

Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce

By

Donalda Halabuza

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty of Social Work

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

© 2009 by Donalda Halabuza

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce

BY

Donalda Halabuza

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

Of

Doctor of Philosophy

Donalda Halabuza © 2009

**Permission has been granted to the University of Manitoba Libraries to lend a copy of this
thesis/practicum, to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) to lend a copy of this
thesis/practicum, and to LAC's agent (UMI/ProQuest) to microfilm, sell copies and to
publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.**

**This reproduction or copy of this thesis has been made available by authority of the
copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research, and may only be
reproduced and copied as permitted by copyright laws or with express written
authorization from the copyright owner.**

Abstract

Research in divorce has not shown how family resilience can be fostered in post-divorce families; instead the predominant focus has been to identify problems, stresses, and strains of divorce. Results from studies have shown great variation resulting in a limited understanding about what parents can do to manage the divorce transition in a manner that promotes family resilience. This study has utilized a salutogenic orientation in seeking to determine the process of resilience for families of divorce. A salutogenic approach in research shifts the focus from searching for problems to searching for qualities and processes that facilitate health.

This qualitative study has utilized narrative methods to understand how positive adaptation was fostered. Using a holistic-content model of analysis, this study sought to discover patterns and themes of resilience. The theoretical frameworks used to guide the development of this study were family stress and coping theory, ecological theory, and a salutogenic perspective.

In-depth interviews were conducted with seven parents in three different stages of the family life cycle. Each parent provided the primary residence for their children and had either sole or joint legal custody. This approach allowed me to obtain a retrospective account of how resilience within the family was fostered.

This thesis described adversities associated with divorce and identified resources that were used to overcome them. Resources helped by building a strong sense of coherence within primary parents. Family resilience was depicted as a process involving personal qualities of parents and children, family characteristics, and resources in interaction with developmental, and divorce problems. The identities of primary parents

were pivotal in facilitating family resilience by determining how resources were used and which ones were needed. Resources were based on pre-divorce problems and reasons for separation.

Results are depicted in two broad categories: “Stories of Violence” and “Stories of Betrayal.” Barriers to justice are described in “Stories of Violence” as are the resources used to find safety. The “Stories of Betrayal” highlighted the importance of good parenting, basing decisions on children’s developmental needs, and showed how parenting was shared.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Harvy Frankel, chair, and committee members Dr. Tuula Heinonen and Dr. Jason Brown and to express my appreciation to Dr. Rachel Birnbaum, University of Western Ontario, for her participation as an external member on my dissertation committee. I extend my most sincere thanks to my editors and advisor for their helpful feedback. There are many people, specifically family law lawyers and certain judges in the Court of Queen's Bench in Regina who provided timely encouragement and assistance along the way for which I am grateful. Finally, I want to thank my friends who have encouraged and supported me during this process.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge and express gratitude to the Saskatchewan Law Foundation and to the Endowment Fund, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba for the grants I received to complete this study.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIV
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Organization of the dissertation.....	3
Background to the problem	5
Definition of terms.....	13
Definition of family resilience.....	13
Definition of adversity in divorce.....	15
Joint custody and shared custody	16
Separation and divorce	17
Family-oriented approach.....	18
Theoretical framework.....	19
Statement of the problem to be investigated.....	20
CHAPTER 2	30
LITERATURE REVIEW	30
Introduction.....	30
Part 1 – Canadian statistics on divorce	31
Divorce trends.....	32
Part 2 – Statistics and research on divorce as a process	34
Child support	36

Child custody statistics	38
Trend of joint custody.....	41
Part 3 - Research on children of divorce	45
Characteristics of children and adjustment.....	47
Microenvironment – Parents and Parenting	52
Contact between children and the non-residential parent.....	54
Parental conflict.....	59
Parental adjustment.....	63
Children and parental adjustment	65
Parental adjustment based on gender.....	66
Economic decline.....	68
Social support	70
Critical review of the research.....	71
Overview of the literature on risk and resilience.....	74
CHAPTER 3	79
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	79
Introduction.....	79
1. Ecological Theory.....	82
Ontogenetic.....	84
Microsystem	85
Mesosystem	86
Exosystem.....	87
Macrosystem.....	88

2. Salutogenic Approach.....	89
3. Family Stress and Coping Theory	94
Sense of coherence & appraisals	99
Family meanings.....	100
Concept of demands	102
Family capacities	104
Bonadaptation	104
CHAPTER 4	107
METHODOLOGY	107
Introduction.....	107
Part 1 - What is narrative research?	108
Fit with theories	110
Relevance of narrative research.....	111
What are stories?.....	113
Purpose of study	116
Part 2 - Research methods	118
Pilot test of interview guidelines and interview process	120
Data collection for the study.....	123
Selection criteria	123
Recruitment of participants.....	126
Part 3 - Ethical issues and challenges	128
Risks and benefits	128
Consent for parents (Appendix H).....	130

Anonymity and confidentiality	135
Compensation	136
Conflict of interest and power relationships	137
Influence of the researcher in the interview process.....	138
Part 4 – Interviewing and analysis.....	140
Interview guide (Appendix A).....	140
Research interview.....	141
Transcription.....	147
Narrative analysis	149
Process of analysis.....	154
Part 5 - Reliability and validity.....	156
CHAPTER 5	161
FINDINGS.....	161
Introduction.....	161
Part 1 – “Stories of Violence”	163
Sadie’s Story: We survived	163
Family resilience is safety	164
Perseverance in overcoming injustice	166
The importance of functional support in resilience	173
Hope and self-responsibility as keys to resilience.....	175
Chelsea’s story: Turning adversity into opportunity	177
Escaping abuse as a first step in achieving economic independence	177
Importance of understanding domestic violence by legal counsel	180

Setting boundaries and acquiring knowledge	182
Turning adversity into opportunity	183
Economic security is family resilience	185
Redefining family after divorce.....	187
Cindy’s story: Forgiveness, not just for yourself but for the children.....	188
Forgiveness is a component in family resilience	190
Trust in legal counsel and a positive role model enabled rebuilding	191
Importance of women’s shelters and counselling.....	193
Remarriage does not mean the father’s role is replaced	194
Never criticizing the non-resident parent	196
Braiden’s story: Lessons learned the hard way	198
Being allowed to be a father is family resilience in high-conflict divorce	199
Taking personal responsibility in high-conflict divorce	201
Shared residence does not work in high-conflict divorce.....	202
Hope... something to look forward to	204
Chris’s story - A child’s view of family resilience after divorce	205
Hope and positive expectations	205
Awareness of parental relationships	206
Grandfather as a main support.....	207
Synthesis of findings from “Stories of Violence”	207
Part 2 – “Stories of Betrayal”	215
Lydia’s story: My kids are my life	215
Stability and consistency for the children.....	216

Importance of parental cooperation	218
Never criticizing the other parent	219
Both parents being involved in decision making for children	220
Understanding divorce based on the children's perspective.....	222
Importance of economic independence for mothers.....	223
Resolving legal matters to achieve stability	224
Cathy's story: I am a mother: I will not fail!	225
Face problems directly.....	226
Compromises are needed, but not when it comes to children	227
Story of compromise and marriage.....	228
Compromise in having children.....	228
Compromise on the timing of the separation.....	229
Compromise and Collaborative Law	229
Setting clear boundaries is critical to cooperation	231
Self-care and importance of social support for good parenting.....	232
Good parenting is family resilience	233
Theresa's story: Getting the answers I needed	235
Research to find answers	236
Refusal to be defeated by divorce.....	237
Utilizing advice to help children adjust	238
Research to achieve stability	238
Empathy is needed for co-parenting	240
Father's role in helping children adjust	241

Boundaries to co-parent	243
Need for positive role models and getting past self-blame.....	246
Redefining divorce facilitated resilience	247
Synthesis of findings from “Stories of Betrayal”	248
Common themes from all stories	254
Financial ability to support themselves and their children	254
Counselling and education.....	254
Legal aspects and domestic violence.....	256
Importance of openness and introspection	257
Post-secondary education	263
Safety is normal	263
Divorce is normal	263
CHAPTER 6	264
THEORETICAL ANALYSIS	264
Introduction.....	264
Part 1 – Family resilience and ecological theory.....	265
Part 2 - Salutogenic perspective and family stress and coping theory.....	272
Meaning of the stressful situation.....	274
Meaning of identity as a family	276
Meaning of family worldview	278
Comprehensible	280
Manageable.....	281
Part 3 – Family resilience and domestic violence	285

Synthesis	292
CHAPTER 7	297
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	297
Evaluation of research methodology	297
Summary of findings	300
Implications for practice	305
Counselling that reinforces a strong sense of coherence	305
Counselling to help parents foster a sense of belonging and stability	308
Encourage parental cooperation and by developing clear boundaries.....	309
Importance of understanding children's needs and perceptions	311
Importance of employment and good wages for family resilience.....	311
Recommendations and implications	313
The importance of continued funding for domestic violence programs	313
The pivotal role of the court for safety for mothers and children.....	314
Financial resources are a prerequisite for legal services and safety	315
Risk-benefit screening to determine parenting plans.....	315
Clarification of child protection policy and training in domestic violence	317
Training for police on domestic violence	319
Importance of child development literature on risk and resilience in practice....	319
Summary of recommendations for policy	321
Summary of recommendations for practice.....	322
Recommendations for future research	324
Final comments.....	325

REFERENCES	327
APPENDICES	366
APPENDIX A.....	366
Questionnaire for Parental Interview	366
APPENDIX B	370
Questionnaire For Children’s Interview	370
APPENDIX C	374
Commentary regarding sample recruitment	374
APPENDIX D.....	378
Guide for Telephone Screening	378
APPENDIX E	381
Review of Ethical Considerations	381
APPENDIX F	383
Contacts to Obtain a Sample.....	383
APPENDIX G.....	390
Invitation to Participate in a Research Project.....	390
APPENDIX H.....	391
Consents for Parents in Study & in Pilot Interviews	391
APPENDIX I	393
Consent form for Children’s Signature.....	393
APPENDIX J	395
Parental Consent Form for Children’s Participation In Research	396
APPENDIX K.....	399

Review of Methods of Narrative Analysis	399
APPENDIX L	409
Approval from University of Manitoba Ethics Board	409
APPENDIX M	410
Approval from University of Manitoba Ethics Board	410
APPENDIX N	411
Demographic Profile of Participants and their Children	411
APPENDIX O	414
Letter from Catholic Family Services	414

List of Tables

TABLE 1 - Distribution of Children with Separated Parents in 1994-95 and 1998-99 According to Type of Custody and Living Arrangements at the Time of Separation, NLSCY, Cycles 1-3	40
TABLE 2 - Court-ordered Custody Arrangements at Separation, by Type of Broken Union, NLSCY, Cycle 1 (1994-95)	41
TABLE 3 - Comparison of Themes from “Stories of Violence” Based on Ecological Theory	213
TABLE 4 - Comparison of Themes from “Stories of Betrayal” Based on Ecological Theory	252
TABLE 5 - Comparison of Findings from “Stories of Violence” and “Stories of Betrayal” Based on Ecological Theory	258

Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation examined the concept of family resilience as it applied to families of divorce. This dissertation strived to answer the multi-faceted question, “What resources, beliefs, and actions help families to maintain and restore family resilience while in the midst of divorce?” This exploration specifically sought to identify personal qualities of parents that facilitated children’s adjustment, what formal and informal supports were supportive, and how these supports were helpful. I wanted to know what family members did and what helped them through the divorce transition. The “family” was the unit of analysis even though the primary informants or participants were parents. My definition of family consisted of the parent who had primary residence with their children and had either sole or joint legal custody.

This qualitative study used narrative methods to understand how families positively adapted after divorce (Cohler, 1991, 1994; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). The focus was not only to identify the risks and protective processes, but also to understand how resilience was promoted within the family unit. In the original research design two interviews were to be conducted, one with the parents and one with the children, to obtain a co-constructed narrative about family resilience. However, due to the low response rate for children’s participation, the research design was based on parental perceptions of family resilience in divorce. I anticipated that there were various pathways leading to resilience, which depended upon the family’s culture, history, social location, and internal qualities. Pathways to successful coping and adaptation must be understood within the ecological context specific to each family (Barton, 2005).

Therefore ecological theory, family stress and coping theory, and a salutogenic perspective were used to guide my inquiry. Results showed there were various pathways leading to resilience, which depended upon the parents' pre-divorce history, social location of the family, and resources were selected based on personal qualities of the primary parents.

