestic duties. “After separation, I use to stay at work till late, as a way of avoiding the fact that I am now alone”. He never trusted a so-called “friend” in his life after what happened to him.

His first son would sometimes take him to a different environment for a weekend in an effort to help Max forget about what happened. He later got a transfer to Pretoria where he had an opportunity to make a fresh start. However, his two children never received any assistance in dealing with their emotions relating to their parents’ divorce. While they would outwardly say that they did not have any issues with their mother, it is clear that they are continuing to experience feelings of resentment, anger and even hatred towards her.

#### **4.4.4. Mode of resilience**

While Max had no parents to rely on for emotional support, he received enormous support from his two sons, as they journeyed with him throughout his emotional adjustment. He described his sons as “the most courageous children” he had ever

met. He was emotionally exhausted during and after his divorce, and his sons gave him the support he needed to stand up and pick up the pieces of life and restart all over again. His sons thus played a pivotal role in helping him cope positively after his separation and divorce.

He described them as his mode of resilience. It should be noted that the fact that his sons were able to provide such support is not an indication that they were unaffected by the divorce of their parents, but rather could be viewed as their desire to remain strong for their father's sake. He also got help from a professional psychologist, who provided him with counselling. This meant that when Max was in his home, he could rely upon his sons for support, and could also turn to his psychologist for additional support. He was thus exposed to both support and counselling, which offered different perspectives on his situation.

#### **4.4.5. Analysis of Max's narration**

In analyzing the narration of Max's emotional journeys following his divorce, two important factors are seen to have played an enormous role in the collapse of marriage, namely communication and infidelity. As these two factors could be

described as being of pivotal importance to marriage (and thus key to the collapse of Max's marriage), they shall be explored more closely below.

#### **4.4.5.1. Communication problem.**

Communication could be considered to be one of the basic reasons why many marriages may fall apart. In this analysis, Max wanted to talk about the odd conduct displayed by his ex-wife during sexual intercourse, but she refused. She failed their marriage by remaining silent, though she knew what her problems were in that marriage. African people viewed marriage as a focus of existence.

In other words, it is a "*drama in which everyone becomes an actor and actress and not just a spectator*" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 133). The researcher is in agreement with Mbiti that every spouse is entitled to have a say or opinion in sustaining the cohesion of marriage as Africans and not merely have a passive role. Communication injects the element of reliance into marriage and rejuvenates the relationship, whether in a Western or African perspective.

#### **4.4.5.2. Infidelity**

Many researchers agreed that extramarital sex is the result of boredom, which thus correlates with a lack of communication (Kitson, 1985; Williams, 2006: 470). Routine could play a big role in relationships, and part of the challenge for long-term couples is to keep a measure of enjoyment in their union by finding pleasurable experiences, taking trips, going out for dinner etc., with the aim of eliciting communication between spouses.

#### **4.4.6. Effects of divorce on children**

As noted above, Max's children were there since the beginning of their parents' marital problems. This results in a build-up of strange behaviour against one of the parents. The fact that both boys had moved in with their father is not only an influence of gender (since they were all males), but also a result of feelings of anger and bitterness directed towards their mother.

According to Erwin, such people are ..... *“More likely to suffer from depression; react with anger or aggressive behaviour than girls who may try to please adults by suppressing feelings”* (2006: 240). In agreement with Erwin, this kind of behaviour might also have huge negative influence on their performance at school

and other spheres, including their perceptions over social things. If counselling is not given in time, such as here, the effects could grow to the long-term effects. While these two children were taking care of their father, they needed their own support system, to help them cope with the feelings they were burdened with.

#### **4.4.7. Relationship with ex-spouse**

Max had described his ex-spouse as “dangerous”, and feels that people should be careful when striking up a friendship with her. By stating this, he is indicating that he sees no alternative way or even a desire to mend his relationship with her.

### **4.5. BJ**

#### **4.5.1. Background**

BJ is a 47-year-old father of two children, a boy and a girl. He worked in the private sector for over fifteen years. After he got married, he found that his wife wanted to lead a high-end lifestyle, which placed an enormous financial burden on him. BJ married what he called a “housewife”, it was never easy as she could not contribute financially.

#### **4.5.2. Journey of marriage and divorce**

“During the first nine months of our marriage, things were taking good shape. All changed after our first child was born, and she demanded a lot of expensive materials for the child. The biggest mistake I’ve made was to have an unplanned child. Had I planned for him, things would have been better. She had friends just nearby, who had nice and expensive accessories for their kinds and so she wanted the same. My salary was too low for all those things, and I had to use credits so that she can be happy.

“On the other hand, I had to buy everything for the house including expensive furniture. As I was struggling with all this, I could not even afford to maintain myself. On our second child, I could not pay anything anymore due to heavy deductions on my salary. She then began to yell at me, that I am not a good husband and a father to our kids. I told her she should find a job, but would not respond. One day I came from work, and the house was almost half empty. My parents went to her parents about this and she was brought back”.

BJ had a difficult relationship with his boss at work and was accused of mobilizing a strike until he was fired. After being dismissed, he took the matter to court.

While the money he received from the court case was used to pay some of the credit they had accumulated, BJ found that his wife was no longer interested in staying in the marriage and she left. The reason she provided BJ was that she is tired of starving.

#### **4.5.3. Aftermath of divorce**

BJ felt extremely hopeless after his wife left him. He had no one to turn to for comfort but his parents, which he found to be a challenging and emotional task. Just after his wife had left him, he wanted to be alone, and never talk or even think about his ex-wife. He was facing paying off credit, and grappling with the household tasks that his ex-wife had done such as keeping the house clean and cooking.

He found that despite his best efforts to distract himself, he would have flashbacks of his time with his ex-wife, which left him feeling depressed and unable to focus. In part, the depression may have also been due to the loss of daily contact with his children. His sister and mother helped him perform some of the household duties. Through the intervention of his sister, he also went to see a professional counsellor.

#### **4.5.4. Mode of resilience**

Throughout the case study, BJ's overall ability to adjust positively from this adversity was due to the presence of his parents and sister. They played an important role in reducing the level of depression and emotion by availing themselves to him and nurturing him. This allowed him regain his self-confidence as well as rebuilding his societal relationship. A professional counsellor also played an important role in helping him work through his symptoms of psychological disturbance, and regain his sense of self-esteem.

#### **4.5.5. Analysis of BJ's narration**

What is remarkable in BJ's case study is that he had to handle many major stressful events simultaneously, namely:

- The pressure he felt from his ex-wife, who wished to live a more luxurious lifestyle, which left him with many unsettled debts. While struggling with the bills, she was enjoying life to the fullest. She never wanted to work, but she would ask for expensive clothes and other things. Perhaps the fear he had was that if he refused her desires, she might leave him.

- Following the stress of increasing debt, was the loss of his job, which left him financially unstable. Since he was the breadwinner in the house and the only source of income, he had to struggle alone in getting food for the house, while his ex-wife continued pressurizing him. She did not provide him with emotional support and understanding after he lost his job and all the debt he faced alone. It appeared as though all she was interested in was the fulfilment of her demands.
- The final event which bombarded him during this stressful period was the loss of his loved ones through the separation, which led to him feeling stress, a sense of despair and anxiety, and even resulted in his withdrawal from the community. This abrupt and sudden separation was due to the financial position he was facing after losing his job. This signified to him that his marriage was not based on love, but rather on more material needs only. BJ felt as though if there was love, he would have received greater support from the wife, and it would have been easier for him to recover from his debt.

#### 4.6. ANALYSIS OF NARRATIONS BY DIVORCED AFRICAN MEN

Separation, in which a couple decides to no longer live together, can be accomplished in two ways:

- With informal separation, spouses settle financial, child-custody, child-support and visitations arrangements between themselves, with no legal papers drawn up.
- With a formal separation, a lawyer draws up a legal agreement enabling the couple to live separately, while specifying financial, child-custody, child-support and visitation arrangements between them.

In the light of the above narrations of divorced African men, it appears that most employed the informal separation approach. This is because there were no legal implications to their separation, even though they termed it ‘divorce’ (which is the legal dissolution of a valid marriage). Rather than it being a legal agreement, these separations were based on *family* agreements; hence it was needless to divide property in some other cases. Additional personal factors contributed to the separation or dissolution of marriage, including communication difficulties, infidelity, falling out of love, unsatisfactory sex life and financial difficulties.

Loneliness played a big role just after their respective divorce proceedings, as they could not talk about their emotions to other men. Loneliness could be defined as being in need of companionship and support, and yet not receiving it. When one is feeling *isolated*, however, no amount of human companionship can alleviate the sensation of being alone and lonely. These African men suffered loneliness during the first few days of separation and felt cut off and separated from other people, in spite of the physical presence of others.

This is because of their state of nervousness, tremendous emotions and sense of despair. Consequently they may unintentionally isolate themselves further from others through their silence. During the period of emotional adjustment, participants were able to recover due to familial support, social, friends and new environment. Ferreira reported that “*changes in social activities after the end of the marriage are related to significantly higher distress, but that friends, professional help; children and work buffer some of this distress*” (2007: 31). In agreement to this, Kitson states that “*social support has been defined as formal and informal contacts with individuals and groups that provide emotional or material resources that may aid a person in adjusting to a crisis such as separation or divorce*” (1981: 25).

