

**A PASTORAL NARRATIVE APPROACH TO BLACK ADOLESCENTS**

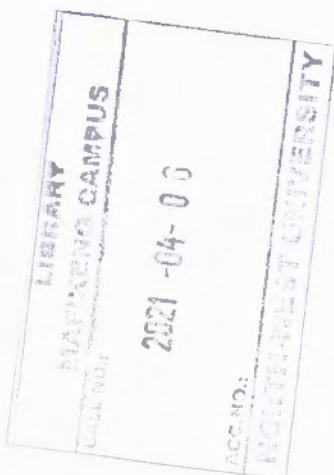
**AFFECTED BY THE DIVORCE OF PARENTS**

**BY**

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**Declaration**

I, L.S. THWANE declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work and that it was not previously submitted at another institution.

Student:.....

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this research is on the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents. Statistics have shown that there is currently a noticeable rise in the number of black families affected by divorce. This study departs from the premise that the trauma caused by divorce is influenced by aspects such as culture and the developmental stage of those affected. It is believed that the black adolescent is highly vulnerable due to his/ her cultural background and the fact that adolescence represents a transitional developmental stage. Due to the African worldview and cultural value system the adolescent's experiences most probably differ from how Western adolescents perceive crises and challenges.

Therapeutic intervention can take on different forms like psychology and pastoral counselling. This study deems pastoral counselling a suitable intervention for adolescents as the church is present in most communities, making it accessible for most people. Pastoral intervention in this study is approached from a narrative perspective as it takes into consideration the personal narratives of counselees. It is expected that the affected adolescent may be preoccupied with the problem saturated narrative created by parental divorce. As adolescents are focused on their personal needs and identity formation, the narrative has much potential for facilitating alternative stories in the light of God's grand narrative of His covenant love. As current pastoral literature does not sufficiently reflect on the pastorate cognisant of the African worldview and culture, this study wants to integrate a pastoral and narrative approach when guiding the black adolescent affected by challenges created by parental divorce.

In addressing this problem the study attempted to accomplish the following objectives:

- To discuss marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.
- To investigate the institution of marriage and the phenomenon of divorce and its effects on black South Africans.
- To discuss the developmental stages of adolescence from developmental theory and to identify challenges for the black adolescent.
- To provide a general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life.

- To describe a pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents
- To identify markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents.

As the study's main aim was to contribute to the field of practical theology and pastoral care, the interpretive model of Osmer (2008) was applied in a literature based approach. Another important aim was to contribute to the growing corpus of literature on contextualised pastoral care which is much needed within the African context. In this way it hopes to make a contribution to a pastoral approach which is cognisant of the African worldview and culture while at the same time is congruent with the Bible as Word of God.

**Key terms:**

**DIVORCE**

**BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS**

**ADOLESCENTS**

**PASTORAL COUNSELLING**

**NARRATIVE THERAPY**

**PASTORAL NARRATIVE COUNSELLING**

## **Chapter 1**

### **1. Introduction**

Divorce is a global reality impacting negatively on the affected couples and their children. For some time, South Africa has had one of the highest divorce rates in the world. Of significance for this study is that there has been a substantial growth in the number of divorces occurring in black families. According to Te Vaarwerk (2009:45) there has been an 18% decrease in the number of black families where both parents live with their children since 1970 compared to the 6% decrease during the same period amongst whites. The statistics of children who are affected by the divorce of parents are as follows: 37.4% amongst Blacks, 20.2% amongst Coloureds, 27.1% amongst Whites, 15.3% from Indians and Asians. According to the Department of Justice, the divorce rate in South Africa has escalated with 28% from 39573 to 50517 (2013) cases with the biggest statistical growth amongst black South Africans. A total of 18571 children under 18 were affected by divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2013:7).

From this it becomes apparent that black children are becoming a cause for concern in terms of support and counselling in the wake of their parents' divorce. Lauer & Lauer (2000:426) state that children of all ages present with a variety of needs during the occurrence of divorce in their families. These may include anxiety, depression and withdrawal from significant others (Lauer & Lauer, 2000:426). They also have an increased risk of behavioural problems like bed wetting, aggression, delinquency and eating disorders (Barnes & Dowling, 1999:38; Matsafu, 2005:41). It eventually also influences the way in which children view the world which leads to insecure attachments (Hodges, 1991:9).

Although it can be accepted that children of all age groups are affected negatively by the divorce of parents, it is also suspected that vulnerable age groups can suffer even more. One of these age groups most certainly are adolescents. Generally speaking, adolescence presents a challenging period. During this time physical, social, and psychological changes take place within children's lives. During this phase children find themselves on the border of adulthood and therefore this period is characterised by the search for and consolidation of identity (Mwamwenda, 1989:40). Rice (1996:3) suggests that adolescence is a bridge between childhood and adulthood over which individuals must pass before they take their places as adults in society. Due to the general

vulnerability of this age group the instability caused by the divorce of parents tends to raise the risk of harmful behaviour like drug and alcohol abuse, pre-marital sexual activity, poor academic performance and higher rates of drop out from school (Matsafu, 2005:41).

The negative effects of divorce on children in the adolescent phase of development can be further influenced by their social and cultural backgrounds. According to Smith and Stone (2001:16), South African adolescents face significantly greater challenges than their counterparts in countries where society is more stable. These social challenges include poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and violent crimes. Although these may affect adolescents across racial boundaries in South Africa, these challenges are more prevalent amongst black communities of which at least 40% live in abject poverty. In cases where a poor family is split up by divorce, the children are likely to suffer even more as the father may not maintain children under the custodianship of the mother this makes them even more vulnerable.

Cultural prescripts in terms of family life and the unity thereof can further complicate the lives of adolescents during the divorce of parents. In African culture, family is defined differently from the way the West defines it. The nucleus African family is linked to the broader community. The concept of *Ubuntu* comes to play here. This concept is an aspect of African hospitality it embodies the positive thinking of the Africans. *Ubuntu* recognises that there is diversity of African culture but it also indicates commonalities found among them in areas like value systems, beliefs, practices which largely reflect the African world view. The common principle of this world view is *Ubuntu/botho* or humanism. The word *Ubuntu* is found in all African communities even though not under the same name. *Ubuntu* is a set of ideals which guides and directs the patterns of life amongst Africans. It is a notion of a convergent set of desired goals which is entertained by most Africans and towards which activities are directed (Broodryk, 1997:22). *Ubuntu* is characterised by values such as caring, sharing, companion and communalism (Khoza, 2005:269).

The concept of family in the African concept of *Ubuntu* refers to anyone with whom blood ties are shared, whether close or distant, and is thus regarded as part of one's family (Sougalo, 2010:1204). A family can thus refer to siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins and nephews. There is a very strong emotional attachment to this extended family irrespective of the influences of urbanisation or the Western culture. This attachment influences most of the African choices like

marriage and religious affiliation (Soungalo, 2010: 1204). When divorce takes place in a family it affects these emotionally attached individuals as well. An adolescent who is caught in the middle of parental divorce is now left in the lurch because they remain attached to this broader family. All of these challenges highlight the need of support and guidance towards the black adolescent affected by the divorce of parents.

As this study aims to contribute to the field of Practical Theology and pastoral counselling, intervention by means of pastoral counselling is envisaged. There is good reason to believe that pastoral counselling can make a positive contribution to the counselling of adolescents affected by divorce as pastoral counselling is engaged in the understanding of God in order to convey God's comfort and to instil meaning and hope in the lives of people. Pastoral counselling seeks for signals of transcendence within our daily experiences through theological reflection on the meaning of various experiences of faith and the interpretation of different perceptions of God in connection with life threatening issues (Louw, 2011:4). From the above statement pastoral counselling can be seen as a means of bringing hope to the lives of affected adolescents and helping them manage the consequences of their parents' divorce in their own lives. Pastoral work should be guided by the perspectives rooted in the gospel of salvation. Pastoral counselling as a sub-discipline of practical theology is concerned with the dialogue and encounters between God and human beings. Salvation must be understood and interpreted in terms of the spiritual text and the effect it has on the development of a life of faith (Lamprecht, 2010:62). It is the task of the pastoral counsellor to enable and empower challenged people to find resources to discover and sustain such hope. In this sense pastoral counsellors have to be agents of hope. Pastoral counselling is strategically placed amongst different approaches to therapy to approach disgruntled adolescents using the Word of God as the way to deal with their challenges. An important aim of the pastoral process is to bring a troubled person to a point where he/she can hope again. A counsellor should guide a person to think about the traumatic situation in a different way, particularly in light of the fulfilled promises of God. The concern of pastoral counselling is a total reorientation towards life determined and directed by faith. Pastoral counselling is involved with a reorientation process in which people must integrate their challenges into their being as to discover meaning in suffering so that they may consider their challenges as an opportunity for spiritual growth (Louw, 2008:218).

Of specific concern for this research however, is that the focus of pastoral counselling will be on black adolescents within the South African context. How should the pastorate approach this vulnerable group amongst the black South African population when they are affected by the divorce of their parents? This brings the issue of contextualisation of pastoral counselling to the fore. Until a few decades ago, thinking and research in the field of pastoral counselling was mainly a Western endeavour (Brunsdon & Knoetze, 2014:2). According to De Jong van Arkel (1995:189) however, the uncritical application of Western approaches may end up being irrelevant within African contexts. As the mythical African worldview and culture differ substantially from the Western worldview and culture, the black adolescent can in all probability not be approached in precisely the same fashion as their Western counterparts.

What makes this matter more complicated is the fact that it would be difficult to maintain that there is something like a homogenous African worldview, culture or context (cf. De Jongh van Arkel, 1995:190). Instead the African worldview and culture should rather be viewed as a pluralistic and multidimensional matter as many influences played a role in the formation thereof. Counselling of black adolescents can however not be done without considering the cultural context in which this individual was raised. This implies that the pastor or counsellor who deals with the black adolescent should do so cognisant of the African worldview and culture in order to present with an appropriate pastoral response.

Through the years pastoral counselling was dispensed from various points of departure. Some of the well-known examples from pastoral history include Eduard Thurneysen's so-called *kerygmatic* approach where the focus was on the proclamation of the Word to the individual (Thurneysen, 1963:201). Seward Hiltner, again, tried to widen the scope of pastoral counselling by drawing on the insights of psychology through his educive approach (Hiltner, 1958:25). Jay E Adams's *Biblical Counselling*, was essentially a *nouthetic* model for pastoral counselling that was searching for answers to human problems by means of a confrontational model as Adams saw in guilt the foundation of human misery. Louw (1998:47) described this as a *nouthetic reaction model*, as Adams in no way wanted to compromise the Biblical integrity of pastoral counselling. Adams (1979:9) was adamant that contributions from the field of psychology and psychiatry stood in an antithetic relationship to pastoral counselling. Gerben Heitink defined his

approach to pastoral counselling as *Hulpverlening* (rendering help). This points to the encounter where the pastor enters into a helping relationship with the counselee in search for answers to life's questions in the light of Scripture and in relationship to the faith community (Heitink, 1979:79).

Even though Paul Tillich was a systematic theologian he showed some contribution and relevance to the concept of pastoral theology. His ontology of acceptance presumes a certain relationship between God and reality. In the light of Christ's incarnation, human relationships are viewed as a type of on-going or indirect incarnation. The nature and quality of human relations are thought to be an indirect medium through which God's redeeming involvement is revealed. As a result it is not so much the testimony of God's word that brings about human healing through forgiveness and conversion rather the process of communication and counselling. He was of the view that knowledge of a person is obtained from an individual through counselling procedures and techniques. People have the inherent potential to arrive at transformation and constructive self-realisation. He states that pastoral counselling gathers its knowledge from the so called client by means of perception and empathy (Louw, 2011:27)

### **1.1. Narrative approach**

In this research a narrative approach to pastoral counselling is favoured. This approach was pioneered by Michael White and David Epston in their collaborative book: *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (1990). This approach to therapy conveys the message that people's lives can be interpreted as a story which in turn can be used as a strategy for therapy. Narratives develop in people's lives because of the events that are sequentially linked across time according to a certain plot (Morgan, 2000:5).

The stories of people are influenced by the broader social context in which they are found and these stories also influence their future expectations (Morgan, 2000:8).

This therapy is aimed at bringing change to the lives of the people involved, with their permission in giving out their story. People give meaning to their lives and relationships by telling the stories of their experiences and it is through interacting with others in performance of

these stories that they are active in shaping their lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1990:2).

The stories according to which people understand their lives can however become “stuck” if it is characterised and overwhelmed by problems. Then a problem saturated narrative ensues which will negatively influence their present future negatively. A narrative approach has the potential to help people discover alternative stories and begin to tell their stories in a different and liberating way (White & Epston, 1990:9).

The problems that are faced by people can be externalised. Externalisation is a concept in Narrative Therapy that encourages people to regard the problem as an object separate from themselves. In this way the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person. (White & Epston , 1990:39).

Externalisation of the problem is reinforced by mapping the influence of the problem in the life of a person. Through a process of reflexive questioning counselees can be helped to externalise and separate their lives from their problems. (White & Epston, 1990:41).

Deconstruction of the problem helps people to identify structures that support the problem. Deconstructing conversations help people unpack dominant stories and to view them from different perspectives (Payne, 2006:84).

Within the narrative approach the counsellor does not assume the role of a problem solver, but rather someone who assists the counselee to identify unique outcomes, where the problem did not control the counselee’s life. Through a process referred to as co-construction the counsellor helps the counselee to find an alternative and liberating story (Morgan, 2000:52).

The narrative approach will be explored as it holds promise not to reduce the pastoral process to a mere *kerygmatic* event, nor to an explanation of brokenness as a result of sin, but giving a voice to the story of the adolescent within the narrative of the broken family. The approach this study wants to contemplate, will however venture to put the narrative within the framework of pastoral counselling (theology), which takes the narrative of God’s redemptive work seriously as to construct an alternative story submerged in the story of God.

## **1.2. Current state of the research**

As is evident from a deconstruction of the topic of this study, a variety of themes are grouped together to form the over-arching focus of the research. Treated as individual topics, most of these aspects are well researched and documented in academic literature.

In terms of Practical Theology and pastoral care, an abundance of literature is available from which this study can extract relevant information. According to Miller-McLemore (2014:1), Practical Theology as study field has grown thereby making new studies in the field of Practical Theology and pastoral care feasible.

Existing research on adolescents and divorce mainly seem to focus on statistical aspects of divorce in developed countries (Amato, Booth & Spencer, 1995:21) and the psychological effects of parental divorce on adolescence (Brentano & Clarke-Steward, 2006:15). From the field of development theory substantial literature regarding the developmental tasks of people in this life phase is available, creating a framework of what can be expected of this stage of human development.

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In terms of the narrative approach to therapy, there is also ample literature available, although this research will mainly focus on the narrative approach to counselling as pioneered by Michael White and David Epston in their seminal work “Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends” (1990).