Organization of the dissertation

Chapter 2, the *Literature Review* begins with a review of divorce statistics to illustrate the current divorce rates and to show that it is unlikely divorce rates will significantly decrease. In this chapter, I provide an overview of longitudinal studies that reflect the reality of divorce and its implications in Canadian society. Longitudinal research is included because it represents divorce as a process and shows that divorce is only one form of several family transitions that occur over the course of a life cycle of families. This chapter also provides the context of divorce by reviewing literature on lone parenting and poverty, child support, changes in legal child custody and residency, and patterns of shared custody. I include a review of the literature on various themes common in divorce research: specifically the impact of divorce on children, economic decline, the impact of parental conflict, parental adjustment, the quality of parent-child relationships after divorce, and research based on family stress and coping theory. Because the topic of this study is family resilience, I include a summary of risk and resilience literature on child development.

Chapter 3 is the *Theoretical Framework* that is used as a foundation for this study. This research was based on a salutogenic perspective, ecological theory, and family stress and coping theory. Because these theories are interrelated, I explain how they overlap and how they are interconnected to provide a consistent approach in this study. In addition, key concepts from each of these theoretical frameworks are explained separately, showing how they apply to divorce and resilience.

In Chapter 4, the *Methodology* is described, starting with defining narrative methods and showing how this methodology complements the theories chosen for this

study. I describe the entire research design: the selection criteria of participants, the data collection, and the interview as well as ethical considerations. I discuss transcription and the process of analysis, ending the chapter with an examination of reliability and validity.

Chapter 5 outlines the *Findings* resulting from this research. The findings are broken down into two general groups “Stories of Violence” and “Stories of Betrayal” illustrating different pathways families used to become resilient after divorce. I include a summary at the end of each section and a synthesis of the findings from all the stories. I conclude this chapter with three tables displaying the results in a succinct manner.

In Chapter 6, *Theoretical Analysis*, I describe how the results apply to theories chosen for this study. I explain the findings and provide meaning based on ecological theory, family stress and coping theory, and a salutogenic perspective.

In Chapter 7, the *Conclusion and Implications*, I provide an evaluation of the methodology used in this study and summarize the findings, outlining implications for practice and policy by highlighting the importance of certain results. I end by including a list of recommendations and considerations for future research.

Background to the problem

In recent years, the concepts of resilience and family strengths have become more apparent in social work literature as we seek to identify “what works” for families facing various adversities (Early & GlenMaye, 2000; Graybeal, 2001). De-pathologizing family functioning has led to what is commonly known as the strengths perspective in social work practice (Saleebey, 1997, 2002; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, & Kisthardt, 1989). A basic tenet of this approach is that all people possess internal strengths. There are also strengths in social environments that enable people to cope with stress and trauma. These concepts provide the foundation of this study, which is based on a salutogenic perspective (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987). A salutogenic orientation has been used in health research to focus on what contributes to wellness rather than pathology or illness (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987).

In family resilience research, little is written about how families facing divorce emerge as resilient (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). This occurs in part because divorce is viewed as the dissolution of the family unit (Ahrons, 1994). As a result, research has focused upon individual functioning, such as how parents adjust or how children are affected, rather than family functioning. I saw a need for research from a salutogenic perspective to discover what contributes to family resilience in divorce. The predominant focus of divorce research has been on problems. Yet, in everyday life, we know that many families facing divorce emerge as resilient (Hetherington, 2003) and many children of divorced parents do not show long-term negative effects (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

The literature on separation and divorce has identified many of the problems and risks associated with divorce, but it has not adequately addressed the process of how family resilience is maintained or sustained during divorce. Much divorce research focuses on pathology and has sought to identify risks, rather than wellness (Halabuza, 2004); therefore, there is limited understanding about what families can do to manage this difficult adjustment so as to emerge as resilient. A lack of knowledge with regard to how resiliency is achieved has been identified as a gap in studies on divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999) as well as in studies on resiliency in children (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1999, 2000). To more fully understand how divorce affects families, it is equally as important to focus on how wellness is maintained as well as what problems occur. Understanding successful adaptation can strengthen the conceptual base needed to guide and frame both preventative and treatment interventions for families in the process of divorce. Results could inform public policy in the area of family law and court annexed services.

My interest in this area came as a result of my work in providing family mediation and completing custody, access, and various other assessments for the courts. Previous to this, I spent most of my career working with high-risk families and vulnerable children. From this experience, I was able to clearly identify risks and some protective mechanisms when families were neglectful or abusive of children. However, it was not always clear what the protective processes were that enabled positive functioning in divorce. In completing custody reports, I was dismayed by the focus on pathology in the research, which did not inform practice. Yet, I understood the need to research problems of divorce because it was often the most difficult families who came before the

for the courts for assistance. In addition, I quickly learned that when custody reports were ordered, it was often for families where there had been a history of multiple problems, including divorce. I also knew that there were many families who were able to successfully manage this difficult transition, however, the process of how they coped was not reflected in the literature. This led to a salutogenic focus in my study with intentions to better understand how resilience was fostered and how resources were beneficial. By better understanding the positive adaptation of resilient families, it was my hope that I could present another perspective of families of divorce that described processes they used to overcome this transition. Results could point to ways that will better assist divorcing families in the future.

A resilience perspective focuses an understanding on “how the family renegotiates relationships, creates new family structures, and reorganizes their lives to create meanings in response to divorce” (Golby & Bretherton, 1999, p. 239). Divorce is conceptualized as a process of multiple transitions. In most situations, children maintain a sense of family and relationships with both parents (Ahrons, 1999; Thompson & Amato, 1999). Using qualitative methods and narrative approaches allows us to understand family resilience from a retrospective lens. This approach helps identify how protective processes interact with problems so that positive adaptation is fostered. A resilience approach to the study of social phenomena provides a different way of thinking in that “it shifts the focus to an etiology of health rather than an etiology of problems” (Ungar, 2005, p. xvi).

The focus in most research on divorce has been on children’s or adult’s adjustment, not on family adjustment. In recent years, parent-child relationships and

parenting skills were considered in the research (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Golby & Bretherton, 1999). However, the concept of family was not considered; rather, it was non-resident parents' and children's relationships that were the focus of inquiry, or the parenting of the resident parent. This study aims to look at "family" resilience, not individual adjustment or dyad relationships between children and non-residential parents. The goal of much research has been to discover the exact strains and stresses of divorce; to determine how children have been adversely affected; to understand reasons marriages fail; and to understand how parent-child relationships have been impacted. The underlying notion of many of these studies was that divorce resulted in pathology. Results were based on group comparisons of divorced and non-divorced families resulting in a "deficit model." This research did not consider divorce as process; rather it was seen as a static event. From an ecological perspective, families from very different ecological niches were compared. This orientation did not take into account protective factors within the family, in their social relationships, or in the community.

More recent Canadian longitudinal studies have shown that adults may have several conjugal relationships over a lifetime, each resulting in family transitions similar to the transition of divorce (Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2001, 2003, 2004). In fact, it has been suggested that adults engage in serial relationships over a lifetime (Amato & Booth, 1997; Ambert, 2002). Results show that children and parents may undergo multiple transitions such as parental separation, parental remarriage, addition of stepsiblings, birth of half siblings and new stepparents (Juby, Billette, & Le Bourdais, 2007; Juby, Marcil-Gratton, & Le Bourdais, 2005). Therefore, divorce is conceptualized as a process and is considered only one of many possible life transitions.

Research found there were benefits associated with divorce for both men and women, but especially for women who escaped violence and control. Other studies found divorce was a benefit for both genders when highly conflictual marriages ended and for children if they were no longer in a conflictual home environment (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Ambert, 2002; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). There can be salutogenic benefits to divorce in that many women are able to build self-esteem, mastery, and self-efficacy after divorce (Riessman, 1990). From a feminist perspective, divorce has been reconceptualized as “resistance” not as deviance (Rice & Rice, 1986) and as “adaptative” when women choose to depart from abusive or oppressive relationships (Rice, 1994, p. 577).

A diversity approach in divorce research has focused on specific aspects of divorce in efforts to determine patterns of adjustment over time and to determine risk and protective factors associated with adjustment (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). It became evident that there was much diversity in adjustment, with the majority of families emerging as resilient (Hetherington, 2003). However, there had not been inquiry into the specifics of how families overcome this transition to emerge as resilient (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). In fact, family resilience and divorce were treated as mutually exclusive concepts, in that divorce would not occur if a family were resilient. .

Unlike other studies, the focus of this inquiry was to discover salubrious aspects of divorce. Resilience research considers how risk affects families and individuals and how these adversities are overcome. In this study, the risk or adversity was the divorce transition and associated problems. The focus was on how the family mastered these problems. By using a salutogenic perspective, I searched for factors, resources, or

personal qualities that promoted positive adaptation and wellness in context of the problems at hand.

Salutogenic approaches consider health and wellness on a continuum rather than as an either/or proposition (Antonovsky, 1979). Therefore resilience was not considered a static state in this dissertation. It varied depending upon the family's current circumstances, resources, and functioning. Inherent in a salutogenic orientation is a family's or individual's *sense of coherence*, which refers to a worldview in which stressors are seen as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1987). This approach posits that one's sense of coherence determines coping methods.

I have used three theoretical frameworks to analyze and conceptualize my research questions and results: family stress and coping theory, ecological theory, and a salutogenic perspective. Family stress and coping theory has been used in studies of divorce (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986; Wang & Amato, 2000; White & Mika, 1983). The advantage of this theory is that it places the transition of divorce into a more normalized framework of family stress. From a practice perspective, recognizing what contributes to resilience is as important as understanding the origins of problems. Family stress and coping theory helps understand how parents and families appraise stressors, their personal resources, and demands.

Salutogenic inquiries strive to uncover family strengths based on a continuum and process. Ecological theory shows that there are different pathways to resilience depending upon one's socio-cultural location (De Haan, Hawley, & Deal, 2002; Hawley, 2000; Ungar, 2005). Therefore, an ecological perspective has been pivotal in determining how families adapt to divorce in context of their socio-cultural location.

There is no blueprint for resilience, and the goal of this inquiry was to describe different pathways associated with positive coping and adaptation in divorce leading to family resilience. An important objective of this study was to determine what protective mechanisms existed and how they helped facilitate a positive adaptation in families of divorce. A secondary purpose was to determine whether there were similarities between families to understand if there were common protective processes in parents, the family, or in the environment that helped families traverse their pathway following divorce. By studying family resilience, problems were not ignored, but the focus was on the *process* and *how* resources facilitated positive adaptation in the face of adversity. In essence, the central research question was, “How do parents of divorce promote family resilience within the family unit?” I wanted to understand the *process* of resilience.

Secondary questions were:

- What were the biggest challenges families faced in divorce?
- What resources were used?
- How were these resources helpful?
- What meaning did divorce have in the life of the family?
- What values, beliefs, or personal characteristics were helpful?
- What kinds of social support were helpful to parents and to children?
- What were the key decisions parents made that they felt fostered resilience?
- What was their definition of good family functioning after divorce?
- What services would better promote other families’ adaptation to divorce?

It was not my objective to capture the entire experience of divorce but rather to look at how family members coped with the normative and non-normative stressors

associated with this transition over time. I based my questions on a strengths perspective. They were formulated to search for parental strengths; family capacities; and resources within the family, in their social network, and in the community. This study aimed to describe how resilience was fostered and provides insight into variations of adaptation.

I used questions that sought to identify personal characteristics of parents and families that promoted resilience, as well as questions about how their environment contributed. Three broad areas have been identified as “keys to resilience.” They are parental perceptions of “the families’ belief systems (what sense does the family make of adversity); organizational patterns (connectedness, flexibility, and resources); and communication processes (problem solving, clarity, and emotional expression)” (Walsh, 1998, p. 24). These broad areas were useful in conceptualizing my interview questions. The complete research questions for parents and children are included in Appendices A and B of this dissertation.

I hoped to extend our understanding of the process of family resilience during divorce by using the family as the unit of analysis. Because divorce potentially can involve multiple systems, the results are applicable to mental health practitioners; social workers and psychologists in court annexed programs; family law lawyers; the judiciary; and the courts. This study aimed to advance our knowledge of how to help divorcing families by explaining what formal and informal supports were helpful and most importantly, how these were helpful. The study also addressed concerns about how services are provided; therefore, the results could inform policy in family law service or how to enhance services for families of divorce. Results may assist in custody and access evaluations by identifying qualities, characteristics, and dynamics that promote resilience.