In concurrence with the above theorists, social support plays a pivotal role in influencing adjustment. As resilience refers to characteristics of individuals who bounce back after adversity, the modes listed above could be considered the ultimate sources of resilience. However, it is essential to understand how more elderly women and men within the traditional Vatsonga African society define both marriage and divorce.

#### **4.7. UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE WITHIN THE VATSONGA TRIBES**

This society shared the same sentiment with other African societies in defining marriage as ‘the union permanent at least by intention, of a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and the rearing of children and mutual assistance’ (Hastings, 1973: 27). The Vatsonga culture went further to say that, a woman was never married for her husband only, but for the whole family. She was then ‘owned’ by her in-laws and in some cases before reaching decisions on a certain matters; she would be expected to consult with them first. When joining the family, she would be introduced to all family members and would be introduced to the most important people within the family structure, with the understanding that she

would consult with them when experiencing difficulties. Typically these people are her husband's aunts. There are a few reasons for this tradition, namely:

- She would be able to interact with them concerning all matters in her marriage and sometimes life in general.
- She would be tough to keep a secret even if it meant one must die, the secret was not supposed to come out.

#### **4.8. THE SHIFT OF MARRIAGE FROM TRADITIONAL FOCUS**

The focus of marriage in other African communities has shifted from its main objective. Mace and Mace believe that traditionally, marriage was considered to be “*authoritarian, highly institutionalized, rigid, formal, ritualistic and patriarchal*” (1977: 4). This is in contrary to modern marriages, where some spouses do not view the essence of such marriage as a responsibility and a “*focus of existence*” (to borrow Mbiti's (1969) concept). Today most people enter in to this institution for status and economical gain. Others might argue that this was a prominent reason for marriage to take place in the past. However, it is important to note that marriages that took the more traditional form would last, even in the fact of

financial difficulties, etc. In a more modern marriage, it is rare that a wedded couple could continue staying together through such financial difficulty.

This is compounded by the fact that sometimes a spouse is attracted by the promise of economic possessions, and when this is not fulfilled, the marriage suffers greatly. It causes us to ask what makes marriage union endure: financial and material possessions or pure love. Such an approach has devalued the essence of marriage to our African traditional heritage. The researcher furthers this point by citing Ferreira who argues that “*today marriage is understood mainly as a path toward self-fulfilment*” (2007: 13). The researcher believes that this phenomenon is establishing itself now through the influence of education.

Before the dawn of democracy in our country, traditional cultures were observed with reverence, and this made people have a sense of respect towards marriage. On the one hand, the freedom of choice that people have today contradicts with the African cultural and biblical teachings of marriage.

The growing freedom of young people and the weakening of parental guidance and authority has contributed in creating a generation without genuine cultural value systems. This makes the new generation grow without a clear definition of what their values ought to be. These choices gave people much greater opportunity to breakdown the traditional values of marriage as a “focus of existence”. On the

other hand it is the breakdown of human relations due to the growth of urbanization which engages people in things they might never have done within the parameters of their cultural environment.

Some of these have spread across rural areas where traditions and cultures were mostly kept and respected. The high increase of pre-marital sex and the opening of prostitution are few instances of factors that are overclouding societies. Such things are sometimes conducted in public, with no conscience to remind them of who they are within the society. It is imperative that thorough guidance from both parents and pastors be given in order to guide children in a good standard according to African culture.

According to Waruta *“the growing freedom of young people and the weakening of parental guidance and authority has created a generation without genuine value systems”* (2007: 113). In agreement with the quote, this is why a lot of problems arise during marriages and result in the couple seeking divorce. Whenever something is to be built, it is pivotal to have a firm foundation in order to carry the weight on top. Thus, if children are not guided and taught well during their formative years, their marital journey may struggle to endure by virtue of the feeble foundation the marriage was built on.

Despite these social challenges, the institution of marriage is still an ongoing vehicle to procreation as well as a centre for human existence. Waruta says “*African people should never ignore the role of traditional African values even in the context of contemporary changes*” (2007: 115). The coming of the new dawn of democracy as well as education, should not take away the values or essence of marriage and how we should protect this institution as a heritage to be proud of to the upcoming generations.

It is the responsibility of the entire community to teach the upcoming generations about the essence of marriage and the benefits of pre-marital counselling so to have lasting marriages through churches, schools, and other institutions. Steven Koster (2005) acknowledges that marriage provides a variety of personal and societal functions. It provides companionship for two people, fulfilling an aspect of our relational image of God. Thus Adam can rejoice, “*This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!*” Gen 2:23 (2005: 4).

It provides a stable context for procreation and child rearing. Not only can the human race propagate itself (“be fruitful” Gen 1:28), but children are given a permanent, stable, and loving community in which they can be protected, nurtured, and raised. Not only are the children’s physical needs met, but so are their developmental needs, particularly emotional and spiritual ones. We express this

commitment in covenant language as well. Our children are part of God's covenant people.

#### **4.9. DIVORCE IN THE MIDST OF THE VATSONGA PEOPLE**

Divorce was obtainable in this culture but it was still a fairly uncommon phenomenon. In other words, the culture did not approve divorce very easily. In a case where by a serious charge was laid against a woman, the two families would assemble to weigh the matter and take a decision. In most cases, charges which were regarded as serious offence were:

- **Act of cruelty** – (ill-treatment of the in-laws)
- **Unfaithfulness** – (where caught committing adultery, and seduction or other sexual offences)
- **Disrespect** – (quarrelling with the husband and all the in-laws)

If it is decided that she was guilty and should leave the marriage, her family would bring another girl as a way of wiping away the disgrace brought by the daughter-in-law to the family. This was also done if she was unable to give birth. In this culture, divorce was so easy for a husband that he could send his wife away on the above changes, through the vigorous scrutiny of elders. According to this culture, it was a taboo, to say that a man is a barren.

The belief was that all men were able to procreate, and this belief remained. When a daughter-in-law has not shown any signs of pregnancy after the first two years of marriage, the family would begin to suspect a form of barrenness either in the husband or wife. Different tests would be conducted discreetly on the husband by old women of his tribe and his aunts. Each would produce their own urine samples, and they would ‘plant’ a seed in the samples to see whether it would thrive or die. According to informants, if the latter occurred, the wife’s would bring another girl in to wipe off the disgrace and bear a child for her sister.

If the result proved that the man could not have children, then an alternative plan was conducted between his wife and his aunt. The aunt would search for a man within the family, who could father a child with this woman on behalf of the husband. The cultural tradition dictated that the closest family member (typically a cousin) be chosen, so that when a child is produced, the family would still be able to call upon the ancestors of the husband and introduce the new child to them.

When agreed-upon time arrived, they would use a profound statement such as; “go to the bush and cut some fire wood” (meaning its time you go and meet the organized man). This was done away from the family. The essence of keeping the secret as taught by aunt plays a pivotal role in this regard. The motive for this was to protect and avert the instigation of divorce against a man. It would serve as a big

disgrace in the community for a man to be divorced for due to reasons of infertility.

In order for the child to resemble his father (the real husband), a wife was required to do some traditional ritual. Every morning and evening after her husband took a bath, she would privately bow to the dirty water in order to bring some resemblance between her unborn child and her husband (who had not father the child). In reality, a lot of charms were used in performing all this acts. This shows that in African societies, procreation is the primary prerogative of manhood.

It stands at the apex of everything and enables a man to be recognized as a real man in his society. Divorce, however, makes African men appear to be inferior and incomplete in their manhood. Furthermore, it serves as an embarrassment to a man when compared to other men in his society. This is possibly due to the belief that the inability to bear children blocks the flow of life and the continuation of the family name.

#### **4.10. FACTORS INFLUENCING RESILIENCE IN AFRICAN MEN AFTER DIVORCE**

Due to the traditional African belief system, there was no qualification for resilience in men after divorce, due to a number of reasons, namely:

- Men were never divorced or left by their spouse due to infertility. If it happened that such a divorce against a husband occurs, he would then be required to marry another wife immediately. The reason underpinning this was the belief that a man is never destined to be alone, and thus, a man was regarded as a genuine man when married. There was also the sense that a man's virility was measured in part by the number of children he had produced. African people take into cognizance the African proverb that says "a man without a wife is like a flower without a vase".
- African men were considered strong in all spheres of life. In the African traditional societies, it was difficult to see the tears of man when overwhelmed by emotional circumstances, as he would be unable to express them.
- African men were required to deal with emotional difficulties in silence. They were instructed to be 'man enough' in dealing with disturbing matters. This played a role in preventing the formation of a mechanism to help African men bounce back after experiencing their emotional trials.
- Marriage and procreation were taken as being an intricate component of African culture, with children played a pivotal role in cementing the union of the two families. Due to the process which is traditionally conducted by the

husband's aunt when the daughter-in-law suspects infertility on his husband, divorce would not be possible. The objectives of this process aimed at preventing such happening divorce from occurring. Even if the possibility of divorce arises, a man would still retain his social status.

Although outside the scope of this study, it is the researcher's belief that the above contains several elements of abuse towards women. While these acts were often cultural requirements, they served to make women appear to be cheap material possessions and instrument of entertainment to be exchanged amongst African men for the sake of bringing happiness and averting the potential disgrace of infertility over men.