What then is the void in literature this study wants to address? As indicated in the introduction, pastoral literature in South Africa is markedly dominated by Western approaches. While there is a clear need for contextualised pastoral theology, focused on the African context, especially in the area of broken marital and family life, this study aims to integrate literature on the topic of black adolescents affected by parental divorce. The specific route the study intends to follow entails a pastoral narrative approach as the researcher expects the narrative to represent an approach suited to the needs of black adolescents. The main goal then is an integrative function.

### **1.3. Research question**

The main problem this study wants to address is how the pastorate can approach the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents. Seeing that the narrative approach holds promise of being an appropriate response for this challenge, the main research question is: how can a pastoral narrative approach address the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents?

### **1.4. Aim and objectives**

The main aim of this study is to investigate how a pastoral narrative approach can be applied in instances where black adolescents are adversely affected by the divorce of their parents.

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives are set:

- To discuss marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.
- To investigate the phenomenon of divorce and its effects on black South Africans.
- To discuss the developmental stage of adolescence from development theory and to identify challenges for the black adolescent.
- To provide a general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life.
- To describe a pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents
- To identify markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents.

### **1.5. Research method**

This study will contribute to the field of Practical Theology and pastoral care. According to Swinton & Mowat (2006:6), Practical Theology can be defined as theological reflection on the practices of the Church as it interacts with the practices of the world to promote faithful participation in God's continuing mission.

Practical Theology can also be viewed as a discipline that seeks to help human beings to have an encounter and fellowship with God and other people. It is concerned with religious actions that communicate with others through the service of the Gospel in order to make room for God in the world (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:7). These Christian actions are communicated in language and are aimed at intervening in the real life situations of people in an attempt to bring transformation in church and society.

According to Swinton & Mowat (2006:6-9), the notion on Practical Theology rests on at least four important principles. Firstly, Practical Theology is about critical reflection. Hereby the faith community is called to critically reflect on their practices in an ongoing way in order to remain faithful to revelation. In this sense Practical Theology is a critical discipline that has the task of challenging current practices and assumptions in order to better them. The second is that Practical Theology is theological reflection. Practical Theology is known as a theological science which makes use of other sources of knowledge like the social and medical sciences. But it must not do it in such a way that it loses sight of its character as a theological science. The third is that Practical Theology should not only be focused on the Church practices, but also on the practices of the world as the church attests to God's reconciliation of Himself and the world. Hence there are similarities and differences in the church and the world. Similarity between the church and the world is that they both run short of God's Glory but on the other hand the church differs from the world because it celebrates God's redemptive work by recognizing who Christ the Lord is and lives according to this revelation whereas the world does not strive to do this. The fourth is that Practical Theology is called to enable faithful practices. This refers to faithful living and authentic Christian practices. In this way, Practical Theology goes beyond human experience and expectation.

Amongst the different research methods available, this study favours the approach of Richard Osmer (2008) as it seems to be relevant to address the research questions that this study is investigating. In the approach of Osmer it is suggested that four questions can be asked during the process of practical theological interpretation. These questions are:

- What is going on? (The descriptive empirical task)
- Why is this going on? (The interpretative task)
- What ought to be going on? (The normative task)

- How might we respond? (The pragmatic task)

Within the context of this study these questions can be answered by executing the four core tasks of Practical Theological interpretation which are as follows:

### **1.6. The descriptive-empirical task**

The descriptive empirical task deals with the gathering of information about the problem at hand. As Osmer has developed his model for Practical Theological interpretation in the first place for the understanding of congregational phenomena, it is theologically grounded as a process of “priestly listening” in order to establish “what is going on”. This implies a careful investigation of patterns that are taken for granted about the research topic (Osmer, 2008:4).

In the context of an academic study, this movement of Osmer’s approach will be applied to investigate the circumstances and cultural context of others in a more formal and systematic way. It means that attention is given to the relevant people in their particular context and in the presence of the Lord (Osmer, 2008:34). Thorough knowledge of what is going on avoids the situation where-by a quick decision is made and judgement on face value is done (Osmer, 2008:34).

The aim of this study is to establish a pastoral response to black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents by means of a narrative approach. In applying Osmer’s first movement to this study, it means that an assessment will have to be made about the state of black marriages in South Africa and how the dissolving of marriage affects the focus group of this study, namely the black adolescent. As was suggested earlier, the researcher suspects that the effects of parental divorce can be exacerbated by both the challenges of the developmental phase of adolescence as well as the African value system, which places a high regard on family life, leaving the affected adolescent in a vulnerable and challenging position. This means that the effects of divorce on black adolescents should be understood against the background of the unique African culture and worldview.

This assessment will be attempted by engaging literature which describe the African worldview regarding family life and marriage, so that a context can be created against which the experiences of adolescents can be understood. Throughout there will be observations from an insider’s perspective as the researcher is also an African Christian male who deals with black African

youth issues in academic and church circles. There is often observation of the challenges that black adolescents face when they are affected by parental divorce. Information gathered in this way will be systematically ordered to serve as a frame of reference for the rest of this study. This will be addressing what is going on in the life of this adolescent.

### **1.6.1. The interpretative task**

The interpretative task of Practical Theology in an academic study refers to the process whereby the researcher utilises the theories in arts and science in order to understand and explain why the patterns and dynamics are occurring in the way they do with regards to the research topic (Osmer, 2008:4).

As mentioned previously, Practical Theology is not an isolated discipline as it engages people in the real world and makes use of other sciences or meta-theories to assist in understanding situations.

This interpretation calls for wise judgment on the part of the researcher - or in theological terms, sagely wisdom as answers are sought as to why something is going on. Many perspectives are needed to understand complex multidimensional phenomena (Osmer, 2008:83). The concept of “wise judgement” is useful during this part of a study. It involves *phronesis* which reminds of Aristotle’s concept of practical wisdom and prudence. This involves “discerning the right course of action in particular circumstances, through understanding the circumstances rightly, the moral ends of action, and the effective means to achieve these ends” (Osmer 2008:84).

In the context of this study, this movement of Osmer’s model suggests that after a description of black African adolescents affected by parental divorce has taken place, this information also needs to be interpreted. An explanation or understanding of why adolescents are suffering certain effects after their parent’s divorce needs to be attempted.

Once again answers to this question will be sought from literature which describes the effects of divorce on families and the developmental phase of adolescents by placing it in the context of the African worldview and culture. This will constitute one of the important contributions of this study, as the literature review indicated that relevant literature for the biggest part are based on

Western experience and knowledge. In this section, a particular understanding of the experience of the black adolescent within the circumstance of a broken family will attempt to be developed.

### **1.6.2 The normative task.**

This third movement of Osmer's practical theological model for interpretation, challenges the research to contemplate what should be going on in the area of marriage and family life and what environment should exist in which black adolescents can develop and flourish. Although some theological indication about the Christian ideal for marriage and family will be provided, the main focus of this study is the broken reality of divorce and the adverse effects on black adolescents. Answers to what should be going on within this broken reality, will thus be sought using Osmer's notion of theological interpretation. What light does Scripture shine on the broken reality of divorce and those who are hurt in its aftermath? It is in this regard that the Church's response by means of pastoral intervention will come into focus, as the church is strategically placed in all communities to support and guide those in spiritual and emotional need. As part of determining what should be going on, the meaning of pastoral counseling will be discussed. A specific strategy to pastoral counseling in this study is also envisaged in the form of the narrative approach which deals with the re-authoring of life stories to invoke hope in dire situations and will therefore also have to be assessed.

In order to achieve this outcome, literature on pastoral counseling and the Narrative will be engaged in order to reflect on the preferred responses with regards to black adolescents suffering the consequences of parental divorce.

### **1.6.3. The pragmatic task.**

The fourth movement of Osmer's model is aimed at finding answers to the question of an appropriate response to the situation under investigation and to lead change. This movement is as "the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable" (Osmer, 2008:176). After indicating what pastoral counseling is and the suggested strategy of the Narrative entails, this movement creates the opportunity to envisage and describe what such an approach should entail. In the light of this, so-called markers for a pastoral

approach to the black adolescent will be provided. Grounded in the information that was compiled, deductions will now be made about how a practical pastoral response should look. In so doing, this final movement will attempt to uncover how the pastoral process involving the black adolescent should unfold in practice. Existing knowledge from the study to this point will be built out by also engaging literature with regards to executing pastoral counseling in order to indicate how the process can unfold.

## **1.7. Chapter outline**

The study will unfold as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Chapter 2: Marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture**

This chapter is aimed at creating a context for this study which is the African worldview and culture. This will strengthen the notion that our view and experiences of institutions like marriage and family are influenced by our worldview and culture. How we experience a crisis like divorce will be influenced by our worldview and culture. This principle has consequences for intervention and therefore pastoral counselling should be cognisant of the worldview and culture of counselees.

### **Chapter 3: The phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans**

This chapter investigates the phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans. Even though marriage is held in very high regard by Africans, the phenomenon of divorce also occurs amongst black South Africans. This chapter indicates that divorce amongst black South Africans is statistically on the rise. It further investigates divorce as a phenomenon amongst blacks, discusses the causes of and the effects of divorce on the family unit.

### **Chapter 4: Adolescence in the context of development theory: challenges for the black adolescent**

Chapter four will attempt to provide a framework for the understanding of the developmental phase known as adolescence. This framework will mainly rest on findings of developmental theorists from the field of developmental theory. The unique challenges of this phase will be related to information from the second and third chapter in order to identify some challenges for the black adolescent as the researcher also assumes that the experience of difficult life challenges

like divorce will be influenced by the life-phase where one finds oneself at the time. The vulnerable adolescent will thus have a certain quality of the experience of parental divorce which will probably be intensified by their experience of adolescence.

#### **Chapter 5: A general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life**

In this chapter special attention will be paid to the Scriptural principles regarding marriage and family life. A good understanding of the Biblical message on family life can help the pastoral counsellor to understand the effects of the black adolescent's loss better.

#### **Chapter 6: A pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents**

As this research considers pastoral counselling as an appropriate response to the black adolescent affected by parental divorce, this chapter will investigate pastoral counselling as sub-discipline of Practical Theology and ministry of the church. A clear understanding of the discipline will enable the pastoral counsellor to establish clear goals and boundaries when engaging with the black adolescent.

#### **Chapter 7: Markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents**

In this chapter markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents are provided. These markers are intended as a broad framework within a pastoral narrative approach aimed at making the adolescent part of the counselling process by presenting their narratives.

#### **Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions**

The summary will give a shortened description of all the highlights of the research. It will address the main points that are significant which need to be outlined. The conclusion will give guidance to the pastoral counsellors on what to take from the study which will help them in the future to deal with similar situations like the one addressed by the research.

### 1.8. Schematic outline of the study

The outline of the study can schematically be presented in the following table:

A PASTORAL NARRATIVE APPROACH TO BLACK ADOLESCENTS AFFECTED BY THE DIVORCE OF PARENTS	
<p><b>Aim:</b> To investigate how a pastoral narrative approach can be applied in instances where black adolescents are adversely affected by the divorce of their parents.</p>	
<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To discuss marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.</li> <li>• To investigate the phenomenon of divorce and its effects on black South Africans.</li> <li>• To discuss the developmental stage of adolescence from development theory and to identify challenges for the black adolescent.</li> <li>• To provide a general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life.</li> <li>• To describe a pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents</li> <li>• To identify markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Research method:</b> A literature study employing the interpretative model for Practical Theology of Osmer (2008) operating via four questions or movements:</p>	
<p><b>Movement or questions according to Osmer and the relevant objectives:</b></p> <p>1. What is going on?</p>	<p><b>Relevant chapter of the study:</b></p>

<p>Objectives resorting under question 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To discuss marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.</li> <li>• To investigate phenomenon of divorce and its effects amongst black South Africans.</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 2: Marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture</p> <p>Chapter 3: The phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans</p>
<p>2. Why is it going on?</p> <p>Objectives resorting under question 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To discuss the developmental stage of adolescence from development theory and to identify challenges for the black adolescent.</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 4: Adolescence in the context of development theory: challenges for the black adolescent</p>
<p>3. What should be going on?</p> <p>Objectives resorting under question 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life.</li> <li>• To describe a pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NWU LIBRARY</b></p> <p>Chapter 5: A general overview of some biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life.</p> <p>Chapter 6: A pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents.</p>

<p>4. How are we going to respond?</p> <p>Objectives resorting under question 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents.</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 7: Markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents.</p> <p>Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions.</p>
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### **1.9. Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of this study may be that it is a literature study on a pastoral topic. Pastoral counselling represents a highly individualised activity while the findings and recommendations of a literature study will, at its best be general. The findings of this study will thus in no way be applicable in all situations pertaining to black adolescents affected by parental divorce, but can only serve as a general guideline.

The mode of a literature study was however chosen as this study represents a mini-dissertation investigating a vulnerable group. As many black adolescents are still going to public schools ethical provisions cause big challenges in terms of accessibility. Due to constraints on resources like time, the mode of a literature study was preferred by the researcher.

### **1.10. Value of the study.**

The biggest contribution of this study is that it contributes to knowledge on pastoral counselling in the African context. As suggested, not enough research has been conducted to address pastoral issues in this area. While much literature is available from a Western perspective, too little is available on pastoral issues like this study is trying to address.

The researcher suspects that the study might be of interest to pastoral practitioners like ministers, pastoral councillors, social workers and teachers who are confronted by black adolescents adversely affected by the divorce of their parents.

## Chapter 2

### Marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the light of this, this chapter will attempt to understand marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture in which the notion of the extended family stands central and family and children are held in high regard. It is suspected that the place which worldview and culture awards to children will ultimately play a role in how children perceive a family tragedy like divorce as this will severely influence a child's place within the family structure. As this impact on a child's feelings of belonging and security it will be important for the pastoral counsellor to understand what the place of someone in the family was.

Subsequently this chapter will address the African worldview and culture and attempt to locate issues like marriage, family life and children within it, in order to establish the role of children within it.

#### 2.2. The African world view

A worldview is referred to as a set of assumptions and presumptions that are held consciously or unconsciously by people about how they perceive reality (Olumbe, 2008:1). A worldview can be perceived as the driving force behind the thinking and behaviour of the people.

According to Van Niekerk (2006:63) a world view is a commitment and a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic constitution of reality and provides the foundation of our existence.

The African worldview refers to a cosmo-theandric vision of the universe where the world of the spirits, human beings and nature form a unity (Nyamiti, 1990:24). The African worldview

embodies culture, religion, customs, values and traditions. It is a fundamental core of the African's reality which is manifested in the values and beliefs which are responding to the physical world and to spirituality. This then influences the way they think, observe and perceive things which will influence the way they present themselves through attire, the type of houses they build and the way they respond to the environment. This worldview is the basic principle within the life of a particular geographical region that affects perception, motivates life, determines values and truth, generate beliefs and moulds behaviour (Turaki, 1999:45).