Definition of terms

Definition of family resilience

The literature on resilience has originated from studies of child development and family stress. Both literatures examined positive outcomes in conditions of adversity and both are concerned about family relationships. Developmental studies have focused on child adaptation with an emphasis on identifying protective factors, processes, or mechanisms (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, Garmezy, & Best, 1990; Rutter, 1987, 1999). Family stress literature has focused on processes within the family and family resources (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005; McCubbin, McCubbin, & Thompson, 1995, 1996).

Resilience is a concept used to describe the *process* of adaptation to severe and often cumulative stressors that are both normative (expected over the life course) and non-normative (unexpected turns of events that create permanent changes in families) (Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987). In studies on children, it has also been demonstrated that resilience is not a steady state but fluctuates with the risk and protective factors operating at any given time (Rutter, 1999). Resilience is described as a process that is contextually embedded in the environment. Therefore, identifying the processes that influence positive adaptation is unique to each family and is influenced by interactions within the environment.

More recent studies have concentrated on how resilience can be studied across cultures and contexts (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005). This research has helped deepen understanding of the fundamental importance of culture in the definition and acquisition of resilience. Ecological contexts of individuals and families are vital in understanding how resilience is achieved as a process, not as an outcome (Garbarino, Dubrow,

Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Rutter, 1987; Ungar & Lienbenberg, 2005). The process of how resilience is achieved has been referred to as an “ordinary process” whereby risks are buffered by resources in the environment (Masten, 2001).

The definition of resilience that is central in this inquiry is borrowed from Hawley and De Haan (1996):

Family resilience describes the path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. Resilient families positively respond to these conditions in unique ways, depending on the context, developmental level, the interactive combination of risk and protective factors, and the family’s shared outlook. (p. 293)

Resilience research can be described as salutogenic because strengths are emphasized and it is seen on a continuum (Antonovsky, 1987). The concept of resilience is not to be confused with self-sufficiency or invulnerability (Walsh, 1998). Family resiliency is conceptualized as a *process in response to significant risk factors*. It does not refer to good family functioning in absence of risk. Resilience surfaces in the face of hardships and has been referred to as the ability to bounce back to pre-crises level of functioning (Hawley, 2000; Walsh, 1998, 2002, 2003). While this definition adheres to the individualist competitive ideology of North America, the essence of the term is based on an ecologically contextualized set of patterns. Resilience is a process of ongoing interactions between risk factors and the environment that act together with personal qualities of an individual to enable them to overcome adversity. Pathways of resilience are unique to each family, including qualities on an individual level, family processes, and the community, with each level being unique yet interdependent (Hawley, 2000).

If the stressors are numerous and there are few protective processes in the environment, Garbarino has pointed out that “virtually every person has a breaking point but each threat costs him or her something.... Even apparent successful functioning may obscure some of the costs to individual’s inner lives” (p. xi). Rutter (1987, 1999) defined risk as three or more risk factors that create a synergy which can lead to a negative or positive trajectory depending upon interaction with the environment. We know from resilience research that active ingredients of risk do not lie in the variable itself, such as divorce, but in the set of processes that flow from the variable (Cowan, Cowan, & Schultz, 1996; Rutter 1987, 1999, 2004). Therefore, adaptative pathways which families use in their adjustment to divorce are linked to resilience or to an increase in problems.

Definition of adversity in divorce

Because divorce has become a common phenomenon, there is some question as to whether divorce is a significant enough adversity (risk) to warrant being considered in resiliency research. However, despite the frequency of divorce in our society, family changes associated with divorce are stressful, cumulative, and create enough adversities to warrant research into divorce in family stress literature (Ahrons, 1983; Golby & Bretherton, 1999). Divorce is a family crisis because it consists of multiple transitions in roles, boundaries, and family dynamics. It is not an event, but a series of events consisting of pre-divorce problems, a crisis in family functioning, and a process of adjustment. Divorce creates a series of stressors that occur in context of normative changes within the family resulting in a pileup of strains. In addition, there are few social norms that govern families’ transitions during or after divorce (Riessman, 1990, 1991).

To some families, divorce is associated with a negative spiral of events, consisting of poverty, repeated moves (often to high-risk neighbourhoods), decline in parenting, ongoing parental conflict, and multiple family transitions as parents change partners. To other families, divorce is still a painful and difficult process, but over time evolves into improved functioning for the parents and children. Even when there are a number of risk factors evident, personal qualities and resources within individuals, their families, and other social groups provide protective mechanisms, which create a positive spiral of events, or prevent a negative spiral for families considered to be at risk (Gilgun, 1999).

Joint custody and shared custody

Joint custody implies children's "legal" custody is shared, giving parents joint responsibility for important decisions such as education or religion. This definition is based on rights of parents. However, legal custody decisions do not define living arrangements for children. There are times when parents are cooperative and work together to make joint decisions as well as share parenting responsibility and residence of the children on an equal basis. Other times parents cannot cooperate but share time on a structured basis.

In this paper I have used the term joint custody to mean legal custody only. It does not mean that children live with both parents equally nor does not mean that both parents have "equal" decision-making power. It means both parents are involved and have some decision-making power. Shared custody is often used interchangeably with joint custody, but depending upon the country, province, or jurisdiction, these terms do not mean the same thing. For example, shared custody has been referred to as shared

parenting, joint physical custody, time-sharing, co-parenting, dual parenting, or dual residential placement (Moyer, 2004). In Canada, shared custody is defined in the 1997 Federal Child Support Guidelines under the *Divorce Act* as an arrangement in which children spend 40% of their time living with each parent (The Child Support Guidelines, 2006).

In practice, parents who have joint legal custody often have a parent designated as the *primary caregiver* or *primary residence* while the non-resident parent has designated times to parent. Also in practice, some joint custody orders are very similar to sole custody in terms of where children reside (Juby, Marcil-Gratton, & Le Bourdais, 2004).

Separation and divorce

Separation means that a couple was legally married and decided to end the marriage by not co-habiting, or a couple who were living common-law and decided to live separate and apart. Divorce is the legal ending of a marital relationship. Because marriage is a legal status in Canadian society, the court grants divorces. There are many different family formations in Canadian society, such as common-law; lone parents who have never co-habited; lone parents as a result of divorce; or common-law relationships that break up; or divorced parents and their children living together in a common-law relationship. In addition, there are blended families where one or both parents were previously married and have children from other relationships, as well as children born into a second or third marriage. This study specifically deals with parents who were legally married and then divorced. In some situations these parents were co-habiting or remarried.

Single or lone parent families consist of one parent and children. These families exist as a result of divorce, separation of common-law unions, or women who have children without living with the fathers. If common-law couples separate, similar dynamics occur as when married couples separate. In addition, there continue to be growing numbers of single women having children outside of common-law unions or marriage relationships. In this dissertation, I used a legal definition of separation and divorce, in part to include families who have only experienced one family transition. With multiple family transitions, there may be other factors that account for difficulties in divorce, such as mental health problems, addictions, and domestic violence. In this study, all participants had been married prior to separation. My sample included one participant who was living common-law subsequent to his divorce and another participant who was remarried.

Family-oriented approach

In this study I have used a family-oriented approach with the focus on family functioning. In the context of these terms, the questionnaires used in the parental interviews were based on discovering how parents helped children adjust, what they did to contribute to a sense of family, and how resources helped the family. My primary informants were parents; thus, I obtained parental perceptions of family functioning and family resilience. I recognized that the primary parent largely influences children's adjustment and the family dynamics after separation. Therefore parental adjustment was important, but the overall aim was to discover how parents helped foster family resilience.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used for analysis of resilience was based on ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986), a salutogenic perspective (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987) and family stress and coping theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). It is important to note that the term *sense of coherence* is based on a salutogenic perspective. A family's *sense of coherence* is also inherent in how stressors are appraised in family stress and coping theory (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, & Fromer, 1994). In addition, the way families respond to adversity is dependent upon their internal resources and resources in their environment. Therefore, these theories are mutually reinforcing and consistent.

My rationale for using these theoretical approaches is that pathways to resilience are determined by the socio-cultural environment of the family and are interactive with the characteristics of the parents and children. Based on family stress and coping theory, adjustment after adversity is based on interactions between the family's appraisal of stressors, developmentally normative stressors occurring at the time, family dynamics, and family resources. In the following section I will present an overview of the current research on divorce, which demonstrates the reasons for this inquiry.

Statement of the problem to be investigated

The research on divorce does not reflect the process or resources that lead to family resilience. It reflects individual adjustment with a focus on children and parents. There is limited research on relationships between children and the non-custodial parent, often the father. The three main gaps in the literature in divorce I found were: a lack of a salutogenic focus, not using the family as the unit of analysis, and not considering the socio-cultural environmental context of the family. This has led to policy and programming decisions based on knowing what does not work and based on a “common sense” mainstream view of how families should be. There is no research that has studied divorce from a salutogenic perspective of family resilience; rather the focus has been to try and understand problems of divorce.

In early research, divorce was represented as dissolution of the family, focusing on reasons why marriages failed (1940s –1970s). This research reflected societal norms of the times which assumed that two-parent family structures were necessary for successful child socialization and development, and that father absence would create serious adverse consequences, especially for boys (Emery, 1988; Hetherington & Stanley- Hagen, 1999). These underlying beliefs led to numerous studies that sought to quantify the risks for children from divorce and compare them to children whose parents remained together. Families of divorce were negatively portrayed as “broken home,” “disorganized,” “fractured,” “incomplete,” and “fatherless” (Ahrons, 1983). During this time, research results were consistent with the dominant paradigm, or predominant ideological belief, that children were best reared in two-parent homes.

Overall, research has shown that children of divorce have more problems in comparison to children whose parents stay together, but these differences were not of a large magnitude (Amato & Keith, 1991a, 1991b; Bernardini & Jenkins, 2002; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). While children from divorced families were considered to be at greater risk for developing more social, emotional, behavioural, and academic problems, most (approximately 80%) emerged as reasonably competent and well-adjusted individuals (Emery, 1982, 1998; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). Therefore, even though risk factors emerged, there was also considerable variation in the divorce experience for families and children. It was found that the children who did have adjustment problems (approximately 20%), had a greater number and severity of problems, but approximately 80% of children showed no evidence of adjustment difficulties and, in fact, some even functioned better than children raised in intact families (Emery 1998; Greene, Anderson, Hetherington, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2003; Hetherington, 1989).

Research did show that children from divorced families were over-represented in delinquent populations (Amato & Keith, 1991a, 1991b; Emery, 1998; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). They were found to exhibit a more severe array of behavioural, social, academic, and psychological problems than children whose parents did not divorce (Ibid.). As Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1999) have pointed out, many of these studies failed to investigate mediating and moderating factors, such as the time since parental separation, individual parent and child characteristics, family process variables, and other transactional factors such as economic decline and reduction in living standards. It was noted that some research was based on clinical samples of families who

had other problems besides divorce (Wallerstein, 1986). Results from studies based on clinical samples were not representative of most families of divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). It is clear that the extent to which children are affected by divorce is dependent on their environment, parenting skills, and other family dynamics which cannot be attributable to the legal status of their parents' relationship.

After the late 1960s, divorce became more common, leading to divorce being regarded as more socially accepted rather than as a personal or family pathology (Ahrons, 1983). These views led to research into specific aspects of divorce associated with risk or maladjustment for children. Representative samples were used in longitudinal studies to determine patterns of adjustment over time. From this research, ongoing parental conflict emerged as the strongest predictor and risk factor for children in any family type (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995; Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1989; Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Kienan, Robbins, Morrison & Teitler, 1991).

Social policy analysts and practitioners were concerned about the problems faced by families of divorce. Therefore, they were interested in understanding causes of divorce so as to devise multi-systemic interventions to reduce parental conflict and develop parenting plans for children (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Kelly & Johnston, 2001). Research concentrated on the most problematic families of divorce because they posed the most difficult problems for the courts, the helping community, and society (Ambert, 2002; Bernardini & Jenkins, 2002; Kelly & Johnston, 2001; Lamp & Kelly, 2001). Concerns about parental violence, child alienation, parental mental health problems, child protection allegations, and child maladjustment dominated the research.

High-conflict families were represented as “typical” in the literature, and divorce was portrayed as the cause of many problems for children and families.