#### **4.11. CONCLUSION**

All these cultural matters were seen as essential elements of African heritage. But today, due to the enlightenment of education, religion (such as Christianity) and democracy, such cultures are seen as barbaric and abusive in their treatment of women. The African custom of giving status and authority to the man is contradicted when these values are now accorded to persons on the basis of academic and professional qualifications rather than according to gender. The effects of modern changes have affected the large part of African cultural heritage.

In the rural areas, the area most affected is arguably the institution of marriage, which carried a certain weight in African tradition. Cultural traditions flourish due to marriage and procreation being seen as integral links to the chain of life, and divorce therefore blocks this continuity. In the following chapter, the researcher further analyses empirical data by looking at the similarities of literature review and the data collected from African tradition heritage. The intervention of pastoral care model and the theology of resilience will also be dealt with.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH ITERATURE AND PASTORAL CARE**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This section will assess the data collected and view the similarities and differences with the literature review. The aim is to check the accuracy of the western theorists regarding the processes of divorce with the experience of African men. These theorists were employed from various disciplines such as psychology and anthropology.

#### **5.2. THE REALITY OF DIVORCE**

Within the Vatsonga societies today, the influence of industrialization and urbanization has affected the social system of the traditional customs, a part of which is the marriage system. As new cultural patterns, aspirations and behavioural norms have emerged and as the traditional social ties undergo changes, societal control becomes weakened. The family is a sensitive institution and it monitors all these changes and reacts to them by experiencing disorganization. Since the

traditional family structure has been so seriously littered, the functions have equally been affected, and many of its important roles are now known to be associated with many forms of instability.

Marital instability, according to Filani (1984), is a breakdown in communication among couples that results in constant arguments, verbal and physical aggression, psychological ill-health, emotional and physical separation and sometimes may lead to divorce. Divorce is one social ill that has befallen the larger part of African people. The society itself abhors divorce, and yet marriages fail on a daily basis. In the African culture, marriage was seen as an essential element signifying the focus of existence and Mbiti observes:

*“For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate” (1969: 133).*

Divorce therefore, barricade the pulse of African cultural marriage in which everyone must become a participant. It is no longer viewed as a permanent union of a man and a woman for purpose of procreation and other mutual assistance, but a centre of chaos and humiliation within the two united families. Literature review on marriage shows a number of factors causing divorce in marriage.

For instance, Thornton (1985) indicates that the spouses' ages at the time of marriage is a possible predictor of divorce; Mbiti (1969) argues that childlessness in African marriage can lead to divorce; Hastings (1973) stressed the possibility of divorce over laziness and infidelity. These characteristics have been said to have contributed to divorce within the African traditional societies.

However, these are not the only reasons why divorce is establishing itself amongst Africans as a growing phenomenon. Based on the previous chapter on voices of divorced African men, numerous aspects contributing to divorce were noted such as the lack of communication between spouses, financial hardship, falling out of love, lack of commitment to marriage and infidelity. Moreover, complaints by husbands and wives against the other for many things concerning family issues are universal. When each sex is asked what frustrates them most about the opposite sex, the following complaints consistently emerge:

### **Women's frustrations relating to men:**

- ❖ Lack of leadership.
- ❖ No sensitivity.
- ❖ No understanding of who their women are.
- ❖ Lack of listening.
- ❖ Feeling of often being taken for granted.
- ❖ Thinks he knows it all.
- ❖ Not emotionally affectionate, but rather focussed on physical intimacy.

### **Men's frustrations relating to women:**

- ❖ Seeks to control relationship through manipulation.
- ❖ Nags.
- ❖ No understanding of who their men are.
- ❖ Lack of respect.
- ❖ Too demanding.
- ❖ Does not like sex.

If these concerns are left unresolved, they may lead to greater conflicts, which in turn may result in a deeply strained relationship which in most cases ultimately leads to divorce. In comparing the frustrations listed above with the causes of divorce, one can easily see the similarities which the researcher believes can potentially be remedied through marital counselling and other forms of family therapy. The danger of these types of frustrations is that they lead the spouses into what Bohannon (1970) calls “*emotional divorce*” where one spouses may feel infuriated by the behaviour of their spouse, which can be resolved if the couple take the appropriate measures. However, when allowing emotions to take precedence, the marriage union is at stake.

### **5.3. EXPLANATION OF THE MOST COMMON REASONS TO DIVORCE**

As discussed above, there are certain consistently mentioned key factors that are perceived to have contributed to the dissolution of some participants’ marriage. It is thus important to explore them in more depth, in order to gain further understanding on the impact they have had on the marriages above.

### 5.3.1. Lack of communication

A communication breakdown creates distance between partners and the fabric of unity is therefore destroyed. In fact, poor communication may be seen as being poisonous to a marriage. One or both partners develop a sense of disrespect towards the other, which leads to an inability to deal with and resolve issues that are affecting either party. The other partner may be clouded with careless words such as ‘I don’t care’. *“The test of a viable marriage is the ability to successfully address differences and conflicts”* (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2004: 6; Arku Isaac, 2002). Therefore it is important to discuss differences and problems that may hurt the marriage, before damage may be caused.

If one is feeling hurt about a behaviour or act that the other spouse performed, it is advisable to address the issues constructively rather than allowing destructive thoughts and feelings of anger overshadow the issue at hand. Numerous divorced African men had experienced the problem of lack of communication in their marriage and had allowed such feelings of anger and avoidance overshadow them. This, in the researcher’s opinion, demonstrates the importance of learning effective communication skills, which will enhance couples’ communication skills that would help them to express their needs, feelings, ideas in an effective manner, and

ultimately to be heard and understood without fear of criticism or rejection by their spouse.

### **5.3.2. Financial Issues**

Economic strain and the resultant financial burden is another common reason cited for the collapse of marriage. Disintegrating financial circumstances, incurred debts and disagreements over the allocation of money may place tremendous strain on a marriage. Married couples could squabble over such issues as shared financial responsibility, unequal financial status, undisclosed financial state, spending habits and lack of financial support. However, it is important to note that money is not always the sole or even the primary cause of divorce. Nonetheless, it is still a significant factor. It may be argued that it is in fact the lack of communication over financial issues which harms the relationship, rather than finances per se.

### **5.3.3. Infidelity**

An extramarital relationship may be a symptom of an unhappy relationship and contribute greatly to the decision to seek divorce. The sense of betrayal, hurt and mistrust when the infidelity is discovered undermines the marriage and results in a so-called “*accidental or useless*” (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006: 45) divorce.

This realization can be so profoundly humiliating and hurtful that it raises not only the possibility of divorce, but may also cause feelings of depression and anxiety, which further destroys the marriage bond. “*It is evident that the role of infidelity in a couple’s decision to terminate a romantic relationship is multidimensional, and it depends greatly on the context of the infidelity*” (Fine & Harvey, 2006: 156).

Theorists write that infidelity can be linked to a number of additional factors such as incompatibility between spouses, alcohol and drug use, relational distress and contextual opportunity. Steven Koster (2005: pp. 2-3) argues in his paper of marriage and divorce, that marriages have a spiritual dimension and are more than simple contracts and should be respected.

In the horizontal dimension, we commit ourselves to *fidelity*. We promise faithfulness to the other *person*, giving them an exclusive and permanent place in our lives. We promise faithfulness to the *role* of being a spouse, offering not performance for reward but seeking to support the other. We promise faithfulness to a *community*, becoming part of a social fabric comprised of both current and future families (Lewis Smedes: 1994).

In the vertical dimension, we recognize that marriage is a vocation. God not only witnesses our horizontal commitment, but the marriages itself begins at God’s initiative. God calls us to relationships in the way we are created, and in giving us

a spouse, he calls us to a specific person. In our marriage vow, we promise faithfulness to *God* to receive this spouse as a divine gift.

Just as we were created to be in relationship with others, we were also created to *leave* all others and *cleave* to our spouse (Gen 2:24). We become one before God—one flesh, one person. He goes on to say that, “this vertical dimension accentuates the distance of a biblical theology of marriage from a secular one. We are called to stay in marriages even during difficult times when motivation to stay in the marriage is low. We are called to receive our spouse and build the other up, helping the other grow into more of what God intended. It is not just a promise to be together as long as we feel like it, playing at love, but to dedicate ourselves to it in what Karl Barth calls the “*final exertion*” (1968: 33) of making it work.

#### **5.3.4. Lack of marriage commitment**

According to Encarta dictionary, “*commitment means responsibility, pledge or even obligation to do something*”. It also says *commitment is the state of being emotionally or intellectually bound to a cause or a person*”. This definition perfectly describes the marital commitment; people pledge to abide to the above when they repeat marriage vows. The marriage vows then bind them emotionally

to one other as spouses. However, if the commitment is not genuine or is not very strong, it is vulnerable and may disintegrate over time.

Samms () states that “*commitment is the most important factor in the success of any relationship*” (2005: 32). Samms further indicates that “*building a marriage is much like building a house, and the plans you follow are shaped by the vision you have in mind. The vision you construct for your marriage will shape the life you have in it*” (Ibid). For many couples, the marriage vows are just a symbolic act of ceremony, and they thus do not necessarily follow or keep the commitment made through the vows to the partner. They tend to forget that it takes commitment to nurture any relationship. With it being so easy to obtain a divorce, many couples feel that it is easier to simply end the relationship instead of trying to save their marriage.