This African worldview also influences ethics and morality and how they understand and interpret Christianity and other religions. Africans are highly spiritual and they strongly believe in connection with the ancestors. Their concept of reality and destiny is embedded in the spiritual world. All things pertaining to social matters are controlled by the spiritual laws which are a mystery to them. The spiritual world according to the African worldview is divided into the non-human spirits and the spirits of the dead. The non-human spirits are in a hierarchical order according to their importance and power (Turaki, 1999:40)

The hierarchical order which prevails is made up of the creator, the deities, object-embodied spirits, ancestors' spirits, other non-human spirits. These are made up of good and evil spirits and in all this, man is in the centre. The spirits abide in different places like in certain trees including the silk cotton tree, baobab tree, sycamore trees, burial grounds, dams and rivers, caves and mountains (Turaki, 1999:41).

### **2.3. African culture and tradition**

Africans like all other nations of the world have a certain way of doing things where they live. The way the Africans conduct their everyday way of living is their culture and there are some similarities amongst the way they do things. Culture can be defined as the customary manner in which groups learn to organise their behaviour and thought in relation to their environment (Howard, 1986:6).

Culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief systems, art, law, morals and customs. Culture refers to material and intellectual equipment which satisfy their biological and social needs and also adapt to the environment (Ayisi, 1979:1).

According to African culture, there are some shared ways of life which state that the African world view is life affirming. African culture also emphasises duty rather than rights. An individual has to have a sense of working and must earn the right to benefits. The rights reflect rewards from one's performance of duty. It is only after one has performed work that one will be entitled to a reward or benefit. When children do not contribute to their parents' good burial they cannot lay claim to their wealth, appealing to the abstract rights of man. The African culture is tolerant and it emphasises the necessity for a countervailing power. New gods may be acquired if the existing gods fail to match their rivals' power (Falola, 2003:63).

Basic values found in African culture are respect for elders, which is derived from the postulate of life affirmation. It also emphasises lineal continuity, mutual dependency, transparent living and maintenance of cosmological balance (Shawa, 2010:111). Achievement is defined in terms of the society rather than in personal terms. The concept of affirmation of life explains the reason for the African emphasis on care and sharing within kinship groups. It also casts light on the value and care placed upon children by community members no matter the kind of relationship they have (Shawa, 2010:111).

The community with various points of reference like land, clan and tribal roots and rituals plays an important role in African culture. The communal way of life cuts across all African societies (Mbiti, 1991:36). In African tradition there is no individualism. A person owes his/her existence to existing people and also to the generations that have passed. To show this sense of communality when the child is born it goes through the rites of incorporation and gets introduced to the ancestors and to the broader society. When a person gets married he is not alone, the whole family and community gets involved and the wife traditionally is for the family not for the individual only because she is going to serve societal needs.

The concept kinship refers to lineage and is the basic organising principle of traditional African society. African traditional communities are organised around kinship and it helps in understanding African morality and ethics and it manifests tribalism and ethnicity. African traditional kinship is characterised by clans with their histories, emblems, taboos and kindred. It also exhibits dress, adornment, form of dwelling and tribal markings (Turaki, 1999:26).

Children also belong to the kinsmen even though they bear their father's name. The things that affect the individual also affect the community and the things that affect the community affect the individual. The notion "I am because you are and you are because I am" (*Ubuntu*) is an African notion which is central to the existence of communities and Nations in Africa (Landman, 2002:270).

There are about 3200 tribes composed of thousands of clans and sub-clans in Africa South of the Sahara. These groups are further organised into individual families and also extended families, this shows how central communal life is among Africans. These groups do have some differences in practicing some cultural rituals, language and other activities but their diversity does not create animosity. These Africans believe in totality of life and holistic culture but they live differently from the individualistic Western way of life (Mbiti, 1991:36).

#### **2.4. Marriage in the African tradition.**

Marriage in African tradition is discussed broadly in order to create a context for marriage amongst black South Africans. Marriage amongst Africans is a means to gain social status in a family or society and tribe. Status is achieved through having children. Remaining a spinster or a bachelor invites ridicule from relatives and society (Nyirongo, 1997:111).

A bachelor is seen as a person who has no future because there are no children who will keep his name after he had passed on. According to this culture, he loses the possibility of ancestral status (Letsosa, 2005:11). Marriage in Africa is an essential step that every member of the society is expected to take. It is a rite of passage signifying focus of existence and is generally regarded as a lifelong union but could be dissolved when justifiable reasons are given (Waruta & Kinoti, 1994:88).

Marriage among the Basotho of Lesotho is regarded as one of the most important traditional institutions. Most of the Basotho men marry between the ages of twenty and twenty three but some marry late because of poverty. Most of the men and woman at this age have already undergone an initiation process. Women also get married after initiation. The man has to pay bride price (*magadi/lobolo*) to the woman's parents before marriage. *Lobola* is a process of negotiation that results in the coming together of two families. The process is formal and protocols are to be adhered to. Negotiations are to be conducted in physical presence not by

quick visit or telephonically. Negotiations might take some days during which talks revolve around the number of cattle to be paid as lobolo (Boshego, 2006:118). *Lobolo* is a sign that marriage has been recognised traditionally by the family and society. A woman who is in the process of getting married undergoes premarital counselling by her *Rakgadi* (the younger sister to her father). The man is counselled by *malome* (uncle) and this process of counselling is called *Go laya* which is the giving of the law on how to conduct themselves in marriage (Semenya, 2010:8). The two are deemed husband and wife immediately after part of the lobolo has been paid and the man can claim the wife and children (De Klerk, 2009:12).

Traditionally *lobolo* was paid in cattle but currently money has replaced cattle, especially due to urbanisation amongst blacks. *Lobolo* is also not only used to refer to money or cattle but can also refer to other things like a knife, axe, jacket, stick or blankets (Semenya, 2010:82) concurs with (Molapata, 2005:45).

During the process of *lobola* (negotiations) the uncle (*malome*) and the aunt (*rakgadi*) are the chief negotiators and are called *bo mmaditsela*. The delegation is housed in one place and the negotiators would have to pay a certain amount of money in order for the bride's family to talk to them. This is called *pula molomo*, literally meaning "mouth opener". It is only after the *pula molomo* that negotiations begin and the negotiators explain that they are there to ask for a bride (*sego sa metsi*) for their son (Semenya, 2010:82).

When the *lobola* process is complete and the dowry is paid the bride's family slaughters a sheep and gives it to the groom's family (*hlabisa*). When the process is complete the bride will be sent to the groom's place and on arrival she is given a new name (*teknonymous name*) so that she is not addressed by her family name. This teknonymous name will have to suit the name of the child she is going to bear (Guma, 2001:272).

In the African tradition in general women are viewed and treated as inferior to men. They are to perform domestic chores and when the husband helps with these chores he is regarded as being bewitched by the wife (Nyirongo, 1997:117). The husband is always regarded as superior and a woman is not supposed to oppose him; when women become assertive and self-directed they are said to be threatening the marriage (Van den Berg & Pudule, 2007:169).

## **2.5. African family life.**

African family life is distinguished from Westerns patterns by several significant features mainly related to marriage such as the so-called bride-wealth and the provision for polygamy in many African cultures as well as patriarchal residence where each of a man's wives would have their own living courters (cf. Kuper, 1965:441).

Arguably, the main distinguishing characteristic of African families must however be the notion of the large kin group. This stems from the belief that marriage links two families rather than the bride and the groom. This belief influences all thinking regarding the family including the resolution of conflict between members of the couple. The main idea of this collective thought is that it strengthens the family unit by making it a part of a larger whole.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the African family pertains to the different stages in the life cycle of a family which are visible in most African families. This means that African people "become" what they are supposed to be by moving through different stages during their lifetime. These stages are distinguishable because of ceremonial events that highlight the changes in roles and rights of African as they grow older. The first stage is the nucleus family which is made of couples only before children are born. The second stage ensues when a woman bears children and she now has the responsibility to raise and nurture them. The man has to provide for an extra mouth so his work also increases. When children grow older and are able to participate in family activities the family enters another stage. These children get involved in family decision making particularly if they are males. These children then get married and leave their families or they bring their spouses home and this leads to another stage. When one family member dies or the couple gets divorced then it is believed that the family is dying (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1986:16).

Men especially gain status as they grow older. A combination of maturity and children give them more status. As African parents grow old they are taken care of by their children. Divorce is another way in which marriages would be dissolved in the traditional system, the woman would return to her family and in instances where the husband is at fault the large portion of bride-wealth would be returned to the woman's family. The children would stay with the mother when

they are still young and would go to the father when they are grown up. Divorces in traditional systems were not disruptive to the spouses and children (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1986:19).

From the above the importance of family or kinship transpires. It is only within the collective that the individual gains importance, identity and purpose. This denotes a specific type of co-dependency which is not always visible within Western thinking where individuality plays a much more important role (cf. Masango, 2013: 751).

### **2.6. The importance of children in African culture.**

It can be safely argued that children are of paramount importance within the African worldview and culture. In this sense a marriage is not complete without children and is not fully consummated until children are born. Childlessness is such a serious issue that it is seen as justification for the practice of polygamy. In such cases, polygamy is simply compared to a man who digs several wells in different places in order to satisfy his thirst (Letsosa, 2005:11). In the case where a woman does not bear children a man would be free to marry a second wife or more wives depending on how wealthy he is. These measures are common across black Africans even though this practice is diminishing because of the Western influences (Kenyatta, 1938; Ngulube, 1989).

According to Jomo Kenyatta the first Kenyan president, marriage without a child is practically a failure. In Zambia children are regarded as the most important in a marriage and they are the means to sustain it. The presence of children is a base for agreement amongst the couples and they get a sense of peace and purposeful life because of the children. Marriages are dissolved easily when there are no children (Ngulube, 1989:21).

On a practical level, children guarantee the continuous existence of a family. A man without lineage is like a man without citizenship and he might as well not exist (Turaki, 1999:226). They are the means of continuity of societies and regarded as a heritage (Shorter & Onyacha, 1999:34). On a figurative level children are viewed as the glory of a family Thus the more the children the more the glory of a family. Children amongst Africans are therefore valued and loved as they are regarded as the wealth of the family and demonstrative of its worth.

In terms of societal position children are expected to respect their parents and the elderly. They are obliged to obey all instructions and they cannot argue with or question anything that comes from the parents. Their views are normally not considered as they are regarded as too young to know or say anything worthwhile (Mbiti, 1991:115). Children are expected to contribute to the wellbeing and functioning of the household. Therefore children would begin helping by age eight. At this stage there is no division of labour according to gender but when they reach ten they would be allocated work according to gender. Values like persistence and co-operation are taught by giving children responsibility for certain chores within the household. As early as the age of seven or eight they are expected to be able to attend to younger siblings, thus strengthening their familial and social responsibility in line with the collective African spirit. (cf. Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1986:24).

### **2.7. Preliminary synthesis**

This chapter focused on the African worldview and culture and attempted to locate the role of children within it. It transpired that the African worldview and culture holds the notion of family in high regard and that it favours the collective instead of the individual. Within this context marriage becomes very important as it creates extended families where members are bound together in unity and not just the husband and wife. Within this extended family each member are valued and held in high regard as they contribute to the unity. As such marriage is the favoured way of being in comparison to staying unwed. The value of the institution and the process of marrying are supported with negotiations and payment in the form of *lobola*. The fact that uncles and aunts are involved strengthens the notion that the broader family constitutes a marriage.

Marriage positions African people within a process where they become who they are supposed to be by moving through different stages. It is important to note that African people are interconnected and are essentially dependent on another to attain the goals of these stages. Children play a paramount role in this process. Without children a woman, a man and a marriage is incomplete. In the same way children need parents, elders and siblings to develop as a person and become fully human. This interconnectedness becomes vital at times of the rituals that celebrate these different stages.

In the light of this, the divorce of black Africans constitutes nothing less than a tragedy and an existential crisis as it primarily robs the adolescent of his/her core identity. It not only removes the significant others, but also costs the adolescent their own significance. It can be assumed the feelings of loss will be more intense within the framework of interconnectedness as found in the African culture when compared to individualistic cultures like the Western culture. This should be deemed of great significance for the pastoral process.

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## **Chapter 3**

### **The phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter has highlighted the communal nature of marriage within the African context. It also pointed out that self-worth within the African context, to a large extent, depends on relationships with others. It was therefore stressed that divorce will not only affect the couple but also the families and even the kinships and the broader village. Obviously it will also have detrimental effects on the children involved, including the adolescent.

In this chapter the phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans will be investigated by discussing statistics of divorce amongst black South Africans, the causes for, and the effects of divorce. This will be done in an attempt to create a proper understanding of the phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans.

According to Havemann (1990:270) divorce denotes the “legal process through which a marriage contract which was entered into by a man and a woman in a civil manner or in a customary way” is annulled. Divorce usually results when a partner made him or herself guilty of a transgression which jeopardised the marital relationship. Verryn (1975: 242) defines divorce as “the end of the marital relationship and of marriage itself.”

Irrespective of culture or nationality, divorce always results in loss. Cox and Paley (1997:25) remind that previous sureties like unity, a home, financial security and stable relationships are ruined by divorce. Although it may be regarded as a cliché, the party worst affected by divorce are the children of divorcees (cf. Emery, 1999:12).

#### **3.2. Statistics of divorce in South Africa 2011-2013**

There is an alarming high divorce rate in South Africa. Although fluctuating, and showing a decrease in the last years, the numbers are still very high. During 2011 a total of 20980 divorces from civil marriages were processed. This was a decrease of 8.5% when compared to the 22936 divorces registered during 2010 (Statistics South Africa, PO 307:2011).

In the Ngaka Modiri Molema district of the North West province (where the researcher is situated) 3489 divorces were registered during the 2011/2012 financial year. Of importance for this study is that of this number 3204 divorces were amongst blacks, 144 amongst coloureds, 18 amongst Asians and 132 amongst whites. The North West Province recorded 16055 divorces for the 2011-2012 financial years. 35.8% of these were amongst the black African population group.

Nationally, Statistics South Africa shows that in 2011, 11475 of the divorces that took place affected children of 18 years and younger. The distribution of the number of children affected by divorce shows that 37.4% were amongst blacks, 20.2% from coloureds and 27.1% from whites. The total number of children 18 years and younger affected by divorce was 18571.

The rising divorce rate amongst black subsequently contributes to the rise in single-parent households. During 1970 68% of black families in South Africa were two parent families while this figure dropped to 50% in 1990 (cf. Te Vaarwerk, 2009:45).