The way results were communicated also contributed to a view that children and parents of divorce had more problems than others. For example, about 20 – 25 % of children from divorced families show high levels of problem behaviours compared to 10% of children from non-divorced families¹ (Hetherington & Chingempeel, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Simons & Associates, 1996). We could also interpret and rephrase this result to show that 80% of children do not show any serious difficulties in relation to their parents’ divorce. The first statement emphasizes pathology and the second emphasizes resilience. When we consider the substantial overlap in distribution, we can also conclude that 40% of children of divorce are better adjusted than their non-divorced counterparts (Greene, Anderson, Hetherington, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2003). Again this statement would emphasize resilience, not pathology.

An emphasis on problems was chosen because of concern for the future of family as an institution. There were concerns that especially boys would have problems without a father influence (Ahrns, 2002). The introduction and liberalization of divorce laws in 1968 and 1985 resulted in a vast increase in the divorce rates (Ambert, 2002), which increased concerns about the impact divorce would have on society. When divorced families were compared to “normal families,” phrases such as “fractured families” or “broken homes” were used that reflected societal assumptions about these families being inadequate or inferior to meeting children’s needs by having violated social normative assumptions (Ahrns, 1983). Even though there has largely been a focus on the problems

¹ Meta-analysis shows the ratio to be 17% of children from divorced families to have more problems as compared to 10% of children from parents that remained together (Amato & Keith, 1991b).

associated with divorce, variations in the divorce experience do emerge (Ambert, 2002; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999).

Through divorce research, we also learned that divorce can enhance the lives of children if it reduces parental conflict (Booth & Amato, 2001; Jelinek, 1998). It has been reported that children from high-conflict homes feel relieved when parents separate compared to those from low-conflict homes who report distress (Amato & Booth, 1997). Transitional problems for children dissipate within 1 to 2 years after divorce (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). Therefore, when children are studied, results carry significance as to what the findings will bear. Other studies found that some children exhibited problems 4 to 6 years after divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991b), but the problems could be due to other origins. Some research indicated that children of divorce exhibited lower problem-solving skills in their marriages as adults (Hetherington, 1999b) although selection of a stable, supportive spouse in adulthood could essentially eliminate the risk of divorce and increase individual functioning of adult children of divorce (Hetherington, 1999b; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Rutter, 1999, 2004). It is believed that children learn problem-solving skills in their family of origin. If they have witnessed their parents' inability to resolve conflict, it is likely they will not have learned productive problem solving, thus contributing to their problems as adults.

Overall, the best predictor for child maladjustment in divorce was found to be parental conflict, more so than absence of the one resident parent, troubled parent-child relationships, and economic disadvantage (Buechler, Anthony, Krishnakumar, Stone, Gerard, & Pemberton, 1997; Davis & Cummings, 1994). When divorce was associated with increased problems due to parental stress, conflict, and poverty, children from

divorce were at greater risk for emotional and psychological problems. When divorce was associated with a move to a more harmonious, less stressful situation, then children had similar adjustment to those from non-distressed families, often scoring higher in social responsibility and cognitive capacity (Amato, Rezac, & Booth, 1995; Greene, Anderson, Hetherington, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2003).

Research has shown that problems for children do not necessarily stem from divorce, but from other deteriorating conditions in the family prior to divorce (Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1986). Divorce can increase or decrease problems for children depending upon the quality of parenting and other family relational dynamics. In the absence of new stressors many children of divorce emerge as reasonably competent, well-adjusted adults (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 1999a).

In divorce research, the unit of analysis was often individual functioning such as children's reactions or parental adaptation; rarely was it based on family functioning. At times, the unit of analysis did consider parent-child relationships (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Golby & Bretherton, 1999) but the overall context of the family was absent. Divorce in essence was viewed as the dissolution of the family unit therefore analysis of individual functioning was justified. However, based on the perspective of family systems theory, overall family dynamics are pivotal to how individuals adapt (Owusu-Bempah, 1995). Research on children's adjustment was inconsistent and findings were often conflictual because family dynamics and environmental resources and risks were not considered. In resilience research the environment was pivotal to how children adapt (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

In recent years, there has been more research using family systems theory as an approach to examine the influence of relationships and interactions within the family structure (Amato, 1993; Amato & Fowler, 2002; Amato & Rodgers, 1997; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Katz & Woodlin, 2002; Owusu-Bempah, 1995; Vanderwater & Lansford, 1998). Studies based on family systems theory have shown that family dynamics affect and are affected by individual adjustment. Strolz and Ney (2002) used systems theory and incorporated an ecological approach to show how larger social systems impact the family specifically in regard to parental conflict. The results from this study described how the legal system and the professional helping system could either contribute to problems or provide structures to resolve problems depending on how they responded. Qualitative studies have used systems theory to explain variations in post-divorce parental relationships (Durst, Wedemeyer, & Zurcher, 1985). More recent literature has used a systems approach in describing child alienation in context of other professional systems involved (Kelly & Johnson, 2001). However, none of the research based on a systems analysis considers a salutogenic orientation.

Research about divorce has been based on quantitative studies using large samples but often with inadequate measures, sometimes using only two or three items and single informants to assess parental and family characteristics (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). This research has not shown what the interactions were between risk and protective processes resulting in variance explained by factors that fluctuate from sample to sample (Hetherington et al., 1998). Therefore results have not been conclusive in terms of causation. Other studies that used a smaller but less representative sample found that parenting mediates the adjustment on children in divorce (Forgatch, Patterson,

& Ray, 1996). Qualitative studies have provided more understanding about how variations in parenting affect children's development and adjustment (Golby & Bretherton, 1999). The literature does not reflect the lived experiences and feelings of divorced parents and children (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999).

When normative stressors were considered in quantitative studies on divorce and adolescence, results showed that divorce was more disruptive for teenagers and it was associated with other problems, such as school dropout, early parenthood, and elevated drug use (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1990; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). Other studies found good parental monitoring was a protective factor, especially with girls from divorced homes where they may become sexually active at a younger age or associate with older male peers (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). The age of children at the time of divorce is one important consideration when trying to account for effects of divorce. From an ecological perspective, risk and protective resources in the family's socio-cultural environment and the age of children determine coping abilities.

Overall, we can conclude that children are affected by divorce but there is little agreement about the extent, severity, and duration of problems children encounter due to parental separation (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Emery & Forehand, 1994; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). We also know divorce of high-conflict marriages can lead to improvements in children's functioning (Amato, 1995). It is inaccurate to conclude that divorce will substantively damage children, but it is equally inaccurate to ignore the practical and emotional struggles of children and their parents (Emery, 1994, 2000). The greatest risk for children is when they experience multiple marital transitions, whereby there are frequent, if not constant, adjustments (Kurdek, Fine, & Sinclair, 1995). These

changes would create a cumulative or ripple effect in the context of normative changes within the family. There would be limited stability because of constant adjustment to change.

It is clear that the impact on children is greater immediately after parental separation (and remarriage) but problems start to diminish in the 2nd year after divorce and in the 3rd to 5th year after remarriage (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002). It is also known that some children have delayed effects while others show severe adjustment difficulties immediately. The greatest differences in how children are affected are in the domains of externalizing behaviour, social responsibility, and academic and economic attainment (Amato, 2000; Bray, 1999; Emery, 1999) but the exact causes are unclear.

Family stress and coping theory has been suggested as a means to study divorce (White & Mika, 1983), but it has rarely been used to study family adaptation to divorce. One study that used this theory to study adult adaptation to divorce found that adjustment was positively associated with income, a new relationship or remarriage, attitudes towards divorce, and being the partner who initiated divorce (Wang & Amato, 2000). This research found little evidence to show that stressors associated with divorce (such as losing friends, declines in income, and moving) were associated with negative adaptation. Wang and Amato (2000) found the strongest predictor for positive adaptation was associated with a new partner, which could be considered a positive resource. This study did confirm family stress theory's premise that the definition of the stressful situation was key in how they adapted (Patterson, 2002). If divorce was viewed as a choice it was positively associated with adaptation, in that those who initiated divorce were the ones most able to move on emotionally.

Other studies have shown that women are more likely to initiate divorce even though they may be more financially disadvantaged (Braver, Whitely, & Ny, 1993; Gray & Sliver, 1990; Kitson, 1992). Therefore positive adaptation for women as compared to men was more common. The specific combination of events that enables positive coping was not identified.

Using family stress and coping theory it was found that parental perception of divorce was crucial to how people adapt and that stressors and resources were secondary (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986; Wang & Amato, 2000). According to Plummer and Koch-Hattem (1986), the perceived severity of divorce stressors or pileup of family stressors was more difficult for men as compared to women. Pileup stressors included changes in social network size, income change following divorce, severity of divorce, mental health resources, role flexibility, rules prohibiting emotional expression, and satisfaction with child custody arrangements. In this study it was suggested that women have more social network skills with which to facilitate their adjustment to divorce, whereas men must develop social networks at the time of divorce and are therefore disadvantaged and have greater difficulty adjusting (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986). This study showed the presence of children to be helpful in parental adjustment, in that it led to more of a hopeful stance in life. There were no differences in regard to decreased income.

In the following chapter, I will provide a more thorough and comprehensive review of the literature and research regarding divorce.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins with a review of current statistics and research using Statistics Canada data to briefly illustrate current divorce rates and show that these rates are unlikely to decrease.

The second part of this chapter presents statistics and research findings based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY)(Juby, Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 2004; Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 1999). I included this longitudinal research because it more accurately portrays divorce as a process, which is consistent with my research goals of describing *the process* of family resilience in divorce. In this section, I also examined the context of changing family life, lone parenting and poverty, child support, children and family transitions, changes in child custody statistics, and patterns of shared custody.

In the third part of this chapter I review research on divorce. The literature I reviewed in this section is based on research topics that pertain to family adjustment such as how children are affected, contact with the non-residential parent, economic decline, parental conflict, and quality of parent-child relationships after divorce. Included in this section is research based on family stress and coping theory. Because the focus of this study is on family resilience, I conclude the literature review with a summary of risk and resilience literature on child development.

Part 1 – Canadian statistics on divorce

In Canada, marital separation and divorce has become a common occurrence. It is often stated that 50% of marriages will end in divorce, however in Canada the divorce rate hovers at 38.3% or an estimated 70,000 divorces per year ²(Statistics Canada, 2005). In 2003, the total number of divorces was 70,828 with Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia reporting the highest rates. Over the past 5 years divorce rates have remained relatively stable with less than a 2% change since 1999. In 2003, Statistics Canada estimated that 38.3 out 100 marriages would end in divorce by their 30th wedding anniversary (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Divorce rates include an increasing number of repeat divorces. For example, in 2005 it was reported that repeat divorces account for 16.2% of divorces for husbands and 15.7% of divorces for wives (Statistics Canada, 2005). In 1998, 33% of all marriages in Canada included one spouse who was previously married (Ambert, 2002, p.3).

While divorce rates have stabilized, the incidence of divorce varies depending on the duration of the marriage, with the highest number of divorces occurring during the first 4 years of marriage (Statistics Canada, 2005). After the first 4 years of marriage the divorce rates steadily decrease with each year of marriage. According to Statistics Canada (2005) the peak divorce rate in 2003 was after 3 years of marriage, when 26.1 out of 1,000 marriages ended in divorce. In 2002, the proportion of divorces for the 1st year of marriage was less than one divorce per 1,000 marriages, but it was 18.0 divorces per 1,000 marriages after the 2nd year, 25.0 divorces per 1,000 after the 3rd year of marriage

² 70,000 divorces represent all divorces in Canada, regardless of whether it was a first marriage or not. In 1997 (67,408 divorces), 1998 (69,088 divorces) and 1999 (69,672 divorces) there was a brief reduction in the number of divorces in Canada. The average number of divorces over the 5-year term from 1996 – 2000 was 69,597.5. In 1996 there were 71,528 divorces and in 2000 there were 70,292 divorces (Statistics Canada, 2000).

and 25.7 per 1,000 after the 4th (Statistics Canada, 2004). In 2002, the average duration of marriage was 14.2 years. In 1999-2000, 60% of all divorces occurred for those who had been married for less than 15 years.

Divorce trends

Over the last 40 years there has been an increase in divorce, which has led to a greater reliance on the courts for decisions regarding custody. Reliance on the courts brought the complexities of family dynamics and problems faced by divorcing families to the attention of the courts and government. To respond to this demand, court annexed services were developed involving social workers and psychologists providing custody assessments, mediation, parent education programs, and psycho-educational programs for high conflict parents.