#### **5.4. EFFECTS OF DIVORCE AMONG AFRICAN MEN**

Divorce is a painful experience that elicits different emotional responses such as depression, hopelessness, isolation, anger and anxiety. As the divorced African men feel the pain of having an emotional void in their lives, the resultant emotional turmoil may cloud them and some may even feel ashamed of themselves. Some of these emotions may be temporary, while some may last for a longer period of time.

It is important for this reason to explore more fully some of the more common emotional struggles noticed from the main participants.

#### **5.4.1. Feelings of Anger**

In the light of the voices of divorced African men described in the previous chapter, feelings of anger emerged as they felt a mixture of different emotions entered their lives. When a divorce occurs, the effect is similar to having a death in the family. So many emotions can rise to the surface, such as anger, frustration, fear, sorrow, anguish, bitterness, hatred, and regret. An individual in the divorce process may start questioning their value as a person and as a mate. They start thinking and asking questions such as "If only I had done this..." or "I should have done this", as they sometimes think that this would have helped tremendously in saving the marriage.

The truth of the matter is that anger is a fact of life. Our world is filled with violence, hatred, war, and aggression. Many theories of human development focus on the infant's struggle with anger and frustration and the primitive fantasies of aggression, guilt, and reparation that result from these feelings. In essence, people

grow up experiencing anger right from the beginning of their life, and their actions are sometimes characterized by anger carried from the past.

Some of the African men, on the other hand, tend to form friendships where they do not talk about their deep inner feelings, despite having a genuine friendship with one another. Since the majority of men are thus not able to voice out their bitterness and hurt felt during the divorce, they tend to feel a void in their lives. According to Mosher, *“men’s lack of emotional awareness is not complete; rather it is selective. Men are allowed to feel and become aware of emotions in the anger and rage part of the spectrum”* (2006: 164; Williams, 2006).

In concurring with the quotation, it is common for men to seclude themselves from their friends because they do not even know how to have fun with their friends when their minds weigh so heavily with emotional baggage related to divorce.

#### **5.4.2. Feelings of Hopelessness**

Divorce is a highly emotionally charged transition. It is a stepping stone which often leaves people with a sense of hopelessness, by virtue of the fact that the divorce occurred in the first place.

The experience of divorce is highly likely to result in a person building a wall of defense and self-protection to hide behind, as they are determined not to allow themselves to be vulnerable again. Although it is a natural self-defense reaction, it is neither healthy nor productive. Sooner or later the wall has to come down, and the higher it is, the harder it falls. One goal may be to help such individuals identify negative or distorted thinking patterns that contribute to feelings of hopelessness that accompany depression.

#### **5.4.3. The feeling of loneliness**

Research has indicated that feeling lonely during the first month was a major concern to men. However, after a period of six months, it was found that loneliness was significantly less important than it had been at the beginning of the divorce proceedings. Human (2006) found loneliness to be the most pervasive and problematic area for men who are separated (Human, 2006: 45).

Loneliness is not just a problem that affects the individual, but is in fact more widespread to our modern, urban society in general. Although there many different levels of loneliness, it still forms a part of the human experience. On the one hand, is the distressing awareness of being alone, which can be alleviated to some extent by television, magazines or the radio. On the other hand, is the sensation of

loneliness that's similar to boredom and restlessness, moving from one room to another, or trying to keep busy but knowing there is an emptiness in yourself that your activity can't fill.

In rural African communities, friendship (among women) is usually very strong and people receive many opportunities to gain a sense of strength from their friends. Nevertheless in some urban and suburban communities today, while people are physically very close to each other, emotionally they are very distant from each other. Hall writes that:

*“Loneliness is about needing company, needing to feel the presence of another human being alongside us. When this happens, we no longer feel alone. When we feel isolated, however, no amount of human company can alleviate the sensation of being alone. Isolation means feeling cut off and separated from other people, in spite of their presence”* (2008: 81).

Consequently they may inadvertently isolate themselves from others through their silence. One thing that is common to the sensations of both loneliness and isolation is that, on the whole, they are a matter of personal choice. We can choose to reach out and connect more with other people, to reduce loneliness by spending time with others face to face or online, and to reduce isolation by sharing more of our story.

In the literature review, social psychologists were noted to have expressed concern over the way men deal with emotions and resolve problems. Many studies have concluded that women have better relational skills which help them to be more successful at making and keeping friends. Women, for example, are more likely than men to express their emotions and display empathy and compassion in response to the emotions of others. Men, on the other hand, are frequently more isolated and competitive and therefore have fewer (if any) close friends (Kitson & Holms, 1992). This is similar to what some African men do when dealing with their emotions, namely:

- ❖ Showing an aversion to viewing emotions. For many African people (including the Tsonga-speaking), expressing feelings in a form of showing tears and thus is generally considered to be a taboo for males. In some cases young boys receive the cultural message that they are to be strong and stoic in whatever circumstance they are faced with. As men, they shun emotions and such an aversion makes deep relationships difficult, thus men find it difficult to make and keep friendships.
- ❖ Some men apparently have an inherent inability to accept fellowship. In fact, they find it hard to accept the fact that they even require fellowship. While

men may get together for activities such as business, sports, hunting and fishing, they rarely do so just to enjoy each other's company.

- ❖ They have inadequate role models. The male ‘macho’ image is a barrier to the formation of strong male friendships, since a mask of aggressiveness and strength keeps them from knowing themselves and connecting emotionally with others. Moreover, there is the additional barrier of male competitiveness. Men are inordinately competitive. Men feel they must excel in what they do. Yet this competitive spirit is frequently a barrier to friendship.
- ❖ Another problem is the inability to ask for help. Men rarely ask for help because they culturally perceive it to be a sign of weakness, as they simply don't want to burden their family or colleagues with their problems.

Clark-Stewart and Bailey found that “*men were better adjusted than women in the three years after divorce. They also were better off financially, had more stable and satisfying jobs, and had experienced less psychological stress and more psychological satisfaction in the previous months*” (1989: 167).

The theorist is correct in saying that men may be better off financially after divorce, but within the black African context, their psychological stress is not likely to diminish immediately following their divorce. This is partly due to the

pervasive cultural belief that they cannot share their emotions with other people in order to ease their emotions. This is in contrast to women, who typically find it easier to open-up to others, and as result they are able to adjust. This makes the process of healing for men longer than anticipated.

## **5.5. FINAL ANALYSIS OF RESILIENCE**

Resilience can be described by viewing:

- The good outcomes regardless of high-risk status,
- The ability to show competence while under stress on a consistent level, and
- The Recovery from trauma

It is essential to note that there are two types of resilience, namely internal and external resilience. The majority of the above analysis has focused on the latter, for example in the manner which the main participants were able to bounce back through the support of families and communities. The resilient people are expected to adapt successfully even though they experience factors that may be barriers to resilience. Ong et al. (2006) further state that the adaptive consequence of resilience is a function of an increase in emotional complexity while stress is

present. Moreover, high resilient divorcees showed the likelihood of controlling their positive emotional experiences to recover and bounce back from daily stress.

Research in the literature review has indicated that a man often has a harder time with resilience after divorce—at least emotionally—because he doesn't have other confidants in his life besides his wife. While women may confide in several other friends in addition to their spouse, a man often does not. A man often only has one confidant—his wife. Once she is gone, he has no one to rely on for such emotional support. Since men are so highly competitive with each other, showing vulnerability or hurt (such as during or after a divorce) doesn't come easily. This was clear in Hudson's case, where he experienced difficulty in confiding to his parents and friends about sexual problem with his wife in the house.

Some men will usually marry within two years of a divorce, while some women will often remain single indefinitely. Moreover, the individuals who appeared to be more resilient showed a higher likelihood of controlling their positive emotional experiences to recover and bounce back from daily stress. Indeed, positive emotions were found to disrupt the experience of stress and help high resilient individuals to recover more efficiently from daily stress. In this case, some studies such as Fredrickson et al (2003) and Tugade et al (2004) argue that positive emotion helps resilient people to construct psychological resources that are

necessary for coping successfully with significant catastrophe. As a result, positive emotion that was experienced by resilient people functions as a protective factor to moderate the magnitude of adversity to individuals and assist them coping in the future.

In addition to the above, a study conducted by Fredrickson, further suggests that positive emotions are active elements within resilience. By examining people's emotional responses.....suggests that positive emotions are critical elements in resilience and as a mediator that buffer people from depression after the crises (2003:pp 365-376).

Numerous positive factors that promoted resilience have been identified, namely:

- The ability to cope with stress effectively and in a healthy manner.
- Seeking help from professional counsellors.
- Holding the belief that there is something good one can do in order to manage one's feelings.
- Having social support.
- Being connected with others, such as family or friends.
- Self-disclosure of the trauma to loved ones.
- Having an identity as a survivor.

- Capacity for learning.
- Positive futuristic vision.

The most essential aspect of this is that they can learn or be developed by an individual. In Boom's view, "*these are not inherent personality traits that one is either born with or born without. All individuals have within them the capacity to develop, for instance, their sense of self-esteem, their ability to problem-solve, or their ability to dream*" (2005: 46). Boom continues to say that "*resilience is not merely a collection of characteristics or qualities...rather; resilience is reintegration with significantly improved functioning following a stressful life event or challenge*" (2005: 47).