### **3.3. Divorce amongst black South Africans**

In the traditional African way divorce was not perceived as it is today. It was not understood as a total separation of two people by a court of law. In Sesotho culture a woman was expected to never return to her parents' home once married. To stress this it was said in Sesotho *lebitla la mosadi le bohadi* which literally means the grave of a woman is where she is married. This meant that she was not allowed to return to her birthplace, irrespective of how difficult her marriage has grown. Generally it was known that if life in the family had become unbearable because of either party's behaviour, the husband would send the wife back to her family. He would explicitly announce his intention of separating from her. He could fetch her again after some time when he felt like doing it but she had the right to refuse. Should she refuse to go back her guardian who received *lobolo* would have to intervene in the issue. In the case where intervention failed, the marriage would dissolve by agreement between all parties concerned (Mofokeng, 2009:84).

As previously indicated, families in Africa are viewed as social systems constituted of interdependent relationships. As in all systems, actions affecting one member, affect all other members of the family. Cox and Paley (1997:255) therefore point out that divorce can mean the disintegration of broader families.

In all the cultures children remains a communal factor during divorce. Traditional customary law provides that a husband retains guardianship of minor children born of the union. The present dispensation however provides that a husband may be denied guardianship under certain conditions. Presently the court is allowed to award guardianship to the mother under certain circumstances. At present, customary marriages can no longer be dissolved outside of court. It is only the high or divorce court which has the jurisdiction to dissolve a customary marriage.

There are some cultures where termination of engagement by mutual consent for good reason calls for the return of cattle paid for as *lobolo*. There could be forfeiture of *lobolo* when termination without good cause by the suitor or with good cause by the daughter. In customary law there is no action for damages for breach of promise (Mofokeng, 2009:86).

#### **3.4. Causes for divorce amongst black South Africans**

According to the customary marriage act there are a number of grounds for divorce. These include “irretrievable breakdown, adultery by the woman, continual refusal by the wife to render conjugal rights to the husband, wilful desertion by one of the parties, gross cruelty or ill treatment of the wife by the husband and allegations of witchcraft towards the wife” (Mofokeng, 2009:88).

In traditional African culture marriage was a permanent commitment not even dissolvable through death. Therefore the surviving customary wife was expected to marry one of the relatives of the late if husband. In Setswana this practise was referred to as (*seyantlo*) and in IsiZulu (*ukungena*).

There are many considerations for divorce from behavioural point of view. It could be because marital partners have grown apart. There are also differences that lead to many forms of fighting which are the biggest reasons for divorce. These differences are often about disagreements of parenting, money or even abuse which is emotional, financial and physical (Mc-Whorster, 1998:6).

Ernest (2003:20) reminds that unique South African circumstances like mine-labour can also be viewed as a cause for divorce amongst black South Africans. Normal family life was disrupted

by this arrangement and was a prime cause of the destruction of family relationships which existed and personal demoralisation.

Black marriages are currently also challenged by issues such as female empowerment (Takyi & Broughton, 2006:119) which is also referred to as female autonomy or emancipation. This concept is fairly new in the African culture, but puts African marriages at risk since it causes conflict within traditionally-minded families. The concept of the emancipation of females mainly came about with the sudden change in the economic circumstances of women over the last few decades.

According to Russel (2003:163) divorce amongst black South African appears to be more prevalent in urban middle class families. The black families in urban areas live according to principles which are different to both urban white families and rural black families. There is a phenomenon called "fission and fusion" which is characterised by the black families being influenced by Western culture. These blacks are still bound by ties of kinship, descent and domestic responsibility to the family in rural areas even though there is Western influence. This means that their original value system is fragmented as it has merged with a new or other value system.

Another cause for divorce amongst blacks can be found in the change in attitudes towards traditional norms. Kaufman (1998:153) suggests that this is mainly as a result of Western influence and the urbanisation. A change of attitude towards traditional African cultural practices like the system of bride price currently causes tension amongst blacks. While the system of *lobolo* traditionally aided a good relationship between two families it is currently viewed as something that causes tension due to difference of opinion.

Another obvious traditional practice, currently causing tension, is the provision for polygamy amongst certain groups (Russel, 2003:159). In the light of the mentioned emancipation of the African woman, it is understandable that the mere principle of one man rightfully having more than one spouse, can be upsetting and can be a cause for marital tension.

According to Mwiti and Dueck (2007), black marriages most often, suffer as a result of all of the general reasons most other marriages dissolve. These include conflict over differences, inflexibility of partners, oppression of one of the partners, poor communication, money and

monotony (cf. Mwit & Dueck, 2007: 191-193). However in the African context Mwit and Dueck (2007:193) single out childlessness as one of the biggest challenges, usually ending in divorce for Africans. "In Africa, having children is not a choice, but an expectation."

### **3.5. Effects of divorce on the family unit.**

It can be argued that the effects of divorce are detrimental for all the involved parties. This can even be more so within the African culture where it seems that the self-worth of the individual is closely related to the notion of *Ubuntu*, being someone through others.

According to Emery (1999:16) some of the specific effects on children are mainly on the terrain of the emotional. Anger at parents, grief over the loss of the family unit and anxiety are some of the common effects suffered as a result of parental divorce.

It is true that parental divorce impacts differently on different children. The extent to which divorce impacts on the children is dependent on a number of factors. These include "age, gender, maturity level, personality, parents' financial situation and the conditions leading up to the divorce" (Yatt, 1996:27).

Ultimately however, irrespective of the causes of divorce, it remains a disruptive tragedy, breaking up the unity of families on every conceivable level.

### **3.6. Preliminary synthesis**

This chapter focused on the phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans and the place of children within this institution with reference to the effects of divorce upon the family unit.

In terms of divorce amongst blacks, this chapter expanded on the notion that divorce amongst black South Africans is statistically on the rise, negatively impacting on a growing number of black children. It indicated that the meaning of divorce amongst blacks shifted from partial separation to a complete severance of ties. Although several reasons exist why black people divorce, including some reasons based on traditional issues, divorce should never be taken lightly. It remains a grave reality also in African culture where the notion of family and where children is deemed so important. Divorce, in every culture leaves the affected compromised and vulnerable.

The next chapter will investigate the developmental stage of adolescence and will attempt to identify challenges for the black adolescent within the context of parental divorce.

## Chapter 4

### Adolescence in the context of development theory: challenges for the black adolescent

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus now is on the adolescent. An overview of this phase of development will be provided, highlighting aspects like the physical characteristics and behavioural patterns which will pay testimony to this developmental phase, being a challenging one.

The word adolescent is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means to grow to maturity. This includes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains. This growth does not take place at the same rate for every adolescent and is determined by environmental and cultural factors, nutrition, genes and hormones (Louw & Louw, 2007:27). It is defined as an intermediate stage or period of growth between childhood and adulthood.

According to (Rice, 1996:3), adolescence is a gradual and transitional period from one stage to the other, characterised by uncertainty. Since individuals differ, the duration of this stage is not the same for every person. It is regarded as a bridge between childhood and adulthood over which individuals must pass before they take their places as mature adults.

Amongst black South Africans which live in rural areas and for whom traditional values are still important, adolescence is not just a period of physical and emotional transition, but is also characterised by certain rites of passage. These include feasts and rituals that mark the transition to adulthood. Within African culture initiation rites like circumcision are obligatory before adolescents can be regarded as adults. The boys have to undertake male initiation process (*bogwera*) and the girls also have to undergo the initiation process (*bojale*) (Bodibe, 1994:46). Currently, there is reason to believe that not all adolescents in urban areas and their families regard these rites of passage compulsory as they have adopted a Western worldview.

#### 4.2. Adolescence within the framework of developmental theory

The notion that a person's life can be understood in terms of phases is mainly attributed to so-called development theory. Developmental theorists like Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson were some of the pioneers of development theories that suggested that a person's life moves through

certain phases from birth to death (Haber & Runyon, 1983:15). Each life phase consists of unique tasks and goals which need to be successfully completed before a person can proceed to a next phase.

Development theory does not suggest that every person's life unfolds along precisely the same pattern. It only provides a broad framework for what can be expected when people find themselves at a certain age. It seems that development theorists in general agree that the development of a person is influenced by at least two important factors, namely hereditary (nature) and environmental (nurture) factors.

#### **4.3. John Locke**

Locke suggested that children are born with clear minds. Like a clean slate (*tabula rasa*), external stimuli imprint on their minds as they grow. Development in this framework is mainly a result of environmental factors (Hergenhahn, 1992:34). Locke especially opposed the idea that knowledge is innate, hence people's thinking is formed by the environment through all life phases. Applied to adolescence and parental divorce, this implies that divorce of parents has the potential to impact in their lives later on.

#### **4.4. Jean Jacques Rousseau**

Like Locke, Rousseau was also a protagonist of development via environmental factors. He proposed that children should be left to explore the world on their own using their senses and thinking for themselves while parental guidance should be minimised (Hergenhahn, 1992:38). According to him, adolescence can be seen as the phase that starts with puberty which can last until the early twenties. Rousseau also proposed that adolescents can be expected to be more sociable and less selfish than younger children. Subject to peer pressure and the awakening of sexuality, strong interest in the opposite sex can be expected. He acknowledged cognitive advances in adolescents that allow them to think like adults about scientific and moral issues.

#### **4.5. Jean Piaget**

Piaget was especially interested in how intelligence develops from childhood to adolescence and how adolescents interpret their experiences. He believed that the cognitive abilities which involve the way adolescents perceive, reason, plan and solve problems was key to development during the adolescent phase. The ability to reason independently should be one of the goals of adolescence (Hergenhahn, 1992:41).

#### **4.6. Arnold Gesell**

Gesell saw development as a process whereby new behaviour and abilities emerge naturally (Graber & Brooks –Gunn, 1996:102). Development is a dynamic process over the life span and not static. Environmental and hereditary factors work in a reciprocal fashion. Both play an important role in the developmental changes of life. These changes influence and are influenced by the individual's psychological, social and historical development (Wachs, 1996:46).

#### **4.7. Sigmund Freud**

Freud emphasised the role played by family conflict and sexual tension in motivating adolescent behaviour (Elam & Offer, 1993:13). According to him, adolescence could be seen as a psychological reaction to puberty. During this stage adolescents experience a variety of powerful impulses including sexual feelings towards the opposite sex. They develop rivalry with the parents of the same gender and get attracted to parents of different gender. Tension which results brings about pleasure and displeasure which form the basis for personality development and the adolescent becomes independent with their own choices and promotes separation from the parents (Richard & Peterson, 1987:259). Currently psychodynamic theorists do not emphasise the role of sexual tension in adolescent personality but rather concentrate on how the ego and self-lead to their separation from the parents (Sandler, 1992:78).

#### **4.8. Erik Erikson**

Erikson identified eight psychosocial stages of development that encompass the whole lifespan which consisted of distinctive tasks, challenges and conflicts at each stage (Klaczynski, 1990).

Within this framework, adolescence is the optimal stage for deconstructing one's childhood and reconstructing a viable adult identity. His epigenetic principle states that each stage in development contributes something to future stages and reframes all the earlier ones (Havighurst, 1972:2).

He also defined ego identity which refers to the aspect of what people really are and has continuity over time. Some adolescents enter adulthood not sure of their place in the world. This is known as identity confusion. Parents play an important role in adolescent identity formation by allowing them to experiment and helping to make sense of inner uncertainties (Klaczynski, 1990:5). Erikson coined the term identity crisis to refer to adolescents' serious questioning of their essential characteristics, how they view themselves and how others view them.

#### **4.9. General characteristics of adolescence**

Generally speaking, adolescence refers to the stage of life where young people start to mature mentally and physically and start to take responsibility for their lives. For most young people it is a period where excitement is mixed with confusion and frustration. There is no doubt that this life phase should be approached with caution as the experience of young people in this phase can have meaningful implications on the rest of their adult lives.

- A period of physical change



According to Wenar (1990:40), adolescence is a distinct stage characterised by sequential physical and biological changes that can result in emotional turbulence and struggle. Adolescents consequently become preoccupied with how they appear to others. What their peers will say or think of them becomes important and they will do everything to protect their image. They seek mutual support by forming groups which provide them with prototypes, models and other guides to inspire the sense of being worthwhile.

As physical appearance is related to a person's diet, adolescents become cognisant of their diets as these have implications for their weight and shape. They become concerned about their physical attractiveness to others due to the changes taking place in their bodies (Rice, 1996:5).

This physical growth also leads to a severing of parental bonds as they do not want to be treated as children anymore.

- A period of identity formation

One of the key challenges that comes with the physical changes that happens during adolescence is the formation of an own identity. Looking at their contemporaries and trying to establish where they fit in can however be confusing (Woolfolk, 2010:86). The establishment of an own identity is usually a big challenge as the concept of identity keeps on changing during adolescence (Garred et al., 1995: 8). (McCoy, Metsch and Inciardi, 1996:46) pointed out that a unique identity is related to the ability to make independent decisions, attaining a personal value system, establishing expectations about the future, which includes a career orientation and having an own opinion about peer relations and sexuality. Identity formation is thus linked to the making of commitments to future goals (Markus & Warf, 1987:13). It is therefore not uncommon for adolescents to question the ideologies, attitudes and values acquired from role models during childhood. Adolescents usually retain opinions which agree with their current perceptions of their world, but reject those that do not (Thom & Coetzee, 2004:184).

- A period of satisfying personal needs

Adolescence is often characterised by the pursuit of personal needs. Adolescents should be afforded a moratorium which is a time of freedom from commitment so that there can be room for self-exploration and self-discovery. Parents will often be frustrated with this tendency as adolescents seemingly only get satisfied with what they want and not necessarily what they need. This conflict is responsible for adolescence to be known as the “storm and stress” period (Thornburg, 1975:29).

The pursuit of personal needs most often leads to a separation between adolescents and their families as they want to spend more time with their peer group. This tendency is related to the need for acceptance from peers. This should not be seen by parents as rejection by their children, but understood as part of the adolescent’s attempt to form their own identity. According to Hall-Lande (2007:265), parents must retain a strong relationship with adolescents during this period in order to offer protection and guidance with regards to problems emanating from peer relationships forged during this time.

- A period of cognitive development

Adolescence is also a period of cognitive development as the adolescents start to apply their own thinking towards the things they are trying to comprehend. For example, they have to take decisions about issues like relationships, ethical challenges and such. These issues require reasoning which challenges their cognitive processes (Garred, Smulyan, Power & Kilkenny, 1995:5). In this way adolescence becomes a creative synthesis of past identifications and current skills and abilities (Rice, 1996:8).