Divorce became more common in Canada after the passing of the *Divorce Act of 1968*. Prior to 1968, Canada did not have divorce legislation. All provinces except Quebec granted divorce base on English civil law. Under the British legislation called the *Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act, 1857*, it was necessary to prove fault and wait periods were 5 years after separation if the party asking for divorce left the marriage and 3 years if the he or she were was deserted. If cruelty or adultery was not proven, divorce was not granted, and women could not obtain spousal support. As a result, many couples separated but did not divorce (Ambert, 2002). Quebec divorce law was based on the French system of civil law, which had a strong religious influence, in that divorce goes against the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, in Quebec the Canadian Senate granted divorces after proving fault.

The Divorce Act of 1968 made divorce easier to obtain because of the introduction of *no fault divorce* after 3 years of separation. This led to an increase of divorce even though the waiting periods were still 3 and 5 years. In 1968 the divorce rate was 54.8 per 100,000 marriages and in 1969 it increased to 124.2 per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2000). Divorce rates increased again after amendments to the *Divorce Act* in 1985, which shortened the period of separation to 1 year. The *Divorce Act, 1985* was passed in legislature in 1985 and proclaimed in 1986. After the amendments to the *Divorce Act* (1985) there was a 20% increase in divorce with the highest rate of divorce occurring in 1987, when there were 363.3 divorces per 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2000). According to Ambert (2002), the divorce rate was estimated to be between 31 to 36% of all marriages in Canada.

Divorce statistics do not represent the full context of divorce transitions because statistics on divorce alone do not account for other types of family transitions. Currently, in Canada, marriage rates have decreased and common-law unions have increased resulting in more family transitions (Statistics Canada, 2007, www.12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/famhouse/cenfaml.cfm). Based on the 2006 Canadian Census, common-law families consisted of 15.5% of all family types. Some of these families may include spouses who have been divorced. At present, it is estimated that there are 401,045 children living with parents who are in common-law unions (Statistics Canada, 2007, www.40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/famil50a.htm).

Based on Canadian longitudinal studies, it was estimated that 15% of children are born to parents in a common-law union and there is a greater likelihood that children born into a common-law union will experience their parents separating at a younger age

(Juby, Marcil-Gratton, & Le Bourdais, 2004). These family separations will use the same services as those who were legally married and who then subsequently divorce.

Another trend in Canada is the growth of single-parent families, including 3.2% of all family types headed by men, and 12.7% of families headed by women (Statistics Canada, 2007). At present 15.9% of all family types are headed by single parents (Statistics Canada, 2007). These statistics are important when studying divorce because there is an overlap between single-parent households due to divorce, couples who separated but were never married, and children born to single mothers. In 2000, it was estimated that 57.1% of single-parent households were due to divorce (Ambert, 2002; Justice Canada, 2002). Based on data from NLSCY, 7% of children are born to mothers who did not live with the child's father (Juby, et al., 2004). Common-law and single-parent families overlap with families of divorce because when parents break up, it constitutes a transition similar to divorce. Therefore, divorce and custody statistics include all forms of family transitions.

Part 2 – Statistics and research on divorce as a process

In studying divorce transitions, the context of a child's birth is important when considering the number and types of family transitions that may occur during childhood (Juby, Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 2004). Divorce may be one of these transitions but there may be additional family transitions if parents re-marry or live common-law and have other children in a second or third union.

Canadian researchers using the NLSCY database interviewed parents during the winters of 1994-95, 1996-97, and 1998-99. This research found that 69% of children

were born within a marriage in the last cohort, as compared to 85% in the first cohort (Juby, et al., 2004). Almost one-third of children were born outside of marriage. In addition, this study found that 11% of children in the oldest cohorts (1994-95) and 18% (1998-1999) in the youngest cohorts were born to a second family established by either their mother or father. In addition, children born by single mothers were 6% in the oldest cohorts and 10% in the youngest cohorts. Children born into a second family, or into a common-law union, were more likely to experience their parents' separation than children born into their parents' first family (Juby, et al., 2004). Divorce rates are higher for second marriages and common-law unions typically are not as stable as marriage (Ambert, 2002). These results provided a longitudinal context for the implications of family transitions for children that situated divorce as only one of several transitions, which affect children and families. It viewed "children's family experience as a "process" that evolves in response to decisions made by parents about their own conjugal and parental life" (Juby, et al., 2004, p. 1). Many children were a part of several families over time because of parental separation, remarriage, and common-law relationships. This presents a picture of divorce as a process that can lead to several other family transitions over time.

Another study based on three cohorts from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, found that about one-third of children (born in 1983-84) experienced some portion of their life in a lone-parent family by the time they were 15 years old, and children born 4 years later in 1988-89 experienced life in a lone-parent home by the age of 10 (Juby, Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 2004). In addition, 11% of children in the first cohort and 18% of children in the second cohort were children born into a second

family. Children could expect to be a part of several families over their childhood based on their parents' relationship choices.

Child support

Family resilience is influenced by financial conditions. Therefore, poverty and income are important in studying family resilience. Being a single parent is an important factor in predicting poverty, with over 60% of single/lone parent families living below the low-income thresholds used to determine poverty lines (Justice Canada, 2002). In the 1980s, women's income plummeted by 50% after divorce, while men's income declined by 25% (Justice Canada, 2002). Based on recent poverty reports, Saskatchewan children are poorest when they live in a lone-parent family headed by women, with a poverty rate of 47.5% (Hunter, Douglas & Petersen, 2008). The national poverty rate for lone-parent families headed by women is 42.6%. Therefore, in researching family resilience it is important to consider the financial means available to single-parent families. Today, separated and divorced lone mothers have a higher standard of living compared to young single mothers who have never married (Juby, Le Bourdais & Marcil-Gratton, 2004), but this does not diminish the fact that family income is reduced when parents separate and costs of living double as each parent establishes a separate residence.

In Canada, the Child Support Guidelines were established in 1997 to provide more adequate and consistent child support by providing a more objective basis on how amounts would be estimated.³ The Guidelines are based on the principles that children are a joint financial responsibility, and the amount to be paid is based on the proportion

³ All provinces, except Quebec, adopted the Guidelines, which are based on the cost of living in that particular province, income of payer and number of children. Quebec designed its own formula for determining child support.

of resources available for each parent. The Guidelines were amended on May 1, 2006 to reflect changes in provincial, territorial, and federal tax rates (Child Support Guidelines, 2006).

Using the NLSCY data base, it was found that the Guidelines achieved some success in helping parents find ways to share financial responsibilities for children, although there was no child support agreement for 40% of children (Juby et al., 2004). This study found that child support was not paid as frequently for children who were very young or older. For those who did not receive child support the reasons were: 8% other financial agreements; 7% split custody and cost sharing; 7% parents could not agree; 3% unable to locate parent; 10% did not ask for it; 4% did not want child support; 29% other parent unable to pay; and 32 % were for other reasons.

Child support was paid for 60% of children. Child support was court ordered for 16% of children; for 24% of children there were private formal agreements; and for 20% of children it was based on private informal agreements (Juby et al., 2004). Child support agreements were adhered to 73% of the time, with only 5% of parents who did not receive a payment in 6 months and 11% who received irregular payments (Juby, et al., 2004). When children resided with the mother, child support was expected 75% of the time. Mothers were rarely required to make child support payments when children lived with fathers, often because of lack of financial resources (Juby, et al., 2004). When children lived with their father, only one-third of those with an agreement received child support. In shared custody, both parents were often in the paid workforce and each bore their own financial costs, thus there was no child support. These findings confirm that economic viability is a key area of disadvantage for divorced women and their children.

Child custody statistics

There are a myriad of factors that influence custody decisions, such as the age of children at the time of separation, the amount of parental conflict, problems pre- and post-separation, socio-economic circumstances, the adjustment of parents, quality of parent/child relationships, and the attachment between children and their parents (Moyer, 2004). There are also factors related to the children, including his/her personality and temperament and ability to adjust to separation. Most research indicates that custody arrangements do not predict child outcomes (Haddad, 1998; Lye, 1999; Moyer, 2004). How children adjust to parental separation depends on the nature and type of transitions they have over their lifetime (Juby et al., 2004). It depends on their parents' choices in partners, parenting skills, and psychosocial resources. As shown in this review, much depends upon the circumstances into which children are born. If children are born to single mothers or into common-law unions, there is an increased likelihood that they will experience more family transitions over their childhood. Many children belong to several family formations over the course of childhood (Juby, et al.2004). By age 15, 30% of children born during the early 1980s experienced their parents' separation. Of those children who were born 4 years later (12 years old), 25% experienced parental separation (Juby, et al. 2004).

In Canada, there is an increasing trend towards shared/joint custody, especially if the parents come to an agreement without court intervention (Juby, et al., 2004). Joint custody does not define the type of parenting plan that is followed. Therefore, a child's *living arrangements* are not necessarily reflected in statistics on legal custody, and joint

custody is not predictive of the type of living arrangements that exist for children. In addition, joint custody does not necessarily imply that parents are cooperative.

Since the *Divorce Act*, legal custody statistics were primarily collected by Statistics Canada based on court judgments showing percentages of children in various types of custody orders. However, legal custody does not determine where children reside nor does legal custody reflect actual changes in living arrangements that occur as children mature and circumstances change. Children's living arrangements and legal custody statuses often change over time. Changes in custody were investigated using data from NLSCY.

During the 1990s there was a rapid increase in joint/shared custody arrangements with 37% of children placed in the custody of both parents (Juby, et al., 2004). However, it is important to put this statistic in context to show that joint custody does not determine living arrangements for children. As can be seen in Table 1, despite the increase in joint legal custody (from 12.6% to 17.1% between the two cohorts), only one-quarter of these children actually lived with both parents. In addition, this study found that over two-thirds of children remained in their mothers' care when parents first separated. For those children in joint custody, 11% lived with their fathers and one-third of children lived at both residences. Therefore regardless of changes in legal custody, it appears that parenting is still primarily the responsibility of mothers.

Table 1 shows that children were more likely to live in shared custody arrangements when parents came to an agreement without legal intervention: 11.6% compared to 5.6% when court ordered (Juby, et al., 2004). From these statistics, one can

conclude that court orders for shared or joint custody do not lead to parental cooperation or shared residence.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Children with Separated Parents in 1994-95 and 1998-99, According to Type of Custody and Living Arrangements at the Time of Separation, NLSCY, Cycles 1-3

	Court Order Custody Order	Court Order Living Arrangements	No Court Order Living Arrangements	Total
Children aged 0-11 years in 1994-95				
• Mother	80.8%	89.5%	86.1%	86.8%
• Father	6.6%	7.9%	5.4%	7.0%
• Shared	12.6%	2.6%	8.5%	6.2%
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1215		1730	3276
Children aged 0-15 years in 1998-99				
• Mother	77.7%	88.0%	82.0%	85%
• Father	5.2%	6.4%	6.4%	6.5%
• Shared	17.1%	5.6%	11.6%	8.5%
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	2060		2142	4407

Includes 331 children with a court order in progress in Cycle 1

Includes 205 children with a court order in progress in Cycle 3

Heather Juby, Nicole Marcil-Gratton, and Céline Le Bourdais, 2004

The advantage of using NLSCY database is that all family types were considered, thereby more accurately reflecting context and demographics of separation and divorce.

The research showed that a child's age at the time of separation was an important consideration in making custody and parenting decisions, with children 0 to 5 years of age less likely to be in shared custody arrangements (12%) than children 6 to 11 years of

age (16%) (Marcil-Gratton & Bourdais, 1999, p. 19). Shared living arrangements tend to have more flexibility and thus evolve into other arrangements with the passage of time (Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2003) with only 40% of children continuing to alternate homes in the second cohort, 1998-99 (Juby, et al., 2004).

Trend of joint custody

TABLE 2

Court-ordered Custody Arrangements at Separation, by Type of Broken Union, NLSCY, Cycle 1 (1994-95)

	Common-law Relationship	Marriage, common-law before marriage	Marriage, no common-law before marriage	Total sample
Mother exclusive custody	84.1%	74.3%	82.0%	79.3% 87% lived with mother 2 years later
Father exclusive custody	6.2%	7.9%	5.3%	6.6% 7% lived with father 2 years later
Shared physical custody	8.7%	16.8%	10.9%	12.8% 7% of children alternated homes
Other	1.0%	0.9%	1.8%	1.2%
Total percent	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%
Weighted number	328	489	409	1,239

Heather Juby, Nicole Marcil-Gratton and Céline Le Bourdais, 2004

Between 2 and 4 years after separation 10% of children continued to reside in both parents' residences compared to 13% of shared custody agreements or orders at the time of separation, with only 7.5% of children alternating homes after 5 or more years of parental separation (Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 1999, p.27). Children's choice and

age were factors that accounted for some of the change, with older children less likely to remain in shared physical custody arrangements (Juby, et al., 2004). Parents consulted with children regarding living arrangements starting at age 7. Although many parents did not involve their children, it appeared that when children did express their opinion, parents listened (Juby, et al., 2004). It is speculated that children may not wish to live in two residences after they start school because of proximity to school, recreational activities, and peers. They prefer to live in one residence but still see their other parent. Distance between parental homes was a factor this study was unable to take into account (Juby, et al., 2004). Even though joint and shared legal custody does not mean that children reside equally with both parents, it was found that “sharing physical custody even for a limited time period is associated with continued long-term involvement with both parents” (Juby, Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 2004, p. vii).