Participants interpret the divorce as being a meaningful and empowering transition, valuing both their parents (family) and friends' contribution to their development as well as their identity formation. In essence, human beings have within them a force which drives them towards self-actualization. Richardson describes how many diverse disciplines explain this force, including quantum physics, eastern medicine, and myriad religious belief systems (both Deity and ancestral), transpersonal psychology, and finally concludes that:

*“it is clear that society, as well as the academic revolution of the spirit or soul, supports the postulate that there is a healing, driving and motivating force within every soul”* (2002: 315).

This is in agreement with Boon who states that *“resilience is a human force, something that lies within all of us”* (2005: 55). Boon continues to say that, *“resilience, then, is more than characteristics, skills, processes, or outcomes; it is a primary force that motivates us to overcome, to bounce back and to flourish”* (*Ibid*). In concurring with these two theorists, it is imperative to identify and use effectively, various elements of resilience in rebuilding one’s life aftermath of divorce. In a nutshell, an individual may identify an effective use of a strong social support network as an important resource in successfully coping with those experiences.

Although divorce may have a negative impact on children’s development as well, it may help children in single households to become more responsible than those in dual-parents households because they are often required to undertake more responsibilities such as chores. Some protective factors attributing to resilient children in single-family, for example, are adults caring for children during or after major stressors (such as divorce), or self-efficacy for motivating greater adaptation.

Finally, resilience can be viewed as the phenomenon of recovery from a prolonged or severe adversity, or from an immediate danger or stress. In this case, resilience is not related to vulnerability. People who experience acute trauma, for example, may show extreme anxiety, sleep problems, and intrusive thoughts. Over time, these symptoms decrease and recovery is likely. This realm of research shows that the supportive qualities of the family or society influence the condition of recovery.

### **5.5.1. Individuation**

Individuation is a time of anxiety and doubt, deep sadness for what has been lost, and a pervasive sense of vulnerability. In Fisher's observation, many people report feeling a loss of identity as if they are in a void, not meaningfully linked to another person and not yet comfortable with independence. There is a tendency to impulsively seek intimate relationships in order to avoid both the pain of mourning the end of the marital relationship and the anxiety of being alone (Fisher, 1974, p. 116-118). The person has not yet had sufficient experience of being alone and associating it with feelings of loneliness, abandonment and failure.

To be alone successfully involves learning to occupying one's time in a creative and fulfilling way. Loneliness is the emotional state of feeling separate, isolated and unloved. It is sometimes a reality, but can be accepted as a momentary occurrence rather than a reflection of failure and doom. A counsellor or therapist must help to provide acceptance, support and clarity, both during and after the separation, in order to fill the void until personal resources are developed. The therapist must also guide the client in understanding and accepting the complexities of their life transition, encourage decisions that are not self-defeating, and prepares the client for the next aspect of the individuation phase—identity-building.

### **5.5.2. Identity building**

Perhaps the most anxiety-arousing aspect of the individuation process is no longer understanding or recognizing one's self, the feeling of losing one's identity. The person has left a relationship and with it much of their definition of themselves. They need to perceive and interact in the world as a divorced individual rather than as half of a team or couple, and the counsellor should provide support in this endeavour, in which this new sense of self can develop. This will help as African divorce men begin to feel the essence of belonging and being accepted.

The process of identity building is analogous to a rebirth, a new lease on life. It is a time to re-evaluate roles, attitudes and priorities. It is a time of testing and of excitement about new options, as well as anxiety regarding competence and success. As the literature review indicated, there is a tendency to attribute blame on others, especially the ex-partner, for past failures as well as current difficulties.

The majority of African men thus tend to shift all blames at women, even though they contributed in failing marriage. It is essential for the counsellor to encourage the client to assume responsibility for their own life; past, present and future, so that positive decisions can be made and new ways of interacting with their world can be learned. The therapist should encourage risk-taking within the framework of appropriate boundaries, helping the client become their own judge of proper limits, roles and attitudes.

Facilitating change requires a delicate balance between support and encouragement. In chapter four of this study, participants revealed that they had received great support from different structures, in order to help them adjust well aftermath of divorce. However, it is important to note that, an overabundance of support breeds extreme dependency and inhibits risk-taking; on the other hand, too much encouragement can lead to premature risk-taking, failure and discouragement.

Support should be provided in a developmental manner, with more being provided as the individual proceeds through the various divorce phases as anxiety increases (Bohannon, 1970: 30; cf Guttman, 1999: 48; Everett, 1993: 1), so that the anxiety can be gradually reduced as the client develops personal resources and explores independent roles and new behaviours. The learning of specific skills and competencies facilitates positive change, in that the individual is more likely to receive positive feedback from others, thereby encouraging a healthy sense of self.

## **5.6. INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION**

Apart from the above, a lot of informants stated that the influence of education contributed a lot in the growth of divorce in rural African societies. These rural African societies were or are believed to have kept the traditional customs of their culture with utmost sincerity. Informants believe that the education created a situation where by the basic values of Africans are discarded to some extent. They argued that these influences have affected the institution of marriage, and hence divorce develops itself as another institution within African societies. The practice of this today however, may constitute to the violation of women's right. Waruta and Kinoti had observed that;

*“Many educated women, while they would opt for normal marriage would not want to agree to the traditional roles of a wife. Their careers and professions also tend to get priority over their domestic responsibility. These facts have definitely weakened the institution of marriage” (2005: 111).*

They continue to say that marriage has become more of a romantic adventure for two persons who ‘love’ each other. This romantic love and courtship learned through the Western education value system has become the basis of modern marriages, replacing the traditional foundation of communal customs and the moral integrity of the individuals and families entering into marriage relationship.

In most African societies, marriage was not based on the ‘possessive’ romantic ‘love’ which would have been considered an absurdity and an affront to common sense and social organization (Waruta & Kinoti, 2005, pp. 110-111). Despite all the difficulties and emotional pain divorce has on people, there are numerous methods of healing proposed by psychologists. As this is theological research, it is vital to look at ways in which can be utilized in helping people bounce back. In other words, it is a search for a theology of resilience.

## 5.7. THEOLOGY OF FORGIVENESS AS A WAY OF COPING WITH DIVORCE

Many divorced individuals experience negative feelings toward their ex-spouse long after the divorce has been finalized. Even though some are resilient, they still do not let go of resentment towards their ex-spouse easily. Theology of forgiveness in this regard serves as a strategy for coping with divorce. It involves letting go of negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours in response to wrongdoing. According to Müller-Fahrenholz, *“in the bible forgiveness is of a paramount important”* (1997: 2) in the wholeness of one’s heart.

In accords with the theorist, forgiveness is imperative in unleashing anger and restoring wholeness in a person’s heart. It is crucial in this regard to clarify the notion of forgiveness which is often confused with reconciliation. The term *“‘forgiveness’ in Greek is ‘aphesis’, meaning letting go of negative thoughts, bitterness and heavy feelings in response to animosity”* (Müller-Fahrenholz, 1997, 4). In other words, letting go means releasing feelings of resentment, pain, and anger that may have been in the forefront during divorce process. In contrast, *“the Latin root ‘concilium’(conciliation) suggests a deliberative process in which the conflicting partners meet each other in council to work their differing views and to*

*arrive at the same common agreement”* (p. 3). *“Reconciliation is restoring trust in a relationship in which trust has been damaged”* (Worthington, 2003: 170).

Despite the equation in some religious contexts (such as Christianity) of reconciliation and forgiveness, forgiveness is under the control of the person who has been offended and may take place without the offender’s knowledge or interaction. Forgiveness may or may not lead to the restoration of a relationship as the offender needs to change his or her behaviour and show remorse for what has happened (Freeman, 2000: 88).

In this regard, the essence of this theology of forgiveness must aim at the humanness of humanity. Thus from a religious point of view, there are various rationales for forgiveness: to imitate God, to fulfil one’s religious duty, to seek God’s forgiveness, to follow the path of righteousness, and to repair relationships (Ransley & Spy, 2004: 15). Forgiveness is also one of the ways in which people can deal with the events that wound the souls. It must therefore, be incorporated in the mode of pastoral counselling. This will help to make people let go of their resentment towards their perpetrators.

According to Felt *“forgiveness is the key to truly letting go of the past and moving into a successful and joyous future”* (2008: 148). Felt continues to say that *“any lingering resentment, anger, guilt or sadness creates an energy drain. The negative*

*energy wasted here robs the future of its fullness” (Ibid).* In concurring with Felt, one’s ability to recover during the aftermath of a divorce hinges primarily on their ability to forgive. This creates a flourishing space and opening for the future. The Bible indicates that forgiveness of guilt and healing of suffering are inseparably bound together, as the process that heals the wound. Moreover, it gives a genuine process of encounter, of healing and of the releasing of new options for the future.

Jesus, through his sacrificial death, became our example of how to lay aside our rights when we have been offended. He did no wrong, but He laid aside his rights to retaliation or to justice (Mt 26:42; Lk 22:42). On the cross, he forgave from his heart (Lk 23:34). If we take Jesus as our example, we will work for justice, as Jesus did during his lifetime. It is a great lesson that, when we are wounded, we too must lay aside our right for justice and, instead, forgives as Jesus did.