#### **4.10. Adolescence from a black South African perspective**

In the previous section adolescence was described from the vantage point of developmental theory from which certain themes were identified as some of the core tasks of adolescence. In general the researcher accepts that these broad themes will apply to black adolescents as well. In this study it is however also argued that the cultural and societal prescripts of African people make their experience of life unique. Within the framework of developmental theory this would mean that environmental factors such as cultural and societal phenomena will influence the experience of the adolescent phase. One example will be the formation of identity which is core to adolescence. In African culture the importance of community or *Ubuntu* was already alluded to. In this regard it can be expected that individualism will not play such an important role for black adolescence as for their Western counterparts. The notion of family will contribute greatly to the black adolescent's formation of the self as an emerging adult. Here, the African view that one is not born fully human, but that a person becomes human through processes which are communally sanctioned and recognised (Vincent, 2008:444) is important. By highlighting some of these unique (South) African cultural and societal environmental factors, it will be illustrated that black adolescence is a unique experience – as supposedly will adolescence in other cultural denominations also be.

In support of this, Papalia & Olds (1975:541) argued that the Western notion of adolescence cannot be viewed as universal. In other cultures adolescence is less stressful. Research conducted in New Guinea and Samoa showed that the adolescents in these countries did not experience the same stressful development growth pattern as adolescents in Western societies as the transition

to adulthood is characterized by an easier acceptance of the role and demands of adulthood (Hoberg, 2010:252).

What would some of the cultural and societal influences be which make the experience of black South African adolescents unique? Three aspects can be mentioned.

- Rites of passage that coincide with adolescence

As pointed out above, transition within African culture is associated with festivals and rites of passage that celebrate Africans moving through different life phases and becoming human. For African males, the most important rite of passage in this regard is ritual male circumcision. Mtuzi (2004:48) depicts the completion of initiation as the “greatest day” in a boy’s life as it signals the dawn of manhood. Although initiation can be deemed a personal highlight for individuals and part of the traditional African adolescent experience, it is also embedded in a communal/tribal and familial value system and is therefore a process in which the community and family are involved. The familial aspect of initiation becomes apparent in the fact that the families of initiates participate actively in the process. It is for example part of the *Xhosa* custom that the father of the boy will be present at the actual circumcision and has the privilege of actively taking part in the ritual (Vincent, 2008:435).

This underlines that adolescence for black South Africans is immersed in cultural practice with strong communal traits.

- The multicultural character of the South African society

The multicultural character of the current South African society can be seen as a challenge to black South African adolescents as they are attempting to form an own identity. The so-called new South Africa brought along rapid changes which included phenomena like urbanisation, the sudden growth in wealth for some of the previously disadvantaged and exposure to the global village via the internet and media. Migration of parents to urban areas also has an influence on the adoption of cultural practices prevalent in the area. These adolescents may experience a dual identity crisis, as they now have to search for an individual and cultural identity.

- Phenomena prevalent amongst the black South African population

At least three of the phenomena can be noted as being more prevalent amongst black South Africans than other population groups, namely unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

#### **4.11. Adolescence within the context of parental divorce**

The loss of a parent and familial stability caused by parental divorce is a tragic occurrence for all children. There are some who argue that divorce can come as a relief because it brings an end to conflict and domestic violence the ensuing challenges like adapting to a one parent home, remain a challenge.

It is however also true, as it argued in this study, that where a child finds him/herself in terms of development, will influence their perception and experience of parental divorce at that stage. This chapter argued that adolescence represents a vulnerable life phase where a person transforms from childhood to early adulthood. Being a period of rapid physical and cognitive change, adolescents are challenged with the formation of their own identity and of coming to terms with who they are and what they want to be. For the black South African adolescent it is a time where the family is of extreme importance as adolescence coincides with rites of passage within their culture of which the family is an intrinsic part. To lose the very important family unity at such a critical time, can be unthinkable for many of these children. The black South African's experience of adolescence is further complicated by societal factors like the transformation of society and challenges like poverty and HIV/AIDS. That is why it is also known as a critical life phase where suicidal tendencies are amongst the highest in the world (Brunsdon & Janse van Rensburg, 2003:3).

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Furthermore, divorce always has a negative impact on the economic abilities of families. When it comes at a time when the children would need economic stability, for example to go to university, the effect on these children holds promise of disappointment and hopelessness.

Some of the specific challenges that occur amongst adolescents affected by parental divorce are:

- Delinquent behaviour and engagement in premarital sex (Steinberg, 1987:45),
- Increased risk for emotional and behavioural problems (Stevenson & Black, 1988:19).
- Poor scholastic performance (Dowling & Barnes, 1999:38).
- Increased risk of future pathological relationships (Kerfoot et al.,1995:87)
- Suicidal tendencies (Kauffman, 1998:4).

#### **4.12. Preliminary synthesis**

This chapter indicated the intrinsic relationship between the vulnerable developmental stage of adolescence and parental divorce. It was shown that the instability caused by parental divorce, coupled with the unique challenges of adolescence creates very real possibilities for deviant behaviour and a myriad of emotional challenges. It jeopardises the expectations and future of the adolescent in many different ways.

It most certainly poses challenges in terms of intervention through support and counselling which need to be further explored. In the next chapter some theological guidelines will be sought in line with the research approach to this study, namely to ask the question, what should be going on? More simply put, what was God's intention for families? This will help the counsellor understand what families and adolescents yearn for and also bring a better understanding about the loss victims of parental divorce have to cope with.

An adolescence stage is very sensitive because it is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. It is very important that those who deal with them should be careful not to harm them. When the parents' divorce they must consider the emotions and feelings of their adolescent children and give them the necessary support so that their divorce may have minimal impact and effect on this vulnerable group of children.

The parents have to bear in mind that their decision might have a lifelong effect on their adolescent children and this has the possibility of spilling over to the society where the affected adolescent can present with problematic behaviour that results from unresolved emotional issues. Adolescents are operating at a formal operational reasoning where they think flexibly and reflect

on their own thinking, they can reason about abstract and hypothetical ideas so every action taken which affects them cannot just pass unnoticed and unchallenged (Sandler,1992:64).

When parents are involved in divorce they must not just consider their own feelings and emotions but the well- being of their children, especially the vulnerable group which is the adolescent.

## **Chapter 5**

### **A general overview of some biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

In this chapter special attention will be paid to the Scriptural principles regarding marriage and family life. A good understanding of the Biblical message on family life can help the pastoral councillor to understand the effects of parental divorce on the black adolescent better. The aspects that will be discussed in this chapter are marriage in the Old Testament, marriage in the New Testament, the purpose of marriage and the role of children in the family. This chapter will also attempt to identify some of the anticipated effects of divorce, for example, anxiety and feelings of separation and loss. Finally, it will attempt to identify theological themes that might be important in the construction of an alternative story for the adolescent who is suffering as a result of his/ her parents' divorce. These are consolation, God as a father and His covenant love.

#### **5.2. Old Testament perspectives on marriage**

According to the word of God, marriage is a union of people of the opposite sex. This union, which is known as marriage, was instituted by God at the beginning of creation (Genesis 2:18-25). This union can be seen as God ordained, blessed and permanent. Because the intention of God was good, marriage can be seen as a gift which must be approached with respect towards the God who instituted it (Khathide, 2000:56). Marriage in the Bible depicts a permanent relationship not to be broken (Malachi, 2:14-16).

Companionship and fellowship were other important factors for which God created marriage. He said 'it is not good for a man to be alone I will make him a suitable helpmeet' (Gen 2:18). God made a person of the opposite sex who was suitable for the man from the rib and the flesh of the man (Walwood & Zuck, 1983:19). The man named the woman according to himself (*Ishah*) as an indication of the intimate relationship between them (Hughes, 2001:65). Fulfilment in marriage is to be found in this complimentary companionship (Nyirongo, 1997:120).

God promoted unity between the parties within marriage. They were meant to be of one flesh and inseparable thereby confirming marriage as a permanent union for as long as the two were alive (Carson, 1994:12). According to Genesis 2:24 a man is also supposed to leave his father

and mother, cleave to his wife and become one flesh with her. In these three keywords leave, cleave and oneness, the profound secret of marriage is to be found (Van der Walt, 1994:407). Leaving indicates that a public and legal act has to take place in order to make marriage work. The two should physically move from their parents homes and go and stay together in their own house (Trobisch, 1971:12). This was the beginning of family according to God's perfect plan. Cleaving reminds of the physical and emotional unity between a man and a woman (Mashau, 2006:29; Van der Walt, 1994:410). In oneness the two should share what they have and care about each other's needs (Mack, 1977:4).

Another Old Testament perspective pertains to the imperative to multiply and fill the earth. God was not going to continue forming people from the soil he gave man the authority to propagate this mandate of replenishing the earth (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:24). The children given to them were to be brought up in the fear of the Lord to be trained to follow God's ways and instructions (Proverbs 22:6). The ideal plan of God is that the couple should have children and bring them up in a way that is pleasing to Him.

The preferred expression of Christian marriage is a monogamous union (Mashau, 2006:15; Olthuis, 1976:23). Although we read about polygamy in the Old Testament, it should not be the standard for New Testament believers. Polygamy as practised in ancient Israel and traditional Africa is not a desired practice (De Bruyn, 2008:152). Polygamy originated with Lamech after the fall (Genesis 4:19) and it became practice in Israel until the exile.

Marriage is highly regarded by God and He expects all to honour it. The faith should not be broken by divorce for God hates divorce, once married, couples should remain in this institution and honour the spiritual purpose of this unity (Malachi 2:16). God expects commitment in marriage to be like His covenant to His people, when He promises He hastens to fulfil. Marriage between man and a woman should be a unified physical, emotional and spiritual relationship (Adams, 1980:11).

The Old Testament view of marriage is thus that it is a gift from God that was meant as a life-long union. Within this union, children are a gift that must be nurtured within the family.

### 5.3. New Testament perspectives on marriage

The New Testament addresses specific areas of marriage and there are clear instructions on how marriage should be treated as an institution. The Bible instructs the permanency of marriage and it states that what God puts together no one should put asunder (Mathew 19:5-6). According to the law, a person is bound to their spouse for as long as they live. When the one spouse dies then the remaining one is free to marry. Marriage is binding and God's will is that the family should remain a unity.

Marriage in the New Testament is likened to the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church (Eph. 5:21). In marriage the man and the woman should submit to one another and show love and respect. Mutual submission preserves order and harmony between the husband and wife and increases love and respect between them (Mathews, 1996:11). Submission is mostly not a problem where the partners have a very strong relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and where the spirit of selfishness does not exist. Each has to be concerned about the happiness of the other (Letsosa, 2005:192).

A husband ought to love his wife as he loves his own body and as the Lord Jesus Christ loves the church and has given His life for it (Eph. 5:25). There is a need for permanent love which will sustain marriage. For the husband it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. Marriage according to Paul can thus only be sustained by love. Marital love should not be selfish and should reflect Christ's love for His Church (De Bruyn, 2008:171).

According to the Word of God, the wife in turn must submit to her own husband in all things. In this submission the wife should willingly follow her husband's leadership in Christ (Eph. 5:22). This submission does not imply that her husband takes the place of the Lord but rather refers to her submission in service of the Lord. It also does not mean that the woman is inferior, she only recognises the leadership role of the husband in the home so that there can be order (Col 3:18).

According to the New Testament, the husband is the spiritual head of the family and his wife should acknowledge his leadership (Eph, 5:22). This leadership involves serving in love just like the Lord Jesus Christ loved and served those He loved. He washed the feet of His disciples and served even unto death on the cross. The husband and wife need to carry one another's burden, not advancing their own selfish ambition and not domineering over one another (1 Cor, 11:3).

The Lord commands that a wife should not divorce her husband and the husband should not divorce his wife. In case they divorce they should not marry again but rather reconcile in order to avoid committing adultery by marrying again (1Cor.7:10).

From this it transpires that marriage in the New Testament remains a permanent institution which should be built on the example of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the church. This refers to both a loving and serving relationship.

#### **5.4. The Biblical purpose of marriage**

As the relationship between a husband and a wife pays testimony to the relationship between Christ and His church, the purpose of marriage is to glorify the name of the Lord. This suggests that marriage should be conducted according to God's will of which morality is an important part (Letsosa, 2005:193).

Another purpose of marriage is to inspire the happiness of the marriage partners. According to the creation narrative, it was not good that man couldn't find a companion in his own likeness (Gen. 2:20). True fulfilment and happiness only followed after God created a helpmeet for him. Proverbs 5:18 suggests that happiness for man is to be found with the wife of his youth. True happiness ensues when a couple decides to find pleasure in the relationship that God has given them and when they focus on each other's happiness. Happiness in marriage has to be mutual and not one sided (De Bruyn, 2008:172).

Sexual intimacy is another purpose of marriage from which the procreation of children might follow. Fidelity in marriage creates a safe space for sexual intimacy as well as security for children. Partners should therefore remain faithful to one another and refrain from adultery or any form of sexual immorality (Prov. 5:15-20). This instruction from God is evidence that sexual intimacy is a sacred act which God has created for the people who are committed to each other (Frymer-Kensky, 1989:15). From this faithful intimacy, God, in many cases blesses a married couple with children. The married couple now needs to provide their children with the safe space of a family (Spence-Jones, 2004:43). These children should be raised to be God fearing and lead lives that are pleasing to Him (cf. Malachi 2:15).

Another purpose of marriage is to prevent immorality. This is because of sexual temptations in society which are not easy to withstand. Marriage provides God's way to satisfy these desires and to strengthen the partners against temptations. Married couples should not sexually withhold from each other in order to avert sexual temptation (1Cor.7:1-3). Married people's bodies belong to their spouses because God has designed marriage so that through the union of husband and wife the two become one.

### **5.5. Biblical perspectives on the role of children in marriage**

The Bible depicts children as a blessing from the Lord (cf. Ps. 127:5). The parents have the responsibility to take care, nurture, discipline and bring them up in the ways and fear of the Lord. Children, according to the word of God, should obey their parents and honour them because this is pleasing to the Lord. When children obey their parents they bring joy to them (Prov. 10:1) Children are responsible for showing love and respect towards their parents. This obedience should be voluntary. When children honour their parents they will be blessed and they shall live long in the land that the Lord gives to them (cf. Eph. 6:1; Alant, 2004:1).

Through the modelling of the parents, children ought to learn about healthy family life. Parents have to exercise authority in the upbringing of the children as authority is necessary to prevent chaos. In a family God has delegated His authority to the parents to maintain order and raise children according to His will. The subjects under authority have to obey authorities and when they fail to do so they are punished (De Bruyn, 2008:90).

### **5.6. Biblical teachings on divorce**

Divorce is the breaking of the marital bond and the nullifying of the covenant between a husband and wife. When God instituted marriage He did not make room for divorce. God made it very obvious that He hates divorce because it is contrary to His intention for marriage (Malachi 2:10-16). God however allowed divorce because of the stubbornness of people's hearts. In the Old Testament, Mosaic law allowed a man to issue a letter of divorce to a woman that he finds displeasing because of something indecent after he married her (Deuteronomy 24:1-3; Mark 10:4). The general spirit surrounding divorce is that it should be avoided at all costs unless the recovery of marriage is no longer possible. Some of the Scriptural passages that can help the pastoral process form a better understanding of the issue are the following.