As stated in Chapter 1, joint or shared *legal* custody grants both parents rights to make decisions for their children, but also covers a wide variety of living arrangements (Moyer, 2004). Joint custody orders may state provisions for primary residence, the mother’s home with the father having defined parenting time (Juby et al., 2004). Using the NLSCY database, Marcil-Gratton and Le Bourdais (1999) found that two-thirds of children (under 11-years old) who were in shared custody lived with their mother at the time of separation, and 11% lived with their father (Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 1999). More recent research found that 30% of children alternated weeks with their parents; 18% spent weekends with one parent and weekdays with the other parent; 8% alternated residences every two weeks; 5% alternated nights with each parent; and 23%

had other arrangements (Juby et al., 2004). Joint custody was the most fluid of all types of custody arrangements.⁴

Part of the shift leading to an increase in joint or shared custody arrangements can be attributed to societal attitudes and norms reflecting the practicalities of caring for children when both parents work. Other contributors are legislative changes. In Saskatchewan, as in all provinces, there are provincial laws that influence the courts. In Saskatchewan the *Children's Law Act*, 1997, states that the court should: "make no presumption and draw no inference as between parents that one parent should be preferred over the other on the basis of the person's status as a father or mother" (Sec. 8, (c), p. 7).

In addition, the *Divorce Act* (1985) states that:

[I]n making an order under this section, the court shall give effect to the principle that a child of the marriage should have as much contact with each spouse as is consistent with the best interests of the child and, for that purpose, shall take into consideration the willingness of the person for whom custody is sought to facilitate such contact (Section 16, (10)).

In 1998 the special report by the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access recommended the terms custody and access no longer be used in the *Divorce Act*, instead suggesting the term *shared parenting* (Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access, 1998). These recommendations did not result in legislative changes to the federal *Divorce Act*, 1985 but did encourage a different way of thinking. Children were viewed as parental responsibility rather than as objects or possessions.

⁴ Juby et al. (2004) found that in the follow up Cycle 3, 40% of the 30% of children who were alternating residences continued to do so. In joint custody, 32% percent lived with mothers; 17% lived with fathers and 11% lived with both parents because of reconciliation.

The government's response was, in part, as follows:

The challenge is to identify a term that would. ... avoid the problems currently associated with the terms custody and access as well as possible diverse connotations and understandings of the word "shared." The term would need to be consistent with a child-centred approach and would have to be carefully defined to have a clear and accepted understanding and use by both the courts and public (Government of Canada, 1999, p.13).

Over the last number of years there have been more joint or shared custody orders than in previous decades. For example, in 2003, joint custody was ordered for 43.8% of children (Statistics Canada, 2007). While the courts did not decide custody for the majority of children, these decisions are reflective of a trend toward both parents having responsibility for their children (Juby, et al., 2004). Changing social norms influence legal decisions, but the courts are also in a position of power to sway norms of society. Legal decisions have set precedents encouraging a greater acceptance of fathering in our society and may also have planted seeds for new norms and standards in the future.

More incidents of shared custody also reflect the fact that both parents work, in which case sharing responsibility is more practical. This increasing incidence of joint custody is reflected by statistics. For example, in 2003, the courts granted mothers sole custody of 47.7% of children as compared to 1980 when mothers were awarded custody of 78.2% of the children (Justice Canada, 2007). However, as previously stated, court orders do not provide reliable statistics in knowing where children reside, nor do statistics reflect changes that occur over time without court intervention.

Part 3 - Research on children of divorce

Because divorce is an ongoing process and transition, it results in a complex number of changes for the family unit. Similarly, the literature on separation and divorce is very diverse and studies have focused on distinct aspects of this complex family transition.

One area of research was *child adjustment* to parental divorce, which sought to determine risks associated with divorce. Other areas of study were on *reasons for divorce* and *parental loss*, which focused on the non-residential parent's relationship with children. A fourth area of research was on *parental adjustment*. These studies considered adult adjustment and the impact of stress on parenting skills (Amato, 1993). A fifth theme was *economic hardship*, specifically on mothers who have custody. The sixth theme was *interparental conflict*, which considered parental relationships after divorce and how children were affected. The last area of research was a *life stress* perspective, which incorporated elements from the previous themes specifically those regarding parenting stress, remarriage, and blended family compositions. In this perspective, stress was seen as an accumulation of negative events, including the possible stressors involved in remarriage (Amato, 1993; Wang & Amato, 2000; Tein, Sandler, & Zautra, 2000).

These areas of divorce are often studied as discrete variables leading to results that show great diversity (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Because these elements of divorce are studied separately, results are often conflicting.

Studies have focused on children's age, gender, and personality to determine how children fare, but not on how these "factors" interact with a child's overall environment. Children's age at the time of parental separation, gender, and personality are studied in

absence of the ecological context of parenting skills or family problems. Other relevant influences are not made apparent either, such as a child's age at the time of separation (as opposed to their age at the time of the study); the length of time since the separation (as opposed to whether their parents separated or not); the degree of attachment; and the quality of parenting prior to and after separation. As such, much of the literature on how children are affected by divorce lacks a contextual analysis needed to help understand salutogenic aspects. It lacks a longitudinal perspective that would provide understanding of what changes take place over time and the reasons for those changes. Recent Canadian longitudinal studies have shed some light on the impact of these transitions in context of a family's psychosocial problems (Strohschein, 2005).

From an ecological perspective there are numerous factors that influence how children are affected by divorce. Some of these are:

- The socio-economic status of the family
- Family relationships and dynamics prior to and after divorce
- Problems preceding divorce
- Interparental conflict (prior to and after divorce)
- The psychological well being of parents and children
- The quality of parenting before and after divorce
- Children's relationships with others such as stepparents, grandparents, siblings, peers, and teachers
- The context of other family transitions due to parental conjugal relationships.

All of these factors interact with gender, age and personality to determine how divorce affects children. These characteristics are isolated from the environmental

context and the focus is often on problems, not on positive adaptation or wellness. Therefore, I have used environmental theory as the context to present these research results.

Characteristics of children and adjustment

Age and gender at the time of parental divorce have been extensively studied in relation to adaptation to divorce, but the results are inconsistent (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Some studies suggested younger children are more negatively affected in the short term because they do not have the cognitive skills to understand changes in family life (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Emery, 1988) while other studies found that there are more negative consequences for adolescents and older children (Amato & Keith, 1991a).

Still other research found that elementary school age children from 5 to 11 years old are able to understand the meaning of divorce, but become grief stricken and depressed over the loss of their family (Kelly, 2000) because they are the most torn in terms of loyalty conflicts (Emery, 1999; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). It was also found that children between the ages of 5 to 11 see divorce as a personal rejection even though they may not suffer in school or in social relationships (Demo & Adcock, 1988; Bloom & Dawson, 1991 as cited in Di Bas, 1996).

Age was also found to be a factor in custody and living arrangements, in that older children did not alternate between homes while younger children did (Juby, Marcil-Gratton, & Le Bourdais, 2004). Therefore, comparing developmental ages has not been found to be a reliable predictor of children's reactions because this comparison interacts with psychological adjustment prior to divorce, social adjustment, parenting, disruptions

with attachment, parental conflict before and after divorce, and especially pre- and post-divorce parenting skills (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Emery, 1988; Hetherington, 1999a; Kelly & Emery, 2002).

Rutter's (1999) research on risk and resilience in children found that vulnerability to risks such as divorce cannot be determined by age alone, but that *vulnerability to risk increases if attachment is disrupted*. The age of the child interacted with economic decline, parenting skills, and parental conflict (Rutter, 1999). Therefore, comparing how children fare at different developmental ages without understanding their environmental context is meaningless.

A consistent finding was that children's adjustment became easier and problems were less pronounced if parental conflict was low, parenting quality was high, and the relationship with each parent was good (Emery, 1988; Hetherington, 1993; Rutter, 1999, 2004). These salutogenic factors are universal and apply to all children who have been faced with adversity and not just children whose parents divorced. Similarly, in child development research, good parenting skills are buffers for stressors associated with divorce and are important in determining how children adjust (Rutter, 1999). Therefore, parenting skills and family dynamics are more critical in determining a child's resilience.

Gender investigations have produced equally inconsistent results, although there has been some suggestion that children may fare better when they live with the same sex parent (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). Consistent with this suggestion was the finding that the effects of divorce diminish if boys have greater involvement with fathers (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). This finding may be related to the trends of greater father involvement,

higher rates of father custody, joint custody and contact with the non-residential parent (Clarke-Steward & Hayward, 1996; Hetherington et al., 1998).

Research is suggestive of new norms for greater involvement for fathers post-divorce and this trend appears to be reinforced by the growing trend of shared parenting. Canadian statistics show an increasing number of single parent households led by fathers. In the 2006 Census single parent households led by fathers accounted for 3.2% of all household types in Canada, which showed a 14.6% growth in 5 years (Statistics Canada, 2007).

In studies on child development, gender was associated with vulnerability in that girls were described as being more resilient to stressors than boys in childhood, but were more vulnerable when in adolescence due to risk of pregnancy (Masten, Best, & Garnezy, 1989; Rutter, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1992). However, it was also found that recoveries from trauma and loss are largely shaped by “individual difference in the child and *variations in the recovery environment*” (Masten, 1994; Masten et al., 1990, p. 435).

It was found that some children have more problems after divorce, but these problems are not necessarily due to divorce and could have been caused by conditions that existed prior to parental separation (Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Keirnan, Robins, Morrison, & Teitler, 1991). This is an important finding in that problematic children may be problematic because of family dynamics and while marital transitions were found to exacerbate problems in already troubled and poorly adjusted children, this may not be the origin of problems (Block et al., 1989; Hetherington, 1989). Based on longitudinal studies, many parents of divorce had fewer psychosocial resources (Strohschein, 2005). This study also showed the higher the level of parental problems

prior to divorce, *the greater the reduction* in child anti-social behaviour after divorce. Therefore, divorce could have a salutogenic influence on children in highly dysfunctional families whose parents divorce. Problems that have been attributed to divorce may, in fact, be a result of living in a highly dysfunctional home.

Research on risk and resilience found that children who were intelligent, had an easy temperament, high self-esteem, an internal locus of control, and a good sense of humour were more likely to adjust to difficulties in life as a general rule (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Protective aspects related to intelligence were academic achievement, resourcefulness, and effective problem solving (Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1999; Werner & Smith, 1992). From child development research we know that a “likeable” child evokes positive responses and support from others, which enables positive adaptation and coping because others take an interest in the child, provide role modelling, show support, and offer positive mentorship (Masten et al., 1990). Findings from child development research on risk and resiliency are not integrated in divorce research (Hetherington, 1989).

Rutter (1989) has provided another perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of an easy temperament. Based on the “squeaky wheel” hypothesis, he has suggested that children who are more demanding may in fact get more attention and their needs met, not necessarily because they have more problems, but because they are more demanding. Therefore being persistent is a trait that helps overcome adversity.

However, other literature on child development has found that children who had more difficult temperaments were often targeted for abuse (Belsky, 1980) or targeted for criticism within the family (Rutter, 1999). In addition, child development studies on

scapegoating show that children in the same family are not all similarly affected by the same situations (Belsky, 1980).

From this review we can see the personality make-up of the child is not a clear determinant of how a child will adjust to parental divorce. Therefore, whether children have problems after the transition of divorce may be due to a whole host of factors. From a resiliency perspective, the type of personality children have is an important consideration but how they fare depends upon their immediate environment. In line with this, child development research has found community resources, faith, and church can provide protective functions for high-risk children (Masten, et al., 1990). In fact, a longitudinal study on multiple-risk children found that church membership and faith in a higher power were reported to function as protective factors in a diverse number of high-risk situations (Werner & Smith, 1992). Longitudinal research found that children who exhibited significantly more mental health problems after divorce had these problems well in advance of the divorce (Strohschein, 2005).