Jesus was a model to both modes of virtue: those who favour warmth-based and conscientiousness-based virtues. Definitions of forgiveness range from simple dictionaries to complex ones involving psychological processes that attempt to break it up into empirical constructs. The differences in definitions of forgiveness have created many misunderstandings among mental health professionals who are either opposed to or in favour of forgiveness-based interventions (see Reed, Burkett & Garzon, 2001: 4).

“*Forgiveness also relates to improved mental health, such as reduced anxiety, reduced anger, reduced depression, reduced grief, increased hopefulness, and increased well-being*” (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, 2004: 33). Furthermore, many researchers have found that forgiveness of one’s ex-spouse is negatively correlated with anxiety and positively correlated with well-being (Ashleman, 1997; Enright, 2001). Interestingly, some divorced individuals attempt to forgive by letting go of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward their ex-spouse, while others appear to seek to develop a positive perspective toward their ex-spouse actively.

Stahl argues that “*forgiveness is an important virtue that allows for the healthier living*” (2007: 5). In concurring with Stahl, there is evidence that forgiveness relates to an improved state of physical health. For example, Witvliet, Ludwig, and Vander Lann (2001) found that unforgiving thoughts can lead to more physiological stress than forgiving thoughts do. The researcher believes that forgiving one’s ex-spouse is essential for emotional healing to occur. Forgiveness is a way of healing and easing one’s heart that does not depend upon forgetting the hurt and pain. It is, not normal that an older person may completely forget a traumatic event. Even though this part deals with forgiveness, it is still relevant to dwell a bit on the concept of ‘forgetting’.

The notion ‘forgetting’ cannot be understood in a vacuum, and perhaps the starting point of this understanding could begin with questioning whether people forget traumatic events. The answer to this question will depend on what we exactly mean by ‘forget’. Someone with a painful memory might avoid thinking or talking about it and opt to say, “I don’t remember”. This is not to say that such a person does not remember, but rather that this is mechanism for them avoiding thinking about or discussing their pain. It is never easy to forget a horrible experience one has gone through in life.

According to James Kalat, “*memory for traumatic experience depends on someone’s age at the time of the event, its severity, and the reaction of other family members*” (2008: 271). In agreement with the theorist here, a child who is 2-year old may not remember any traumatic event that one’s conspired. But a 12-year-old child may recall everything that had happened.

It is important to note that memories are a cluster of mental movies. As human beings, there are times where we flash back to painful events and in some cases, we may reflect more upon those events which have troubled our emotions. People’s history and their past are stored and organized in their brains. Actions that we have performed and events that affected us were imprinted and encoded inside

our brains. It is therefore difficult to speak about the concept of “forget” especially to those who have gone through the turmoil of divorce.

Divorce is like a painful wound which later becomes a scar. While a wound is only painful for certain period of time, a scar remains visible forever, albeit without pain. So it always reminds one in one way or another that one has experienced a painful event. Though forgiveness plays a pivotal role in releasing anger and resentment, theology of hope professes that hoping for the future is stronger than anything on earth.

## **5.8. THEOLOGY OF HOPE**

According to Stephenson & McDonald “*the only way to do theology is to offer a theology of hope in which the focus is on justice, equality and the defeat of oppression*” (2010: 85). Given the biblical emphasis on hope, this method for creating a theology based on hope is compelling. The biblical account provides further evidence for the notion that hope is an essential part of human life. Prov 13: 12 states, hope prevents the heart from being sick, echoing the idea that hope

enables us to avoid the possibility of destructive despair. God is defined as the source of our hope (*Ibid*).

The need to cope with suffering and trauma is inevitably essential in the theology of pastoral care. In Moltmann's view "*hope brings all things into the light of the promises of God. Does this hope cheat man of the happiness of the present? How could it do so! For it is itself the happiness of the present. It pronounces the poor blessed, receives the weary and heavy laden, the humbled and wronged, the hungry and the dying, because it perceives the Parousia of the kingdom for them*" (2002: 17). Hope is a mechanism that enables happiness and good adjustment with the idea of receiving something good soon.

God is found among the powerless and those who are suffering including divorced Africans. His suffering is the ground of hope for those who are without hope. There is no glorification of suffering as an end in itself. God suffers with us to set us free. More than anything else people need hope for the future. Jimmy Long cites Moltmann who declares that "*living without hope is no longer living*" (Long, 2004: 122). In other words, one ought to live with hope for the future no matter what the circumstances might occur.

## 5.9. SHEPHERDING: THE ROLE OF PASTORS IN THE CONGREGATION

According to Patton John, “*the pastoral attitude, perspective, or way of looking at things has most often been interpreted through the use of the biblical image of the shepherd. The shepherd is the one who cares for all, but who is particularly concerned for those who are lost or separated from the whole community to which care is extended*” (2005: 77). Patton goes on to say that, “*the shepherding perspective is relational in that it is directed toward a particular person or persons, and its basic content is a tender, solicitous concern for those whom it is directed*” (2005: 77).

Gerkin’s model has a shepherding motif which has originated as a metaphor for the role of the king during the monarchical periods of Israelite history. It was first appropriated within the religious life of Israel as a metaphor with which to speak of the care of Yahweh for Yahweh’s people.

This Shepherding motif is captured in the imagery of Psalms 23 where the Lord God is depicted as the good shepherd who leads the people in paths of righteousness, restores the souls of the people, and walks with the people among their enemies and even into the valley of the shadow of death. From this motif one can say that shepherding is a biblical model of pastoral care which aims at leading, nurturing, healing and protecting people. As the divorced African men have

experienced lot of turmoil in their lives during the divorce process, the pastor must be able to lead as a shepherd and do all the pastoral abilities in order to bring about healing and restoration.

In some cases, pastors as shepherd may have to introduce life orientation classes within their congregation, in order to teach about how to prevent and handle marital problems. The researcher believes that the proper nurturing of the couple in the life of the congregation before and during marriage is a part of supporting biblical faithfulness in marriage. Furthermore, Gerkin's model of shepherding connects with the ministry of Jesus Christ which was characterized by compassion.

Repeatedly Jesus Christ embodied compassion in the face of ignorance, hunger, sickness, and even death. He was gripped by compassion when he saw the aimlessness of the common people as "sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34), the sick and the blind among the multitudes (Matthew 14:14; 20:34), and the sorrow of those who had lost the loved ones (Luke 7:13; John 11:35). Jesus Christ's compassion also expressed itself in practical ministry.

Out of compassion, he raised the dead (John 11; Luke 7:14), taught the multitudes (Mark 6:34), and healed the sick (Matthew 14:14; 4:23; 9:35; 19:2). In ministering to the needy, Jesus Christ was not afraid to make physical contact. He took the hands of the sick (Mark 1:31; Matthew 9:29) and the demon-possessed (Mark

9:27). His fingers touched and healed blind eyes (Matthew 20:34), deaf ears (Mark 7:33) and silent tongues (Matthew 7:33). Most astonishing of all Jesus touched the lepers-the outcasts of his day (Matthew 8:3; Luke 5:12-13). In assuming the role of Christ, pastors must actively encourage marriages to achieve God's purposes.

Pastors must help spouses work through the redemptive mess and find grace for each other through shepherding. Those in deep distress need their compassion and support more than judgment. When a marriage fails, it is cause for repentance and mourning. In the opinion of the researcher, the pastoral ability is to deal with and carry out the attitude of genuine caring, and this involves action and feelings, doing something and thinking something towards people of God. The researcher believes that, the term 'pastoral' is associated with the ability to do something such as listening, remembering a person's narration, and respond empathically to such their situation.

The shepherd model of pastoral care also accentuates the role of a pastor in addressing the problem experienced by African people both in the church and broader society, including that of marriage and divorce. Gerkin's model recognizes that human experience is essential in that it helps the pastoral caregiver to have as his starting point human experience (1987: 13). In other words, it is a caring

method that begins where people are emotionally. It responds to human experiences such as divorce in this way.

According to Townsend, “*pastoral care incarnates God’s loving initiative toward humans in the diversity of their life circumstances*” (2000: 148). It is God’s habit to meet people where they live and intervene in the circumstances of their lives. It meets people at their unique point of need. Traditionally, pastoral care has been guided by a metaphor of a shepherd who moves away from the comfort of the familiar and into the unknown to respond to another’s distress without guarantee of certain outcome.

*“All forms of therapeutic practice, whether psychiatry, social work, counselling or pastoral care, seek to alleviate human suffering and deprivation and seek to promote human well-being”* (Lynch, 2002, p. 9).

Lynch continues to say that “*therapeutic practices are ideas about what constitute human suffering and well being, and these ideas are essentially value-statements about what is important about life*” (Ibid). Pastoral practitioners working in the context of African culture will be likely to witness the involvement in the extended family and the wider community as an integral part of an individual’s well-being. This is another essential sign that shepherding is not only carried out by pastors alone, but by the larger number of individuals. It is therefore the responsibility of a

pastor, to educate members of their congregation to care for one another as an integral part of ministry of God.

According to Waruta & Kinoti *“the human being is not a fragmentation but a complete entity, needing healing for his or her whole being; spiritually, socially, psychologically and in relationship with his or her environment”* (2005: 78). In harmonizing with the theorist, the divorced African men stand in need of healing in order to redirect their life aftermath of divorce. Mwaura goes on to say that:

*“In traditional African society health is conceived as more than physical well-being. It is a state that entails mental, physical, spiritual social and environmental (cosmic) harmony. Having health evokes equilibrium in all this dimensions. It is associated with all that is positively valued in life. It is also a sign of a correct relationship between people and their environment, with one another and with the supernatural world. Health is understood more in a social than in a biological sense”* (Ibid).