#### Deuteronomy 24:1-4

This is the first Biblical passage that seems to utter the possibility of a so-called “bill of divorce” or a divorce letter which allows for divorce under certain circumstances. According to this passage, a man could issue his wife a “bill of divorce” if he found “some uncleanness” in her (KJV). According to Louw (1986:18), the meaning of “uncleanness” is not totally clear, but should be treated as a general action that brought the marriage into disrepute. This passage should however not be seen as a justification for divorce, but rather as an attempt to protect the sanctity of marriage and a recognition of the reality of broken relationships amongst husbands and wives.

#### Mark 10: 2-9

Jesus said if anyone divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another woman he commits adultery, the same applies to the woman. This divorce was allowed because of the stubbornness of people.

#### Matthew 5:32

In this situation the Lord Jesus Christ was opposed to those who purposefully abused the marriage contract using divorce to satisfy their lustful desire to marry someone else. The word unfaithfulness implies a sexually immoral lifestyle not a confessed and repented act of adultery (Blood, 1969:384).

#### Matthew 19:9

The Bible says that any man who divorces his wife except for infidelity and marries another woman commits adultery. When people enter into marriage they should not consider divorce as an option of resolving their differences or the way to get out of the relationship that seems dead. Marriage has to be a lifetime contract made by God, not to be broken. The men who do such things are warned because this is just a way of satisfying their lustful desires.

#### 1 Corinthians 7:15

The apostle Paul made provision for divorce in cases where a believer was married to an unbeliever. If the unbelieving partner wished to stay with the believing partner then there should

be no divorce but if the unbelieving partner abandons the covenant then the believing partner was not bound by the marriage covenant. In this text Paul was applying the principle that a believer should in the first place not marry an unbeliever. The desire to serve the Lord by some of the people in Corinth however made them think of divorcing their pagan spouses in order to marry believers, but Paul still stressed permanence and sanctity of marriage. The believers had to use their influence to win their partners for the Christian faith (Mitchell, 1985:1).

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

Divorce of the parents undoubtedly has a negative impact on the lives of the children as it destroys the unity that lies at the centre of family life. As children owe allegiance to both parents, divorce creates a variety of challenges they may not be prepared for. Divorce has long term effects if the children do not get spiritual, emotional and psychological help. According to Yatt (1996:37), divorce also poses serious challenges for adolescents irrespective of the fact that they might be older. Some of these challenges include the following:

### **5.8. Uncertainty**

When adolescents are left in the dark about the reasons for their parents' divorce, they are likely to be left with crippling uncertainty. In some cases they may develop self-blame tendencies as they see themselves having contributed to their parents' tensions and challenges. It is common for children from divorcing families to search for information from different sources about what happened in their families and what the future will be. This can have a negative influence on the children-parent relationship in terms of trust and confidence. It is likely that this mistrust can grow if the situation is left unabated. Issues of uncertainty further ensue as children are now left in the custody of one instead of both parents, hearing only one side of the story and not answering questions about the true reasons for the state of affairs (Cooney, 1994:12).

Normally parents are weary of sharing information with children from fear that they will be unable to understand it. Mitchell (1985:170) however contends that to prevent uncertainty divorcing parents should provide short honest and simple information about the true state of affairs to all parties concerned.

### **5.9. Fears and anxiety**

Divorce destroys all certainties that existed during the time of familial stability. This leads to fear of the unknown which can cause anxiety. Anxiety can trigger frustrations which can end up in delinquent tendencies like bullying, sexual activities and even crime like shop-lifting and deviant behaviour like truancy Ernest concurs with Yatt in this ( Ernest,2003:34) (Yatt, 1996:186).

Louw (1986:55) suggests that anxiety levels amongst the children of divorcees are the highest in the first year after divorce as many radical changes come into effect over a short period of time. This will reflect in the academic performance of scholars and students (Ferri, 1976:04). Adolescents experience further anxiety in terms of the future relationships of their parents and if they will have a place in such relationships. These high levels of anxiety need to be managed to avoid deviant behaviour becoming a fixed pattern.

### **5.10. Feelings of separation and loss**

Divorce most of the time signals the end of the familiar. It brings along change on most levels and takes away many privileges. So, for example, when the custodial parent moves to a new home the life of an adolescent will have to change to suit the new situation. They might have to change school, make new friends and lose previous supportive relationships linked to their prior circumstances. This creates a feeling of loss and separation because what has been part of their emotions has been torn apart without considering their feelings and wishes. There are instances when the estranged couple remain bitter and angry with each other and develop a feeling of vengefulness (Brun, 1980:74). The strained and hostile relationship between the parents is hurting to the adolescent since both are his/her parents. One of the most obvious forms of loss is in terms of economic security living standards. Each adjustment that has to be made is a painful reminder of this. Change in family routine presents another reminder of loss and the process of adjusting to the new situation can be traumatic and painful (Mitchell, 1985:286).

### **5.11. Theological themes**

In the light of the previous paragraphs, consideration can now be given to some of the theological themes that can be of help to the pastorate to the black adolescent affected by parental divorce.

One of the main challenges within a pastoral narrative approach relates to the merging of God's grand narrative with the narrative of the adolescent affected by his/her parents' separation. It is suggested here that this should happen by means of a contextual interpretation rather than a homiletic proclamation (Louw, 2011:369). Louw prefers a so-called organic use of Scripture which implies that the introduction of scriptural truths arises from the dialogic and communicative nature of the pastoral conversation. The method used in an organic approach is not to take a specific scriptural theme or text and apply it to the situation, but rather that the pastor first listens to the situation in order to identify an existential theme or problem. The pastor then studies the scripture in a listening attitude trying to interpret the meaning of God's promises for such a situation (Louw, 2011:370).

### **5.12. Consolation**

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In the light of the effects of uncertainty, anxiety and loss, consolation will be one of the goals the pastorate wants to achieve. Job 15:11 speaks about the consolation of God as words spoken gently. In Acts 9:31 the church in Samaria and Galilee which was afraid of Paul not knowing that he was a changed person because of the history of persecuting the Christians got consolation from the Holy Spirit that this was the man of God. The church lived peacefully and grew in numbers as they lived in the fear of the Lord. Consolation has the ability to bring both calm and reassurance which enable people to make progress through difficult circumstances. The adolescent has to be consoled by the Word not to be discouraged. They must be encouraged to be strong just like God encouraged Joshua to be strong and very courageous as he faced an unknown future as a leader of Israel. The adolescent has to face the future without one parent knowing that God is with him/her.

### **5.13. God as the father**

The theme of God as father reminds that God is both a shepherd and a provider. He is the protector and the restorer. David in Psalm 23:1-4 describes the Lord as the shepherd. He spoke from his experience as a shepherd of the flock. Sheep depended completely on the shepherd to guide them. God as the father can be depended upon by this adolescent for guidance into the future. He can direct the steps of this adolescent to walk upright into the future without falling even if they can stumble (John 10:11). The Lord Jesus Christ has come for the flock and those who believe in Him are His flock (Hebrews 13:20).

The adolescent can depend on God for provision that He will make a way for him/her not to lack any good thing. He leads us into green pastures means that He does not want to see His children going hungry. The absence of one parent does not take away the fatherhood of God when our earthly fathers desert us our heavenly father does not, He remains faithful.

### **5.14. God's covenant of love**

God is also a covenant God who entered into a relationship with man (Gen 17:2). In the covenant man finds assurance of the unfailing faithfulness of God as Jeremiah 31:31 reminds that He is always faithful to his covenant and He remembers it. The covenant was also a promise that God wanted to bless His children. Within the framework of broken families the covenant serves as a reminder of the unchanging character of God who remains the same, even though the circumstances of people may turn for the worse. This especially is of value when coming to terms with the loss brought on by divorce.

### **5.15. Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a pardon for human sins and shortcomings (Micah 7:19). The adolescent who is faced with the pain of parental divorce has to begin their own healing by forgiving his/her parents. This can help towards their liberation from bitterness and anger. Parents will have to be forgiven for what the adolescent feels was an unfair decision that has been taken because it seems as if parents do not take their children into consideration.

In the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:12) we ask for forgiveness as we forgive the others who sinned against us. The adolescent will not heal if they do not learn to forgive and let go of the bitterness

and anger harboured in their hearts. God does not forgive grudgingly but is glad when we repent and go back to Him and He offers forgiveness free of charge. The adolescent has to forgive the parent that he/she regards as having failed him/her and face life with no grudge. Restoration will only come when true forgiveness has taken place.

### **5.16. Restoration**

The person who has been hurt is not in the good state of mind and can do certain things that can be detrimental to his/her safety and to that of the others. Restoration is returning to the initial state or form (Psalm 51:12). David after sinning against God by taking Uriah's wife and killing him felt that the joy of God's salvation had departed from him. He asked God to restore him. This adolescent has lost the sense of trust in one or both parents.

The level of love could also be affected and this person needs to be restored to his/her original state as it had been before the parents divorced.

Getting rid of bitterness is the way to restoration. God is able to restore a person by the Holy Spirit and total healing will be obtained. A psalmist in Psalm 80:19 asks the Lord to restore them and shine His face upon them. For one to get life back there has to be restoration from the Lord because He is the one who knows us and by His spirit He gives us life. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life and the restorer of what was lost. When counselling takes place the aim is to restore the emotions of a person which are in a state of destruction.

### **5.17. Preliminary synthesis**

This chapter paid attention to some of the Scriptural principles regarding marriage and family life in an attempt to understand the Biblical message on family life. Knowledge about marriage and family life can help the pastoral councillor to understand the effects of parental divorce on the black adolescent better.

Some of the Old Testament perspectives have shown that marriage is a God instituted union between a man and women with companionship and the procreation of children as some of its main goals. This union was meant a lifelong union. It also transpired that marriage is highly regarded by God and He expects all to honour it.

In the New Testament marriage is especially understood in the light of Christ's relationship towards the church. This highlighted the principle that marriage and family life should be characterised by love and serving one another. The permanent nature of marriage thus also transpired in the New Testament.

The Biblical purpose of marriage was identified as working towards creating a happy environment for the partners and family, creating a safe space for sexuality. Within the Biblical framework children form the crown of a marriage, putting marriage partners in the role of parents who are called to raise their children within a healthy family through modelling.

The Biblical view on divorce is generally negative. Although divorce is not propagated as a solution to marital problems, the Bible at the same time recognises the reality of it. This is mainly due to the hardening of attitudes (Mark 10:2-9), Jewish law provided for it. The will of God however remains that marriage should be deemed as a permanent institution, not to be broken.

As the focus of this study is on the adolescent, this chapter also focused on the effects of inevitable divorce on children. It found that divorce has detrimental effects on all children as it creates, amongst others, uncertainty, fears and anxiety and feelings of separation and loss.

As this chapter established that divorce is contrary to God's intention and has various negative effects on offspring, theological themes were identified that could be of use within the pastorate. It was stated that themes such as consolation, focus on God as the Father, His covenant, love, forgiveness and restoration, would be some of the themes that can be employed in a pastoral narrative approach, as these would most probably be useful in the reconstruction of an alternative story for the adolescent caught up in the problem saturated narrative of parental divorce.

## Chapter 6

### A pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents

#### 6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters the reality of divorce within black South African families transpired. Within the African worldview and culture, the disintegration of the nucleus family unit presents an existential problem for everybody concerned. Adolescents within these families are especially vulnerable because of the demands and uncertainties of adolescence as a development phase. Not having reached maturity, the physical and emotional challenges of parental divorce creates unique challenges. In this chapter pastoral care as a specific form of intervention will be investigated. As other forms of intervention can also be considered to counsel adolescents, like psychology or a social work approach, the unique character of pastoral care and counselling will be investigated within the context of the adolescent affected by parental divorce.

In this study it is suggested that pastoral counselling will be employed together with the narrative approach to counselling. Hence the term pastoral narrative approach will be used as it denotes an approach to pastoral care which employs a narrative strategy to reach the focus group of this study, the adolescent. After considering different approaches to pastoral care, it is suggested that a narrative approach will probably be best suited to counselling with black adolescents.

#### 6.2. Pastoral care and counselling: an overview

The classic term used for pastoral counseling is *cura animarum*, meaning soul care (Louw, 2000:1). It denotes the guiding and caring function of the faithful to one another. According to Mclure (2014, 269), the term pastoral is derived from the Latin *Pastorem* meaning shepherd and includes the notion of tending to the needs of the vulnerable.

From the historical development of pastoral care it is clear that it represents a certain type of care, namely spiritual care (cf. Gerkin, 1997). It is aimed at restoring a person by attending to them spiritually and in the process also in all other spheres of life. Louw (2000: 24) therefore suggests that pastoral care can be seen as faith care that is at the same life care.

Since pastoral developed as a sub-discipline within Practical Theology, many definitions found their way into academic literature in an attempt to explain what pastoral counseling means. Clebsch and Jaekle (1994: 4) defined pastoral care as: "Helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons According to Louw (2010:73), pastoral care denotes 'the expression and representation of the sensitivity and compassion of the Scriptures' understanding and portrayal of God's encounter, intervention, interaction and involvement in our being human'.

According to De Jongh van Arkel (2000:161-162), pastoral care can unfold in four different ways: *Mutual care* is the most basic form of pastoral care and refers to believers taking care of one another, usually in a congregational setting. *Pastoral care* can be viewed as a second level of pastoral care and refers to a more organised and official approach to caring, often done by pastors, but also elders within a congregational setting. *Pastoral counseling* is a third level of pastoral care and refers to a more intensive and structured approach which requires training in both theology and counseling models which are relevant to the congregational setting. *Pastoral therapy* refers to a long term therapeutical engagement which relies on long-term reconstructive therapeutic methods. This requires professional training on the part of the counselor.

The focus of this study is pastoral counselling as a formal way of intervention. However, the notion of Magezi (2007: 655, 656) is taken seriously when he pointed out that pastoral care and counselling are interwoven, thus the one includes the other. However, pastoral counselling here is meant as a formal approach where the spiritual caregiver will engage with the black adolescent in a counselling relationship, using certain methods to guide the affected adolescent spiritually through the crisis that results from parental divorce, using the unique resources such as the Word of God, prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit in the context of the faith community.

It is also important to note that pastoral counseling can be dispensed in various ways. From the development of pastoral counseling several approaches transpired which need consideration when addressing the needs of the adolescent. The so-called *kerygmatic* approach of Eduard Thurneysen, for example, denoted an approach where pastoral counseling was seen as an opportunity to bring the Gospel to the individual: Pastoral care is and remains the proclamation

of the Word to the individual and neither can nor should be anything else' (Thurneysen 1963:201).

Jay E Adams's Biblical Counselling (1979) approach on the other hand was essentially a *nouthetic* model for pastoral care as it was seeking an answer to human problems in a confrontational model where counselees should be lead on the path of confession of guilt as Adams saw in guilt the foundation of human misery.