From an ecological perspective, these findings and explanations indicate that children's adjustment to divorce is not based upon a particular set of personality variables within children. Children's adjustment must be viewed as a process in interaction with their personal, social, family, and community environment and what happens in the months and years following parental separation (Amato, 2000). Divorce studies have tended to compare groups of children who come from separated and divorced families to those who come from families where parents live together. This research has shown great diversity and conflictual results because a myriad of factors that occurred prior to and after divorce were not taken into account. Furthermore, studies that used an ecological

approach in studying children in high-risk neighbourhoods found that children's ability to make meaning and understand, what is happening contributes to resilience (Garbarino, 2001). It was found that children's representational competence, pathways, or social maps were critical mediating factors for risk that enabled positive coping for them.

Microenvironment – Parents and Parenting

As stated in Chapter 1, divorce research has focused around five central themes: contact with the residential parent; quality of parent-child relationships; economic decline; parental conflict; and parental adjustment. Much of the research does not take into account the interactions within the family's sociocultural environment. A consistent finding for all families is that a child's ability to function is dependent upon the quality of the parenting environment (Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Forgatch et al., 1995; Hetherington, 1993). During the initial stages of separation and divorce, various parenting problems have been noted, such as poor parental communication with children; inconsistent parenting; a decrease of affection; and more child management problems (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Emery, 1988; 1999). However, 2 years after divorce, most parents were able to regain their ability to respond sensitively to their children's needs and effectively discipline them (Emery, 1988; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). Using family stress and coping theory as a means of analysis, meanings, resources, and coping strategies will differ depending not only upon the time elapsed since the separation but also upon the particular normative transitions the family is undergoing at the time. Viewed this way, adaptation is an on going process. Yet, as we will see, divorce is often treated as an isolated factor or static event in the research.

Specific qualities associated with the well-being of children are the ability of a custodial parent to be supportive, warm, communicative, responsive to children's needs, and able to maintain age appropriate expectations and consistent control (Kelly & Emery, 2002). In fact, research has shown that the impact of divorce can be buffered by the quality of parenting (Kelly & Emery, 2002).

Amato (2000) found that competent parenting was a key protective factor for children of divorce. However, parents' ability to protect and nurture their children diminished in the first year or two following separation (Wallerstein, 1986, 1991). Concerns of economic distress, task overload, child-rearing distress, and social isolation were common concerns that affected the quality of parenting skills. In the initial period of divorce, parents became lax in supervision of their children and more erratic in their expectations because the stressors of single parenting emerged. It was at this time that new norms started to develop.

As stated earlier, from a child development and risk research perspective, the most important and consistent protective factor was the quality of caregiving during and after major stressors, such as divorce or separation (Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1999). In fact, children living in homes of severe parental conflict appeared to be protected from maladjustment if there was a good relationship with at least one parent (Rutter, 1994). Thus, good parenting can protect children from risks within the family and can aid in family transitions during divorce. Implicit in good parenting was the belief in parental effectiveness and self-confidence (Masten et al., 1990). Parents were able to generate self-efficacy in children by modelling effective action and providing opportunities for children to experience mastery.

Attachment theory provides another perspective on the processes by which responsible parenting can lead to self-efficacy in that a good attachment shows children they are lovable and worthwhile, as well as providing a secure base for autonomy and mastery experiences (Masten, et al., 1990). Rutter (2002, 2004) found that if a child's attachment was not interfered with, disruptions in family life were not necessarily harmful to them.

Contact between children and the non-residential parent

Historically, this body of research was known as *father absent* studies. Early research in this area tested the premise that children from single-parent homes are more likely to exhibit problems because of the absence of one parent in the home, typically the father (Owusu- Bempah, 1995). However, research evolved to try to determine reasons non-resident parents lost contact with their children. From this body of inquiry we learned that frequency of contact with the non-custodial parent was not the best predictor in the quality of the parent-child relationships (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). It was also noted that longitudinal and process-oriented research was needed to draw conclusions about changes in the relationships between the non-resident parents and their children.

The literature on *absent parents* suggests there is a weak association between visitation frequency and child well-being, thus emphasizing other mechanisms that benefit the child (Bernardini & Jenkins, 2002). Contact with non-residential parents was beneficial to children if there were feelings of closeness, authoritative parenting, and financial contribution towards the child (specifically payment of child support), rather than contact alone (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). In addition, other studies found that

authoritative parenting, the quality of the parent-child relationships, specifically relationships that encouraged attachment and security were factors associated with parents' post-divorce relationships with their children (Ahrons, & Tanner, 2003; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Lamb, 2002). Several studies reported positive outcomes for children in cooperative, low-conflict families where fathers were involved (O'Connor, 2001, 2004). Consistent with this finding, when fathers were involved in decision making, parental conflict was low, and when child support was paid, fathers sustained involvement and contact with children (Braver, Wolchick, Sandler, Fogas, & Bray, 1993; Seltzer, 1991). Therefore, contact with the non-residential parent is not a clear determinant of resilience. It depends upon the nature of the parent-child relationship and parenting skills. These findings were consistent with findings from child developmental research, which found that contact with the non-residential parent was beneficial to children if there was an attachment and good parenting (Rutter, 2004). Divorce research with children finds that children consistently said they feel the worst thing about their parents' divorce was the loss of contact with the other parent (Lamb, Sternberg, & Thompson, 1997).

Divorce research went on to discover reasons for the lack of contact with children and non-residential parents. Some research found that the type and frequency of contact a child has with the non-custodial parent is dependent upon the type of union the parents had prior to the separation, with common-law fathers being less likely to see their children than fathers who were married (Marcil-Gratton & Le Bourdais, 1999; Seltzer, 1991). Research has also pointed out that contact is more dependent upon the age of the child at the time of the separation, with more frequent contact occurring with children

who were older (Le Bourdais, Juby & Marcil-Gratton, 2001). This is consistent with child development research that shows attachment is more of an indicator of positive relationships and contact than parental status alone.

A mother's attitude towards the father was also found to be a key determinant of a father's future involvement with a child (Pleck, 1997). It was found that if there was maternal hostility toward the father, there was a greater likelihood of fewer visitations between the father and the child and more frequent interference or sabotaging of the father's involvement by the mother (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Braver & O'Connell, 1998). In these studies, the reasons for maternal anger were unclear, although reasons due to poor fathering and domestic violence were considered.

It has also been suggested that new relationships occurring in the life of either parent are reasons for a drop off in contact with non-residential fathers, but these results are contradictory. A mother's remarriage was linked to lower involvement between non-residential fathers and their children (Bray & Berger, 1993; Frustenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988; Seltzer, 1991). Frustenberg et al., (1983) found that the mother's current marital status had a greater effect on whether fathers had contact with their children than the father's remarriage, while other studies found no difference in visitation associated with the mother's current marital status (Manning and Smock, 1999). Because studies on parental remarriage were inconclusive, research has sought out other explanations for fathers either maintaining or losing contact with their children.

Studies have looked at extra-parental responsibilities such as stepchildren and biological children born in new unions and it was hypothesized that separated fathers "swap" families, meaning they invest time in children with whom they live with at the

expense of those with whom they no longer live (Frustenberg, et al., 1983). These results were replicated showing that if fathers had children in a new union, their contact with their non-resident children decreased (Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Manning, Steward & Smock, 2003).

Longitudinal studies have shown contextual factors are relevant in frequency of contact and not just remarriage or having children in new relationships. Recent Canadian research based on the NLSCY suggests that almost half of children saw their fathers regularly, while 27% saw their father at least weekly, 22% saw him every two weeks, almost one-third saw him monthly, and 19% had no parental visits (Juby, Billette & Le Bourdais, 2007). This research highlighted the timing of new relationships, in that new unions *formed early during the separation* have a strong impact on custody arrangements (Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2005b). This study found that *timing was critical*. If both parents entered a relationship soon after separation, the non-residential parent (usually the father) had a lower chance of sharing custody. If a new relationship was formed closely after the time of separation, specifically before the father and children had established a structure in their post-separation relationship, then a father's new union limited the amount of contact he had from the start with his children and was likely to reduce contact with their non-resident children over time (Juby, et al., 2007). The birth of additional children was not related to contact with non-resident children (Juby, et al., 2005b).

It was found that there was a reduction in frequency of contact between non-resident fathers and children *if a stepfather was present* (Juby et al., 2005b). Although it was also shown mothers' new relationships formed *shortly after separations* were

indicative of children spending *more time with their father* or in a dual residence (Juby et al., 2007). Previously, it was hypothesized that if mothers formed new relationships soon after separation, it could threaten the fathers' relationship with the non-resident children and make the fathers less willing to provide financial support (Fustenberg & Cherlin, 1991). However, this was not found. A consistent finding is that payment of child support is closely related with frequent visitation (Frustenberg et al., 1983; Juby, et al., 2005b).

Frequency of contact alone does not tell us about benefits to children or even about factors that contribute to healthy parent-child relationships. It does tell us that if parents focus energy on new relationships rather than stabilizing their relationships with non-resident children, that over time their contact with these children diminishes (Juby, et al., 2005b).

From this review it is apparent that there are three factors consistently related to a child maintaining contact with both parents: the first is payment of child support by the non-residential father; the second is good parenting by the non-residential parent; and the third is absence of interparental conflict. New relationships for parents are not a factor unto themselves. If parents do not put their children's needs first and involvement in new relationships causes disruptions in attachment, then there is a decrease of on-going parental involvement.

Parents who paid child support were more involved with their children and saw them regularly, regardless of whether they remarried, had stepchildren, or had children in new marriages (Juby et al., 2007). Based on child development literature and replicated by divorce research, good parenting and attachments are critical for a child's development whether parents remain married or not. Good parenting is based on the

personal qualities of the parents and their ecological niche. From a family resilience perspective, this means that the quality of the parent-child relationships in post-divorce families is related to child-centred parenting skills and not frequency of contact alone.

Parental conflict

I included the literature on high-conflict divorce because it overlaps with domestic violence and is pertinent to understanding how mothers who leave situations of domestic violence overcome the hardships and foster family resilience. Parental conflict is a multi-dimensional construct and takes numerous forms. Conflict can be defined and measured in a variety of ways. Parental conflict overlaps with literature on intimate partner abuse, child protection, and psychopathology. Parental conflict varies on a continuum ranging from normal, to high conflict, to spousal violence (Jaffe, Crooks, and Bala, 2005). In high-conflict divorces parents align their children against the other parent so as to sabotage their relationship with the children. It has been shown that there are various types of family violence ranging from patriarchal terrorism to common couple violence (Johnson, 1995).

Johnson and Campbell (1993) identified five typologies of family violence. The first of these is ongoing or episodic battering by the male, whereby violence is attributed to men's low tolerance for frustration; problems with impulse control; and their angry, possessive, or jealous reactions to their sense of masculinity. Secondly, there is female initiated violence, which is related to stress and tension and does not affect the power differential between partners. The third type is classified as male-controlling interactive violence. This type of violence arises out of mutual disagreement. Fourthly, there is

violence that occurs at the time of separation but was not present in the relationship prior to separation. The partner who is being “left” typically perpetrates it. The last type is psychotic or paranoid violence, which is due to mental illness.

Still other research has focused on contexts, such as “the intent of the offender, meaning of the act to the victim and effect of violence on the victim” (Frederick and Tilley, 2001, p.1). Presently, research has integrated studies on domestic violence and continues to focus on determining the most beneficial parenting arrangement for children when there has been spousal violence, parental alienation, or high levels of parental conflict showing there is no one resolution and various arrangements for visitation need to be considered (Jaffe, Crooks, and Bala, 2005).

In addition to research on parental violence, there is a plethora of research in the area of *high conflict* parents, which has studied personality-disordered parents who alienate their children from the other spouse and become involved in protracted court battles (Johnson & Roseby, 1997). Research has focused on causes and has tried to determine effective intervention strategies (Johnson & Roseby, 1997). High-conflict divorce continues to be a focus in research because these families pose the most challenges to the courts, mental health professionals, and the social service system. Because of complex family dynamics and numerous allegations that involve multiple systems such as child protection, the police, and repeated family court litigations these families are very difficult to assess (Dutton, 2005; Jaffe, Brooks, & Bala, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Kirkland, McMillan, & Kirkland, 2005). Services are manipulated against one another in an attempt to win custody or change court orders. Research showed that counselling and psychotherapy were found to be largely ineffective with parents in high-

conflict divorces because of their unwillingness to evaluate their contribution to the conflict (Kitzmann & Emery, 1994).