Pastoral care has the potential to bring healing and hope to the divorced through pastors and shepherds. Pastoral care and counselling is historically concerned with healing the broken and liberating people of God to develop self-esteem. An

important feature of the hermeneutical model of Gerkin is the “*recognition of the care not only of the individuals but of the whole family*” (1987:118). Gerkin’s methodology connotes the African belief of uniting families in order to cement a good relationship.

In this regard, the inclusive shepherding model of Gerkin has a lot in common with the African view, which is also inclusive. The focus of this study is on the divorced African men and their pastoral care needs. To emphasize the question of needs, Clinebell says that “*pastoral care is a response to the need that everyone has for warmth, nurture, support and caring*” (1984: 46).

On the other hand, Hulme is in support of this when he writes:

*“Pastoral care is a supportive ministry to people and those to them who are experiencing the familiar trials that characterize life in this world. Such as illness, surgery, incapacitation, death and bereavement”* (1981: 9).

This is heightened during times of personal stress and social chaos, and in the researcher’s opinion, the divorced Africa men are no exceptions to the needs described above. On the other hand, Jesus understood himself to be a shepherd.

Human ‘sheep’ were the reason for his coming. “I have come that they (members of the flock) might have life and have it to the fullest” (John 10:10). If human sheep are to experience the abundant life Jesus promised, those who lead them must know that they themselves have been ‘called’ to the vocation of shepherd.

As shepherding is everyone’s responsibility, African people have their ways of guiding their children and community at large as a way of pasturing. This type of shepherding according to African people was the most pivotal one in understanding the roles and responsibilities of both women and men in families and societies.

### **5.9.1. Pastoral care in pre-marital counselling**

Pastors may pursue continuing educating about pre-marital and marital counselling within their congregation as well as the community at large. This can encourage and nurture marriages, while helping to prevent divorces from occurring.

- The pastoral mission in marriage to African people should aim at playing a constructive role in building up individual marriages, and in so doing help with the realization and fulfilment of human potentialities.

- The pastor has to make it their task to assist members of the congregation in understanding their calling and in equipping themselves to enter into it faithfully. The pastor will do this through a wide variety of activities such as through his preaching from the pulpit, in the teaching of the catechism, in his special classes for parents, in his own relationship with the children and young people of the congregation, in vocational groups, and in other groups organized to meet particular needs of the larger community.
- The churches, then, have a responsibility to teach its entire people a strongly theological view of marriage as rooted in the covenant of God with his people and of the Christian family as a community of love and a fellowship of faith.
- The child's preparation for life and for marriage will not begin with verbal admonitions, but will rather stem from the love of God from the experience of living in a community of love and grace from the moment of birth. Assisting parents in receiving the grace of God so that their household may become a community of grace is the church's first task in the pastoral care of the child.

## 5.10. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING METHOD

The traditional African family counsels provide their child responsibility and rules on how to live in marriage territory. And that the so-called divorce is not welcomed to the society for it will serve as a disgrace. The family, as an institution within the community, gives instructions on marriage and family life. These marriage boundaries are a reminder to the new couple that they are about to enter an institution that is recognized in the community and approved by their relatives. Dishonouring such an institution brings shame to both the family and community.

The marital boundaries, which might also be called institutional boundaries, urge the couple to behave and act appropriately within the marriage framework. These traditional cultural values have been broken-down by the growing secularization among the Tsonga-speaking tribes especially in the rural areas. The effects of modern change have affected a large number of African people as well as their customs.

One might argue that education had a greater influence on African people. In terms of knowledge, education has played a pivotal role in enlightening them to ensure that some of the cultural practices which were abusive to women (see chapter four) are largely ignored today. However, in terms of understanding the concept and

values of African, education may cause others to think of culture as something related to heathenness.

### 5.11. A CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN PASTORAL CARE

As is well known, missionaries often held negative attitudes towards African traditions. As a result, when missionaries established Christian marriage, they generally did not consider traditional resources for forming a family. *“Some missionaries looked on Africans as, savage, uncivilized, non-religious, and pagan people of a dark continent. Because of these negative attitudes towards Africans, premarital counselling served only to give instruction and information about Christian marriage”* (Waruta & Kinoti 2005: 112, see Shorter, 1973).

Its focus was narrow, limited to instruction against the African tradition of polygamy and offering monogamous marriage as the only system acceptable in the Christian churches. As a result, the premarital counselling instituted not only by missionaries but by some theologians, was incomplete. In some cases it failed to include other important marriage issues, such as marital relationships between the spouses and matters related to family boundaries. Pastoral care givers today need to put an eye on these matters, teaching them in different congregations.

Now it is time, in the researcher's opinion, to include the traditional African family pattern in the ministry of premarital counselling. This work should provide a place for the pastor as a marriage counsellor to educate young people about family boundaries. Where does the African church stand today in family counselling? Some may respond that the church is at a crossroads and does not know which road to follow.

The problem the researcher has noted is that family counselling is being conducted using foreign methods, away from the African methodologies. We are using Western theories and resources in family counselling, attempting to counsel black African families with a system geared towards more Western ways of thinking. Although Gerkin has enlightened himself with African ways of doing pastoral care by introducing shepherding, a lot still needs to be incorporated.

The church in Africa this needs its own family counselling model in order for people to derive the important benefits of family counselling. An African family counselling model cannot be drawn from nothing. It cannot be invented from intellectual theory. Pure African family counselling should be rooted in traditional

African family life care. The true African soul can be found in traditional African concepts of family.

## **5.12. CONCLUSIONS**

The separated and divorced will always be part of the church. They will be a fast growing part of the church. In fact, most of the church families have been touched by divorce in one way or another, whether it is through direct family split or a child of a member who seeks a divorce. The church has the job of recognizing these people, ministering to them, and encouraging others to fellowship with them. The following chapter provides a summary of the research by pointing out how the research preceded its findings and provides recommendations for further studies.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EVALUATIONS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this final chapter is to present an overview of the study, and recommendations for further studies. This research project had explored a traditional mechanism used by divorced men within the African context in bouncing back after divorce. The methodology used was both quantitative and qualitative in orientation and involved in-depth interviews with participants.

#### **6.2. EVALUATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The foremost objective of the study was to explore an African mode of resilience in men during and after divorce processes. It further dealt with whether theology has a mode of resilience or not. The phenomenon of divorce has been explained from sociological, psychological and biblical point of view. The four participants in this study had their own very subjective experience of separation and divorce. It had appeared that social support, spirituality, families (relatives and parents) and

new environment served as aspects of resilience which enabled them to navigate their journey of reintegrations after their separation and divorce.

### **6.3. PARTICIPANTS**

In the research proposal, the researcher stated that he aimed to interview five participants who had been through a divorce. However, only four participants were interviewed. These participants were aged between 30 and 55, and were from different places in Limpopo Province, specifically from the Mhinga, Makuleke, Kurulen, N’wamitwa and Elim. Community members who witnessed these men’s struggles in terms of adjusting during divorce were also interviewed. The research question explored the participants’ different experiences of divorce, and focused specifically on their unique points of view, ideas, motives, beliefs and feelings on the phenomenon of divorce. They were thus allowed to tell their stories in their own way, since they were viewed as experts in their own journey and experiences. In this regard, the aim was to remain congruent with each participant’s context and continually refer to the text of each written story whilst making interpretations. The interpretations have dealt with individual themes and through the processes of the use of language, personal identities and exchange of dialogue, new meanings were created with the participants. These were recorded in chapters four and five.

Participants were selected objectively, and could not be friends or acquaintances of the researcher, in order to ensure that the researcher's objectivity could be retained (Walker, 1985: 30). The criteria for a safe and representative sample were thoughtfully determined in such a way to inclusively represent the spectrum of men participating in the research project. Letters were sent to the purposively selected divorced men and other experts in African traditional affairs, outlining the study and asking permission to contact them (see Appendix A). The letters further explained the nature of the study and provided an indication of how long the interviews would take. Following the invitation, co-researchers were invited to participate in the study and were again given a verbal and written explanation of the nature of project.

#### **6.4. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

The study followed quantitative and qualitative which were in-depth in orientation with participants. The study also made use of quantitative methodologies in order to obtain a broader view of men's coping mechanisms during divorce. The use of statistics allowed the research to move beyond the in-depth studies and demonstrate how divorce impacts men in South Africa. One-on-one interview method was followed in collecting data from the ground. For those who were

interviewed in Xitsonga, their answers were then translated into English. The research questions were designed to study the participants' experience from their point of view and immersed in from their ideas, motives, beliefs and feelings. During the time of interview, the researcher ensured that there were no distractions by anybody during the process of interview. Based on the questions raised in the interview guide, the participants' answers were classified and discussed extensively in chapter four and five. They were also analyzed and the concepts which were frequently observed from all participants were categorized and summarized in different sub-headings.