The pastoral councilor should however carefully consider which approach to use, as not all pastoral approaches will accommodate the adolescent. So will adolescents in all probability not react positively to an approach where they experience pastoral counseling as "preaching". Nor will the *nouthetic* fit the situation well, as the adolescent will perceive him/ herself as the victim of parental divorce or rather as the reason of his/her parents' divorce.

That is why this study is suggesting a narrative approach to pastoral counseling which rather focuses on the life stories of counselees as a point of departure. As was indicated earlier, adolescents are preoccupied with their own feelings, and will most probably respond positively to a counseling approach which takes their experience and narrative seriously.

Another motivation for using a narrative approach concerns the specific focus group of this study, namely black adolescents. Being Africans, narratives or stories play an important role in how black people think and understand their reality. The history that related one generation to another was never written down, but passed on orally. One common way in which stories were told were through folklores told by an elderly person to children around the fire at night (Achebe & Innes, 1992:8-20). It is understandable that something like African poetry is a central part of African communication as it is one of the African ways of understanding the self (Mphahlele, 2004:83).

It is highly probable that a familial crisis like the divorce of parents will alter the personal story of adolescents about themselves completely. A narrative approach can therefore be used to great effect in changing the problem saturated story that will ensue from such a tragedy.

In the light of this, the narrative as an approach to pastoral counselling will now be discussed in greater detail.

### **6.3 A pastoral narrative approach**

The narrative as therapeutic method was introduced through the collaborative effort of Michael White and David Epston in their book *Narrative means to therapeutic ends* (1990). The message it conveyed was that the lives of people can be interpreted as a story and that this story, or text analogy, can be utilised as a therapeutic strategy (Brunsdon, 2014:5). White and Epston (1990:13) are of the view that people give meaning to their lives and relationships by telling their stories and their experiences and that in interacting with others in performance of these stories they are active in shaping their lives and relationships. Morgan (2000:5) suggests that narratives develop in the lives of people as a result of events that are linked in sequence across time according to a certain plot. These narratives are made up of different types of stories and are also influenced by the broader social context in which they originate (Morgan, 2000:8). Not only do people live their lives according to these narratives, but their future expectations are also based on them. When the dominant stories of people's lives are problem-saturated (White & Epston 1990:9–10), their lives become problem-saturated. This creates a dim view of the present and the future. The narrative approach can then be instrumental in helping people discover alternative stories and helping them to re-tell the dominant stories in a way which is liberating (White & Epston 1990:9–15).

The narrative makes use of different strategies to help counselees to re-tell their problem saturated stories. The following are the most prominent strategies.



### **6.4. A not-knowing approach to counselling**

Anderson and Goolishian (1992:29) point out that the narrative approach requires a 'not knowing' approach on the part of the counsellor. This makes people the "experts" on their own life stories. It involves a method whereby a voice is given to people to tell their stories without reservation and not wanting to tell the counsellor what the counsellor wants to hear.

### **6.5. Externalisation**

Externalisation is a concept in narrative that encourages people to regard the problem as an object so that they can talk and think objectively about it. According to O'Hanlon (1994:24), 'the person is never the problem; the problem is the problem'. Externalisation enables counselees to talk about problems in a detached way. It helps them to investigate the influence of a specific problem on their lives. Externalisation of the problem reduces conflicts which do not bear any fruit between persons including those disputed over who is responsible for the problem. It undermines the sense of failure that has developed for many persons in response to the continuing existence of the problem despite their attempts to resolve it. It paves the way for people to co-operate with each other to unite in a struggle against the problem and to escape its influence in their lives and relationships. It opens up new possibilities for people to take action to retrieve their lives and relationships from the problem and its influence it makes people free to take a lighter, more effective and less stressed approach to deadly serious problems.

### **6.6. Mapping the influence of the problem**

This refers to the process whereby counselees verbalise the influence of problems in their lives and relationships. It involves a description of a problem which is much broader than the description that is usually offered of the problem itself. This is necessary to establish how big the influence of a certain problem really is. This opens up a broad field in which to search for and identify unique outcomes (White & Epston, 1990:43).

### **6.7. Unique outcomes**

A unique outcome can be anything that does not fit with the problem-saturated story (Morgan 2000:52), including instances where the counselee actually overcomes the problem. These unique outcomes can serve as clues or starting points for alternative stories. Events that are different or outside of the problem's influence are called unique outcomes, it is something the problem won't like. They are also called sparkling events because they shine in contrast to the dominant story. It can be a plan, action, feeling, statement, quality, desire, dream, belief or ability. Unique outcomes are mainly easy to answer because they seem relevant today to the experiences of life. Therapist can realise unique outcomes during conversation. Speaking to a

therapist about the problem represents a stand against a problem's influence. Unique outcomes can go unnoticed unless the therapist helps to identify them (Morgan, 2000:51).

#### **6.8. Relative influence questioning and deconstruction**

Relative influence questioning refers to two types of questions that enables externalisation and the identification of unique outcomes. First set encourages a person to map the influence of the problem in their lives and relationships. Second set encourages persons to map their own influence in the life of the problem to persons and relationships and into the world of experience, a world of flux. People find new possibilities for affirmative action, new opportunities to act flexibly (White & Epston, 1990:42). Deconstruction refers to the scrutinising of traditional ways of thinking and assumed truths. It helps the counselee to think critically about the thing we often accept as true and to help them to decide to distance themselves from these if they form part of their problem-saturated stories (Payne, 2006:84).

#### **6.9. The construction of alternative stories**

This can be viewed as the outcome of narrative therapy, generating new and liberating stories through which people are reconnected with their hopes and dreams (Brunsdon, 2014:6). Alternative stories are based upon unique outcomes that were discovered through a historical review of the person's influence in relation to the problem. The uncovering of unique outcomes can facilitate possibilities of new stories where the problems of the past do not dictate expectations about the present or future.

#### **6.10. Epistemological positioning**

In a pastoral narrative approach it is important to remember that the narrative, as described and employed by White and Epston (1990) represents a post-modern approach to counselling. As they pointed out, the narrative represents a move away from the 'linear notions of causality' reminiscent of modernism (White & Epston, 1990:2). In this regard, Milner and O'Byrne (2002) also observed:

‘Narrative therapy ... this way of working is more political and social in nature, being based on the sociology of the post-structuralist Foucault and the sociolinguist Halliday concerning the oppressive effects of dominant narratives on people’s understanding of the validity of their ways of living.’ (p. 10)

As pointed out earlier, pastoral care and counselling represents a theological (spiritual) approach to counselling and can, epistemologically speaking, not only rely on the narrative of the adolescent in the construction of alternative stories. As Janse van Rensburg (2000) convincingly pointed out that the uncritical use of post- modern epistemologies within the pastorate can lead to epistemological discrepancies.

The use of theories and strategies from other helping disciplines or approaches to counselling is of course not foreign in pastoral counselling. Swinton and Mowat (2006) suggested that other disciplines be approached with a spirit of true hospitality and that they can be applied through a process of “conversion” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006:92) to be of service within a theological approach. Through “critical faithfulness” the divine givenness of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit are respected in collaborative efforts. Brunsdon (2010:16) therefore suggested that the narrative be employed as a *strategy* within the pastorate. In this way the counsellor can freely use the strategies of not knowing, externalisation and deconstruction in search of alternative stories, but also employ the grand narrative of God as found in the Scriptures to co-author a liberating story together with the counsellee.

### **6.10. Preliminary synthesis**

This chapter provided an overview of pastoral counselling as a form of intervention for the adolescent who is affected by the divorce of parents. Pastoral counselling denotes a spiritual

mode of helping and can be seen as faith care that is at the same time life care. Through time, many different approaches to pastoral counselling transpired, each with their own focus. It was indicated that not all approaches to counselling would benefit the adolescent affected by parental divorce.

The narrative approach to counselling as pioneered by Michael White and David Epston was suggested as a relevant approach to adolescents because it takes seriously the so-called story analogy in which the story of the counselee is regarded as key to the counselling process. Through different strategies developed in narrative practice the counselee is assisted in reconstructing an alternative story to the problem saturated story caused by parental divorce.

As the narrative is however a postmodern approach to therapy and embedded in social constructivist theory, it cannot be used unqualified within a pastoral approach which is reliant on Scriptures. It was suggested that in a pastoral narrative approach, the narrative together with its different strategies, is employed as a strategy for pastoral care.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an indication of how a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of their parents will deploy in the light of this research.

The study indicated that divorce is a growing phenomenon amongst black South African families. Apart from the general negative impact of divorce on families, divorce amongst black families present big challenges against the background of familial values in the African context. As shown, a very high premium is put on marriage and family life in the African culture in which children play an important role. It was also shown that the impact of divorce is experienced differently by the individual family members. Due to the sensitive developmental phase of adolescence, they in particular, can experience the divorce of their parents as a severe challenge. Within the framework of the narrative approach to counselling it can be said that their current narrative has the potential of becoming problem saturated to the extent that their expectations of future narratives become strictly limited. The adolescent, who is not yet developed as an adult, will have to, amongst others, deal with issues like loss, uncertainty and anxiety.

The narrative approach to counselling was specifically chosen in this research, as it takes the personal narratives of counselees seriously as opposed to more traditional approaches in the pastorate, like the kerygmatic approach which follows a homiletic approach to counselling. Strategies developed in the narrative approach to counselling will be utilised within a pastoral framework to intervene in the lives of challenged adolescents.

In this chapter, the pastoral narrative process will be placed within the framework of the stage model of Louw (2000:349) to indicate that the pastoral narrative approach unfolds through different stages. This is however not to suggest that the pastoral process is viewed as something that is fixed and rigid. In this study it is maintained that the pastorate is a dynamic process. There are however different stages that can be distinguished in the process and a model like that of

Louw can serve as a scheme or a map which indicates the direction in which the process should flow.

### **7.2.The stage model of Louw**

Louw suggests that the pastoral process unfolds along certain stages (Louw, 2000:349). Together with others like Egan (1994), Louw has found that certain basic aspects are usually attended to during counselling. This means that the counselling process proceeds from somewhere and it is aimed at reaching certain goals.

In this regard Louw identified the following stages of the pastoral process.

#### **Stage 1**

This stage is aimed at building contact, developing self-insight and facilitating self-disclosure with the counselee (Louw, 2000:356).

In the light of the development theory, adolescents may find this first stage of the pastoral process difficult. Louw reminds that all people are unique and will not find it easy to trust the counsellor or to disclose how they feel. Self- insight might be equally as difficult for the adolescent who may be anxious, unsure and angry at his/her parents for the crisis their divorce caused.

Louw therefore suggests that patience and listening skills should prevail during this initial stage of counselling.

#### **Stage 2**

The second stage of counselling will focus of the thought content of the troubled adolescent. An analysis of the problem and what constitutes the perceived problem, should now receive attention.

Louw suggests that clarity on problems and what it entails can be achieved by connecting and integration, identifying logical consequences and eliminating irrational thoughts (Louw, 2000:357). Here the pastor plays an important role in assisting the counselee to link and integrate

different aspects of a situation in order to identify what the real problem is. Also to help them articulate the consequences of the problem and to think rationally about the true state of affairs.

### Stage 3

The third stage refers to a very substantial part of the counselling process as it is focused on a description of the problem, an analysis of the resources the counselee has for addressing the problem, setting up a contract in terms of responsibilities to deal with the problem, the setting of goals and to decide on how successful achievement of goals will be rewarded (Louw, 2000:362-362). To this can be added what homework will be necessary to achieve these goals, prioritising goals and the design of a programme by which goals can be achieved.

### Stage 4

Louw describes the last stage as *telic* in nature (Louw, 2000:363) as it is focused on helping the counselee to apply their faith in order to make meaningful decisions in the light of the crisis. During this stage Scriptures will play an important role in order to strengthen the faith of the counselee and lead him/her to spiritual maturity. As mentioned previously, this study favours a so-called organic approach to using Scriptures in pastoral counselling. This meant that the pastor does not apply Scriptures in a rigid way, but first tries to understand the counselee's situation before choosing a passage or pericope to apply in the pastoral situation.

This stage also relies on prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the faith and hope of the counselee which will eventually empower them to manage their crisis and grow through it.

## **7.2. Markers for a pastoral narrative approach**

With the different stages of the pastoral process in mind, an attempt can now be made at suggesting markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by parental divorce.

Brunsdon (2009:5) suggested that a pastoral narrative approach starts with a certain attitude, namely sympathy and empathy towards the person suffering a personal or existential crisis – in this case the black adolescent affected by the divorce of parents.

Müller (2000:72) suggested that at least the following aspects should feature within a narrative approach to someone's crisis.

- Listening to stories of despair

As the personal narratives of the counselee stand central in the narrative approach, the task of the pastor would be to solicit the personal story of the black adolescent affected by his/her parents' divorce. Letting the adolescent really be the expert on their own narrative by strictly following the so-called not knowing approach, the pastor creates an environment where the adolescent is free to divulge the narrative as they see and experience it. As the study focuses on the adolescent, it can be expected that the adolescent will have a narrative complicated by the fact that him/herself is still busy establishing their personal narratives. The crisis of parental divorce can thus be an extremely complicating factor, derailing the formation of a personal narrative.

Within the African context it can also be expected that the very close-knit familial structures will further complicate the personal narrative of the adolescent. The destruction of familial ties can lead to the destruction of the personal identity as the study indicated that the African person becomes someone through other people. Adolescents typically also need both parents during this phase in terms of important rites of passage of which the family is an important part. Losing a parent during this very important life phase can lead to the construction of an extremely problem saturated story.

- Listening to stories of the past

Present stories are always anchored in a historical narrative. The historical narrative provides clues about why the current story is perceived in a certain way. How, for example, did the adolescent perceive his/her family before divorce ensued? If it was a happy family which provided security to the adolescent, then the current narrative will be all the more hard to bear. What social discourses are nurtured by the adolescent about parental divorce? Does it represent shame, insecurity or despair? In the same fashion all narratives about the past will provide clues that help the pastor to understand why the adolescent perceives his/her current narrative in a certain way.

- Re-telling of past stories

One of the main purposes of the narrative approach is to tell past and present narratives in an alternative way. In this regard it becomes important for the pastor to help the adolescent revisit past and current narratives in a critical fashion. Here the narrative strategy of deconstruction will play an important role as important social discourses about divorce, crisis management and problem solving can be explored. Within the suggested pastoral narrative approach of this study, the Narrative of God should be brought into the narrative process by helping the adolescent discover how the story of God has relevance for their personal narratives. Exploring the meaning of the God narrative within the framework of the personal narrative is of utmost importance. As pointed out in the theory on the narrative, special care should be taken to search for unique outcomes. Here it will refer to the identification of instances in the past where the adolescent succeeded to manage problem saturated stories in the past. The pastor should especially be curious about such instances as it provides clues to the adolescent's ability to manage problems. These should be discussed and analysed as gateways to managing current challenges.

- The reconstruction of a hopeful future story

This was indicated as the purpose of a pastoral narrative approach – the construction of an alternative story. This refers to how the affected adolescent perceives his/her future narratives as a person that comes from a broken home, within their own culture. This future narrative as influenced by the Grand Narrative of God's grace and everlasting love.

The theological themes identified earlier in this study, namely consolation, the Fatherhood of God, His covenant love, forgiveness and restoration can now be merged into the adolescent's problem saturated story in order to construct hopeful future narratives which will enable the adolescent to manage their current situation. This could be coupled with the problems and challenges embedded in the adolescent's problem saturated narrative. Some of the challenges this study identified were problems such as uncertainty, fear and anxiety, separation and loss. These challenges transpired from literature and can be expected to be present in most narratives adolescents have about the parents' divorce.

Combined with Louw's stage model the following schematic illustration of the markers for a pastoral narrative approach can now be made.

Louw's stages of pastoral counselling	Markers for a pastoral narrative approach
Stage 1: Build contact Self-insight Self-disclosure	Listening to stories of despair: With true empathy and a not knowing approach, the pastor creates space for the adolescent's problem saturated story
Stage 2: Problem analysis Integration of information Development of perspective	Listening to stories of the past: Present stories are always anchored in a historical narrative. The historical narrative provides clues about why the current story is perceived in a certain way.
Stage 3: Decision making Goal setting Programme design	Re-telling of past stories: The telling of past and present narratives in an alternative way will provide clues of where the adolescents want to be and how they perceive the future.
Stage 4: Organic use of Scripture Discovering of meaning Awakening of hope Maturity of faith	The reconstruction of a hopeful future story: The purpose of a pastoral narrative approach. In this narrative God's presence plays the most important role to invoke meaning and hope in a new dispensation.

### **7.3. Preliminary synthesis**

The aim of this chapter was to provide an indication of how a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents will deploy in the light of this research.

It was suggested that the pastoral narrative approach will deploy via different stages as counselling usually starts and ends at certain stages. The stage model of Louw (2000) was used as an example of such a stage model. According to this example, the pastoral counselling process starts by building contact and trust. A pastoral narrative approach starts with a certain attitude, namely sympathy and empathy towards the person suffering a personal or existential crisis – in this case the black adolescent affected by the divorce of parents.

The narrative strategy of deconstruction played an important role as important social discourse about divorce, crisis management and problem solving can be explored. Within the suggested pastoral narrative approach of this study, the Narrative of God was brought into the narrative process by helping the adolescent discover how the story of God has relevance for their personal narratives. Exploring the meaning of the God narrative within the framework of the personal narrative is of utmost importance, there must be construction of an alternative story. This refers to how the affected adolescent perceives his/her future narratives as a person that comes from a broken home, within his/her own culture. This future narrative is influenced by the Grand Narrative of God's grace and everlasting love.

The theological themes identified earlier in this study, namely consolation, the Fatherhood of God, His covenant love, forgiveness and restoration are now merged into the adolescent's problem saturated story in order to construct hopeful future narratives which will enable the adolescent to manage his/her current situation. This could be coupled with the problems and challenges embedded in the adolescent's problem saturated narrative.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Findings and conclusions**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

The focus of this research was on the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents. Statistics have shown that there is currently a noticeable rise in the number of black families affected by divorce. This study departed from the premise that the trauma caused by divorce is influenced by aspects such as culture and the developmental stage of those affected. Also, that the black adolescent is highly vulnerable due to his/ her cultural background and the fact that adolescence represents a transitional developmental stage. Due to the African worldview and cultural value system the adolescent's experiences mostly probably differ from how Western adolescents perceive crises and challenges.

Pastoral intervention in this study was approached from a narrative perspective as it takes into consideration the personal narrative of counselees. It was expected that the affected adolescent may be preoccupied with the problem saturated narrative created by parental divorce. As adolescents are focused on their personal needs and identity formation, the narrative has much potential for facilitating alternative stories in the light of God's grand narrative of His covenant love. As current pastoral literature does not sufficiently reflect on the pastorate cognisant of the African worldview and culture, this study wanted to integrate a pastoral narrative approach with the black adolescent affected by challenges created by parental divorce.

#### **8.2. Findings**

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In terms of the different objectives set by the study, the findings can be summarised as follows:

8.2.1. Objective 1: To discuss marriage and family life within the context of the African worldview and culture.

This objective was addressed in chapter two. It attempted to create a context for the rest of the study by investigating the African worldview and culture and trying to establish the place marriage and family life has within this context.

It addressed the following themes:

- The African world view
- African culture and tradition
- Marriage in the African tradition
- African family life
- The importance of children in African culture.

The chapter found that marriage in the African culture is a family and kinship issue not just a matter of couples. It highlighted the unique character of black marriages in terms of customary law which pointed out that marriage as an institution is one of the most important ways of sustaining social systems within the African context.

Within this context marriage becomes very important as it creates extended families where members are bound together in unity and not just the husband and wife. Within this extended family each member are valued and held in high regard as they contribute to the unity. As such marriage is the favoured way of being in comparison to staying unwed. The value of the institution and the process of marrying are supported with negotiations and payment in the form of *lobola*. The fact that uncles and aunts are involved strengthens the notion that the broader family constitutes a marriage.

This chapter also pointed out that African people are interconnected and are essentially dependent on another to attain the goals of life stages. Children play a paramount role in this process. Without children a woman, a man and a marriage is incomplete. In the same way children need parents, elders and siblings to develop as a person and become fully human. This interconnectedness becomes vital at times of the rituals that celebrate these different stages.

In the light of this, this chapter concluded that the divorce of black Africans constitutes nothing less than a tragedy and an existential crisis as it primarily robs the adolescent of his/her core identity. It not only removes the significant others, but also costs the adolescent their own significance. It can be assumed the feelings of loss will be more intense within the framework of interconnectedness as found in the African culture when compared to individualistic cultures like the Western culture. This should be deemed of great significance for the pastoral process.

8.2.2. Objective 2: To investigate the phenomenon of divorce and its effects on black South Africans. The objective was addressed in chapter Three and it attempted to investigate how the divorce of parents impacts on the lives of the adolescents in the short and long run.

It addressed the following themes:

- The phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans
- Statistics of divorce in South Africa 2011-2013
- Divorce amongst black South Africans
- Effects of divorce on the family unit

This chapter focused on the phenomenon of divorce amongst black South Africans and the place of children within this institution with reference to the effects of divorce upon the family unit.

In terms of divorce amongst blacks, this chapter expanded on the notion that divorce amongst black South Africans is statistically on the rise, negatively impacting on a growing number of black children. It indicated that the meaning of divorce amongst blacks shifted from partial separation to a complete severance of ties. Although several reasons exist why black people divorce, including some reasons based on traditional issues, customary laws still dictate that divorce should not be taken lightly. Divorce, in every culture leaves the affected compromised and vulnerable. The affected adolescents are left with emotional scars and in some cases physically unwell.

8.2.3. Objective 3. To discuss the developmental stages of adolescence from developmental theory and to identify challenges for the black adolescents. Chapter four investigated the developmental stages of adolescence and attempted to identify challenges for the black adolescent within the context of parental divorce.

It addressed the following themes:

- Adolescence within the framework of the developmental theory
- General characteristics of adolescence
- Adolescence from a black South African perspective

- Adolescence within the context of parental divorce

This chapter indicated that a relationship between the vulnerable developmental stage of adolescence and parental divorce exists. It was shown that the instability caused by parental divorce, coupled with the unique challenges of adolescence create very real possibilities for deviant behaviour and a myriad of emotional challenges. It jeopardises the expectations and future of the adolescent in many different ways.

It most certainly poses challenges in terms of intervention through support and counselling which need to be further explored. The adolescence stage is very sensitive because it is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. It is very important that those who deal with them should be careful not to harm them. When the parents' divorce, they must consider the emotions and feelings of their adolescent children and give them the necessary support so that their divorce should have minimal impact and effect on this vulnerable group of children.

The parents have to bear in mind that their decision might have a lifelong effect on their adolescent children and that the affected adolescent can present with problematic behaviour that results from unresolved emotional issues. Adolescents are operating at a formal operational reasoning where they think flexibly and reflect on their own thinking, they can reason about abstract and hypothetical ideas so every action taken which affects them cannot just pass unnoticed and unchallenged

When parents are involved in divorce they must not just consider their own feelings and emotions but the wellbeing of their children especially the vulnerable group which is the adolescent.

8.2.4. Objective 4: To provide a general overview of some Biblical principles pertaining to marriage and family life. The objective was discussed in chapter five.

It addressed these themes:

- Old Testament perspectives on marriage
- New Testament perspectives on marriage
- The Biblical purpose of marriage
- Biblical perspectives on the role of children in marriage
- Biblical teachings on divorce
- Effects of divorce on children
- Theological themes

This chapter paid attention to some of the Scriptural principles regarding marriage and family life in an attempt to understand the Biblical message on family life. Knowledge about marriage and family life can help the pastoral councillor to understand the effects of parental divorce on the black adolescent better.

Some of the Old Testament perspectives have shown that marriage is a God instituted union between a man and women with companionship and the procreation of children as some of its main goals. This union was meant to be a lifelong union. It also transpired that marriage is highly regarded by God and He expects all to honour it.

In the New Testament marriage is especially understood in the light of Christ's relationship towards the church. This highlighted the principle that marriage and family life should be characterised by love and serving one another. The permanent nature of marriage thus also transpired in the New Testament.

The Biblical purpose of marriage was identified as working towards creating a happy environment for the partners and family, creating a safe space for sexuality. Within the Biblical framework children form the crown of a marriage, putting marriage partners in the role of parents who are called to raise their children within a healthy family through modelling.

The Biblical view on divorce is generally negative. Although divorce is not propagated as a solution to marital problems, the Bible at the same time recognises the reality of it. The Jewish law provided for divorce mainly due to the hardening of attitudes (Mark 10:2-9). The

will of God however remains that marriage should be deemed as a permanent institution, not to be broken.

As the focus of this study is on the adolescent, this chapter also focused on the effects of inevitable divorce on children. It found that divorce has detrimental effects on all children as it creates, amongst others, uncertainty, fears and anxiety and feelings of separation and loss.

As this chapter established that divorce is contrary to God's intention and has various negative effects on offspring, theological themes were identified that could be of use within the pastorate. It was stated that themes such as consolation, focus on God as the Father, His covenant of love, forgiveness and restoration, would be some of the themes that can be employed in a pastoral narrative approach, as these would most probably be useful in the reconstruction of an alternative story for the adolescent caught up in the problem saturated narrative of parental divorce.

8.2.5. Objective 5. To describe a pastoral narrative approach as a form of intervention for black adolescents affected by the divorce of their parents. This objective was discussed in chapter six

It addressed these themes:

- Pastoral care and counselling: an overview
- A pastoral narrative approach
- The epistemological positioning of a pastoral narrative approach

This chapter provided an overview of pastoral counselling as a form of intervention for the adolescent who is affected by the divorce of parents. Pastoral counselling denotes a spiritual mode of helping and can be seen as faith care that is at the same time life care. Through time, many different approaches to pastoral counselling transpired, each with their own focus. It was indicated that not all approaches to counselling would benefit the adolescent affected by parental divorce.

The narrative approach to counselling as pioneered by Michael White and David Epston was suggested as a relevant approach to adolescents because it takes seriously the so-called story analogy in which the story of the counselee is regarded as key to the counselling process. Through different strategies developed in narrative practice the counselee is assisted in reconstructing an alternative story to the problem saturated story caused by parental divorce.

As the narrative is however a postmodern approach to therapy and embedded in social constructivist theory, it cannot be used unqualified within a pastoral approach which is reliant on Scriptures. It was suggested that in a pastoral narrative approach, the narrative together with its different strategies, is employed as a strategy for pastoral care.

8.2.6. Objective 6: Markers for a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents. This objective was discussed in chapter seven.

It addressed these themes:

- Listening to stories of despair
- Listening to stories of the past:
- Re-telling of past stories
- The reconstruction of a hopeful future story:

The aim of this chapter was to provide an indication of how a pastoral narrative approach to the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents is deployed in the light of this research.

It was suggested that the pastoral narrative approach deployed via different stages as counselling usually starts and ends at certain stages. The stage model of Louw (2000) was used as an example of such a stage model. According to this example, the pastoral counselling process starts by building contact and trust. A pastoral narrative approach starts with a certain attitude, namely sympathy and empathy towards the person suffering a personal or existential crisis – in this case the black adolescent affected by the divorce of parents.

The narrative strategy of deconstruction played an important role as important social discourse about divorce, crisis management and problem solving can be explored. Within the suggested pastoral narrative approach of this study, the Narrative of God was brought into the narrative process by helping the adolescent discover how the story of God has relevance for their personal narratives. Exploring the meaning of the God narrative within the framework of the personal narrative is of utmost importance, there must be construction of an alternative story. This refers to how the affected adolescent perceives their future narratives as a person that comes from a broken home, within their own culture. This future narrative is as influenced by the Grand Narrative of God's grace and everlasting love.

The theological themes identified earlier in this study, namely consolation, the Fatherhood of God, His covenant love, forgiveness and restoration are now merged into the adolescent's problem saturated story in order to construct hopeful future narratives which will enable the adolescent to manage their current situation. This could be coupled with the problems and challenges embedded in the adolescent's problem saturated narrative.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

The focus of this research was on the black adolescent affected by the divorce of his/her parents. The study pointed out that there is currently a rise in the number of black divorces. The study departed from the premise that a traumatic experience like divorce will be influenced by aspects such as culture and the developmental phase of the affected. It was assumed that the black adolescent would be especially vulnerable because of the vulnerability caused by adolescence and the high value of family that is part of the African worldview and culture.

In the subsequent chapters it was shown that the African worldview and culture indeed imposes a very high value on the collective and the person receives his or her worth via the family unit. As divorce destroys family unity, victims of divorce, especially children are left in the lurch. As the study also showed that the incidents of black divorces are rising, the adolescent group are indeed in need of guidance.

The study further investigated adolescence in light of developmental theory, underlining the physical and emotional challenges. These findings were coupled with the experience of being a black adolescent in South Africa, showing that black adolescents will have a unique experience of parental divorce as adolescence in the African context can indeed be deemed a unique experience.

As this study was contemplating a pastoral approach to the black adolescent affected by parental divorce the Old and New Testament was investigated from the perspective of family and divorce in order to establish some of the theological themes that can be used within a pastoral approach.

Pastoral care as method of intervention was investigated and a narrative approach as strategy discussed. A Narrative approach was favoured as it suited the profile of the adolescent best by creating space for their own narratives as part of the healing process.

The study finally indicated that a pastoral narrative approach has the potential of leading the affected adolescent to healing by helping them to re-tell the problem saturated stories caused by parental divorce.

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