## **6.5. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

In chapter two, the theoretical bases and literature review on the concept of divorce were dealt with from both a biblical and a psychological point of view. It also revealed the divine standpoint in terms of divorce and the psychological consequences for everyone involved. The aim was to arrive at a holistic understanding of all the stages and procedures involved in divorce. Chapter three focused on the research method and design utilized for this study, and outlines the epistemological basis, sample, and data collection and analysis methods. Finally,

the chapter touched on some ethical considerations that the researcher took into account when devising this study.

Chapter four explored the reality of divorce with four main participants and other traditional old men and women within the selected communities of the Vatsonga traditional royal councils. It also investigated the transitional challenges these men had faced in the aftermath of divorce.

Chapter five dealt with the data analysis and hermeneutic of pastoral care. It further reflected upon the themes which were gathered from co-researchers (participants) through the process of narration.

## **6.6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **6.6.1. Traditional way of displaying resilience**

Due to the traditional believe system which were indoctrinated to male children, there was no proper mechanism for resilience in men after divorce, with the following reasons:

- Men were never divorced or left by their spouse due to infertility. If it happened that such a divorce against a husband occurs, he would then be

required to marry another wife immediately. The reason underpinning this was the belief that a man is never destined to be alone, and thus, a man was regarded as a genuine man when married. There was also the sense that a man's virility was measured in part by the number of children he had produced. African people take into cognizance the African proverb that says "a man without a wife is like a flower without a vase".

- African men were considered strong in all spheres of life. In the African traditional societies, it was difficult to see the tears of man when overwhelmed by emotional circumstances, as he would be unable to express them.
- African men were required to deal with emotional difficulties in silence. They were instructed to be 'man enough' in dealing with disturbing matters. This played a role in preventing the formation of a mechanism to help African men bounce back after experiencing their emotional trials.

These cultural standards may have been acceptable by then. Today it however becomes difficult for men to cry out when facing emotional and disturbing circumstances. This is contrary to our understanding that, crying might serve as a remedy to one's heart in reducing the level of depression after a heavy turmoil. In other words, this standard was another way of creating pileup of depressions,

anger, unresolved issues amongst the Vatsonga people although they were not aware of both the long term and short term effects. Moreover, high resilient people are usually and more likely to notice positive meanings within the problems they faced.

### **6.6.2. Theology of resilience**

Resilience as one of the most pivotal key concept in this research was proven to be a psychological one. As this research project is underdone from a theological perspective, the researcher in devoured to seek out a theological mechanism which can be linked and used a way of resilience (bouncing back) in counselling.

The researcher has come to conclude that, people's ability to bounce back aftermath of divorce depend mostly on their ability to forgive. This creates a flourishing space and opening for the future. The researcher however kept in mind that forgiveness is not reconciliation, but rather a way of easing oneself.

Forgiveness is also one of the ways that creatures can deal with those events that wounds their souls as it is a religious thing. It must therefore, be incorporated in the mode of pastoral counselling in order to for the help seekers to gain positive

resilience. This will help to make people let go of their resentment towards their perpetrators.

## **6.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- Firstly, the choice of the study is derived from qualitative and social constructionist principles. Due to the extensive time and labour intensive nature of the study only four participants were interviewed. This small sample only represents a small proportion of divorced couples and therefore cannot be generalized to a larger population of divorced African men. Although the researcher knew that interviewing more divorced men would have elicited more information and assumptions about the research topic, the aim was only on the selected participants in the context of the Vatsonga speaking tribes.
- Secondly, the researcher has however, omitted important information regarding the culture due to its sensitivity and respect for it. These are some of the rituals which African people do and it concerns lots of African charms and sexual connotations. I therefore acknowledge that my interpretation of

data were likely to be coloured by my own perceptions and values as I share some commonalities with this culture of Vatsonga people.

- Thirdly, I acknowledge that the manner in which I elicited themes from each participant's narrations was coloured by the lens through which I was looking at the particular point in time. I therefore note that another researcher may highlight different themes. A more empirical or qualitative vice in the field of psychology research could therefore criticize this study, as its outcomes cannot be generalized to a larger population.

## **6.8. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- As the study focused entirely on the traditional African male's perspective of resilience after divorce, the researcher proposes that a cultural female perspective be investigated in order to get more insight and their feeling as this research did not say anything about women. This would help in determining the variations of resilience between male and female Africans.
- As the research is done from the perspective of the Vatsonga cultures, it would be interesting to have other African cultural way of dealing with resilience after divorce in men. This would help when comparing the modes

in order for others to construct therapy that would help traditional African people. Moreover, divorced men from different cultures could be compared to see whether there is a prevalence of emotional vulnerability and loneliness in divorce in their respective cultures.

- It would be interesting and valuable to undertake a study similar to this one that includes the perceptions of children concerning the impact of divorce on themselves and the whole family as well. This would help in acquiring a holistic understanding from all family members involved with respect to the impact of divorce.

## **6.9. CONCLUSION**

Divorce is a fact of life in modern society. It therefore amount a major change in the life course of all family structures requiring all source of help in order to bounce back. As a way of concluding the research project, divorce is not just a psychological concept but a biblical one as well. A thorough investigation of the biblical stand on marriage and the divine disapproval of divorce were made and have been summarised. The prevalent universality of marriage seems to confirm the biblical traditional marriage as the divine way of recreating humanity. Furthermore, the bible in both the Old and New Testaments view divorce as

contrary to the divine intent. It was noted that Deut 24 does not command or encourage divorce; rather, it simply regulates divorce since it was already happening. After a thorough exegesis of the passage and survey of the relevant interpretations in (Matthews), it is clear that Jesus forbade divorce for any reason except adultery. Divorce is unthinkable because it destroys the intended order of creation and God's creative act in bringing a man and a woman together in accordance with his order. God is the author of marriage; therefore, he inscribed the call to marriage in our very being by creating us as male and female. Resilience as one of the most pivotal key concept in this research was proven to be a psychological one. As this research project is underdone from a theological perspective, the researcher in devoured to seek out a theological mechanism which can be linked and used a way of resilience (bouncing back) in counselling. The researcher has come to conclude that, people's ability to bounce back aftermath of divorce depend mostly on their ability to forgive. This creates a flourishing space and opening for the future. The researcher however kept in mind that forgiveness is not reconciliation, but rather a way of easing oneself. Forgiveness is also one of the ways that creatures can deal with those events that wounds their souls as it is a religious thing. It must therefore, be incorporated in the mode of pastoral counselling in order to for the help seekers to gain positive resilience. This will help to make people let go of their resentment towards their perpetrators.

## Appendix A

P.O.BOX 80  
KANYAMAZANE  
1214

Dear Sir/ Madam/ Dr/ Prof.....

### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A PHD DEGREE (DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY)**

Greetings

With regard to the above matter, you are earnestly requested to participate in a research project that is undertaken as a requirement for PhD degree with the University of Pretoria.

The dissertation title is: **factors influencing resilience in men after divorce; exploring pastoral method of care to an African situation.**

It aims at exploring African way of dealing with resilience in men after divorce. The objective of the study is to interview divorced men and those with expert knowledge in African heritage in order to acquire diverse insights on the phenomenon.

**The study has two phases, namely:**

1. Review of Literature and
2. Empirical Research done by way of In-depth Interviews.

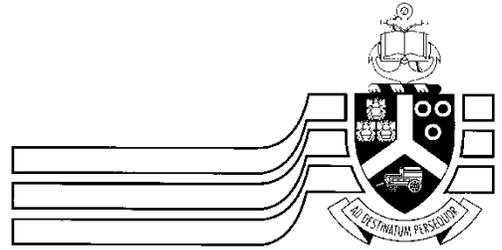
It is with the latter part (phase) of the study that your participation is requested. This will involve an In-depth interview with you.

The duration of the interview is estimated to be between 45 to 60 minutes. You are assured that all your personal experience or inputs obtained will be treated with utmost care to maintain confidentiality. In the final report your name will not be divulged to ensure anonymity. You are also assured that efforts will be taken to ensure that all ethical obligations and consideration will be adhered to. Participation in this research is voluntary. Should you in due course decide to withdraw your participation at anytime, you are free to do so.

Kind regards

Mr Baloyi G. T.

## Appendix B



University of Pretoria

Faculty of Theology

Lynnwood road

Hatfield

0083

**Researcher's name:** Baloyi GT

**Contact details:** 078 104 6214/ 013 794 2059

**Student number:** 23203278

**Title of the study:** Factors influencing resilience in men after divorce: Exploring pastoral

Method of care to an African situation.

This serves to confirm that I..... agreed to be interviewed by the researcher for the purpose of the study he is conducting. The purpose of the study was explained to me thoroughly. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and I am assured anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher will use fictitious name when referring to me and the information is treated as confidential.

Signed at ..... On this ..... day of ..... 2010

Participant's signature: .....

Researcher's signature: .....

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire

Name of participant (fictitious name preferred)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Standard of Education \_\_\_\_\_ Tertiary Education

\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of the questionnaire:** to get participants' emotional journey in their own words.

1. Are you a religious person, who practice your faith daily?

Very religious.....religious.....not religious.....

2. Would you please give a brief background of your self?
3. What was the journey of your marriage like?
4. Share with us, your understanding of marriage based on your religion.
5. Share with me how you felt during the process of separation or divorce?
6. What mode of resilience did you receive in bouncing back positively?
7. How would you define divorce in your own words as an African man?

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