It has been found on numerous occasions that children from homes where parents remain hostile and aggressive have more behavioural, emotional, and social problems (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Long, Slater, Forehand, & Fauder, 1988; Johnson, 1994; Juby & Farrington, 2001). When parents are in conflict, children are at risk of maladjustment, regardless of *whether parents are divorced or not* (Amato & Booth, 1997; Bernardini & Jenkins, 2002; Emery, 1999; Johnston & Roseby, 1997; Morrison & Coiro, 1999). In longitudinal studies, adjustment problems for children were accounted for by pre-divorce factors, such as interparental conflict (Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Kiernan, Robbins, Morrison, & Teitler, 1991).

Children model verbal and physical aggression by watching their parents' poor role modelling; thus they do not have the social skills to form mutually rewarding relationships (Amato & Booth, 2001). Children involved in child custody disputes exhibit more symptoms of depression and withdrawal and have somatic complaints (Johnson, Gonzales, & Campbell, 1987). Other studies show that even if the dispute is not about custody, children have more depressive symptoms, behaviour problems at school, delinquency, and substance abuse if their parents remain in conflict after separation (Moyer, 2004). The type of conflict a child is exposed to was found to be relevant if a child is *directly exposed* to conflict, the *conflict is about them*, or when it *continues* after separation (Davis & Cummings, 1994). In this case, the child is most likely to feel "*caught in the middle*." In addition, it was found in marriages where spouses had

problematic relationships with each other, they also had stressful relationships with their children (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1997b; Simons & Johnson, 1996).

A Canadian longitudinal study based on the NLSYC data set focused on whether children benefit from the dissolution of high-conflict marriages (Morrison & Coiro, 1999). This study found that even though there was an increase in behavioural problems immediately after separation, problems decreased a short time later. The greatest number of behavioural problems for children was for those who remained in homes where there was high conflict.

Based on risk research, parents with psychopathologies and difficult personalities often marry others who have similar problems, therefore increasing the likelihood of a problematic marriage and divorce (Rutter, 2002). These genetic traits are passed on to their children, providing a causal mechanism connecting parental psychopathology and a child's behavioural and emotional problems (Harris, 1998; Rutter, 2002; Towers, Spotts, & Neiderhiser, 2001). Therefore, problems children have when living with high-conflict parents may also be as a result of genetically inherited characteristics. Rutter (2004) has shown that the environment is critical in terms of how people with similar psychopathologies cope, in that the environment provides resources that can buffer or increase risks. Therefore, the particular psychopathology does not determine coping, rather resources and interactions between services in the environment have the power to effect coping with difficulties encountered in divorce. .

Compared to other aspects of divorce that have been studied (absence of a parent, troubled parent-child relationships, and economic disadvantage), parental conflict was the strongest predictor of child maladjustment for externalizing, internalizing, delinquent

behaviour, and academic problems regardless of family type (Bernardini & Jenkins, 2002; Buehler, et al., 1997; Davis & Cummings, 1994; Lengua, Wolchik, Sandler, and West, 2000).

Parental adjustment

Parental adjustment is a key factor affecting a child's long-term well being. If parents were poorly adjusted after divorce, their children were also at much higher risk of developing emotional and behavioural problems (Kelly, 2000). How children and parents coped with the transition of divorce was largely dependent on events that occurred prior to and after divorce as well as on decisions parents made to ease this transition.

Divorce research that used family stress and coping theory as a model for investigation showed that spouses who initiated the divorce had more positive perceptions of divorce, thus they were better able to detach from their previous spouse and form new relationships (Wang & Amato, 2000). In fact, it was found that remarriage or new relationships were strongly associated with parental adjustment. Evaluation of the marriage was based on the relationship history and determined by a relative gain or loss in functioning (Wang & Amato, 2000).

Other research has shown that spouses who perceived insurmountable problems in their marriage tended to adjust relatively quickly once the marriage ended (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Booth & Amato, 1991). Therefore pre-existing problems were a factor in adaptation after divorce.

Typically, adult adjustment enables children's adjustment (Hetherington et al., 1992; Simons & Associates, 1996), so if the adults cannot adjust due to parental conflict,

a child's adjustment will also be prolonged and complicated. The reverse was also found, in that children's adjustment contributes to parental adjustment, and the quality of parenting was pivotal to adjustment (Forgatch et al., 1996). The quality of the relationship and relational processes operating between the parents and children contributes to the adjustment of all family members (Greene & Anderson, 1999; Hetherington et al., 1998).

Studies have also shown that there are diverse experiences in how parents adjust dependent upon their *individual coping* strategies (Sandler, Tein, & West 1994). Wang and Amato (2000) found that those who used active planning skills, effective problem solving, and sought social support, rather than focusing on distraction and avoidance, adjusted better. Perception of control over the divorce process was shown to have a positive effect on how adults adjust to divorce (Gray & Silver, 1990). Those who initiated divorce experienced greater enhancement in their quality of life (Wang & Amato, 2000; Wallerstein, 1986), had less attachment to their former spouse (Kitson, 1992) even though they may have experienced more guilt (Weiss, 1979), and had a higher level of distress while the marriage was intact (Emery, 1994).

Based on family stress research, appraisal of divorce was a determining factor in helping with the adjustment process (Wang & Amato, 2000). Appraisal of divorce was reflected in being the initiator of divorce. Quantitative research on risk and resilience found that poverty complicated good parenting because of indirect stressors, but it depended upon protective processes in the environment such as supportive relationships and other forms of support (Rutter, 1990).

Children and parental adjustment

The presence of children was said to have both a negative and positive effect on parental adjustment, in that children can either lead to ongoing and problematic communication with the other parent or enable positive adjustment. Studies based on family stress theory found that having children was associated with positive appraisals of life and enhanced coping for parents (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986; Wang & Amato, 2000). This finding was replicated by other studies, which showed the presence of children had a positive effect on the psychological well-being of parents (Amato, Rezac, & Booth, 1995; Kitson, 1982). However, these results were contradicted by research that found having children prolonged parental adjustment (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Farnsworth et al., 1989). If the presence of children necessitated considerable contact between parents and if the relationship was conflictual, these factors added to strain (Masheter, 1991). From a father's perspective, losing custody of children was one of the most stressful aspects of post-divorce life (Wallerstein, 1986). Therefore the context of divorce is important.

Problems preceding divorce will determine coping and parenting strategies. Coping will depend upon resources that exist at the time of separation or in the future. Higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, depression, economic problems, and stressful life events are found in adults who will later divorce (Amato, 1993; Gotlib & McCabe, 1990; Kitson, 1992; Kurdek, 1990). This suggests that problems in adjustment post-divorce are not necessarily due to divorce, but due to pre-existing personal problems prior to divorce. In marital transitions, parents with psychological problems exhibit poor problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, which escalate

negative appraisals of their spouses' behaviour and put them at an increased risk for multiple divorces (Hetherington, et.al.1998). It has been clearly demonstrated in longitudinal studies that many children coming from problematic homes showed problems *before divorce* (Chase-Landsdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; Strohschein, 2005). We also know that people with psychological problems choose problematic partners thereby increasing the risk for divorce (Rutter, 2004).

There is consensus in research results showing that a child's adjustment to divorce is related to parental adjustment (Booth & Amato, 2001; Kitson, 1992). In studies on joint parenting it was found that successful couples are empathic, flexible, maintain boundaries between interparental homes and parent-child interactions, and can adjust their expectations as they shift from a spousal role to a co-parenting role (Steinman, Zimmelman, & Knoblauch, 1985).

Parental adjustment based on gender

Research based on gender effects is inconclusive because gender is separated from other factors that occur in the process of divorce, including pre-existing problems and post-divorce coping strategies. Some studies have found that men were less influenced by divorce because of fewer financial repercussions and their psychological well-being tended to improve more quickly than women's (Doherty, Su, & Needle, 1989).

Consistent with this research, several studies found that divorce had more detrimental effects on women (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Marks & Lambert, 1998). Wallerstein's findings (1986) contradicted these findings. She found that men were less

likely to have initiated the divorce, had fewer confidants, and lost custody of their children. Thus divorce was described as a more painful and difficult adjustment for men. Other studies also showed that men had more lingering attachment to their former spouses making adjustment more difficult (Kitson, 1982; Masheter, 1991). Overall, research shows that spouses who were unhappy in the marriage reported gains in psychological functioning, while those who were content with their marriage reported more difficulties in adjustment (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Several studies report positive adjustments to divorce for women (Riessman, 1990; Wang & Amato, 1990). This was due in part to the fact that more women initiate divorce, and women are often more adversely affected by a distressed marriage, while men are more adversely affected by being unmarried (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). In a qualitative study on divorce, Riessman (1990) found that women ascribed positive aspects to their divorce even when their income was greatly reduced. Similar to Antonovsky (1987), Riessman defined psychological health on a continuum whereby individuals were doing very well in some areas but struggling in other areas. Riessman (1990) described positive aspects related to divorce adjustment for women that included competence in management of daily life, changing their meaning of social relationships, and a fuller sense of identity.

Research from a feminist perspective sheds a different light on women's adjustment to divorce. Feminist research shows that women are far more likely than men to initiate divorce, to list specific problems, and prefer less contact with their former spouses (Diedrick, 1991). Consistent with Riessman (1990) it was found that despite lower financial status, women make greater psychological gains after divorce as

measured by self-reports in the areas of happiness, self-esteem, adjustment, and satisfaction (Diedrick, 1991). This is consistent with research that shows marriage has a protective effect for men and a detrimental effect, mentally and physically, for women (Sobel & Russo, 1981). Overall, it can be assumed that when marriages end women have more to gain in terms of personal autonomy and egalitarian roles even though their income may decline (Amato & Booth, 1991; Riessman, 1990).

Studies on parental adjustment were able to identify some factors that contribute towards adjustment, such as attitude towards divorce, being the initiator, and new relationships. How resources benefit parental and family adaptation is not clearly illustrated without careful investigation of the factors in a particular family's socio-environmental context. It is clear that socio-economic status alone does not predict coping skills or adaptation, nor does gender, age, or choice in separation. Variation exists because adjustment is a process dependent upon personal, family, and environmental contexts. Few studies on divorce have considered the continuum of adjustment; rather they have focused on discrete variables that vary over time.

Economic decline

Divorce and separation result in a substantial decline in children's standard of living, increased economic instability, and stress in the custodial parent's home. Financial changes intensify the disruptiveness of divorce and affect long-term adjustment in children (Kelly, 1993). In the United States, custodial mothers' income dropped an average of 30%, and in Canada incomes dropped 23% for parents who separated in the mid-1990s (Galarneau & Sturrock, 1997). Reduced incomes can lead to living in poorer

neighbourhoods and more disruptive events for parents and children, but it was found that social relationships and emotional support can moderate adverse effects of economic distress on family relationships (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Simons & Associates, 1996). It was also found that parental education levels, income, and employment were positively associated with psychological adjustment to divorce (Booth & Amato, 2001; Kitson, 1992; Shapiro, 1996).

Children tend to live with their mothers regardless of the legal custody order, and financial support is not paid for 40% of children (Juby et al., 2004). These findings lend support to women's economic disadvantages but do not account for remarriages or other changes that would also affect household income. However, it is clear that income levels alone do not predict parental or family adjustment.

From research on risk and child development, we know that economic disadvantage is not a direct risk, but it plays a causal link that can increase problems for children (Rutter, 1994). Rutter (2004) had noted that poverty makes good family functioning more difficult because it increases parental stress, limits opportunities, and exposes the family to poor environments, all of which have negative effects on children and parenting. Rutter also found that the impact of poverty is mediated by other factors in the environment, such as social support, high quality parenting, and financial help (2004). Poverty is a socio-culturally defined concept. This means that if everyone around a family is in the same economic situation, the stigma of poverty is not apparent because they are within the norms of their environment (Antonovsky, 1994). From ecological studies, it was found that people's perception of their situation includes comparison to

others, but poverty does lead to higher crime neighbourhoods and increased risks (Garbarino, 1996, 2001).

In divorce, income is a risk factor if it results in multiple moves to poorer neighbourhoods, or if parents are unable to provide careful monitoring because they are unavailable to provide high quality parenting due to pre-occupation with stressors or employment. Poverty remains a concern for many children and families given that over one-third of children are born in common-law unions or to single parents (Juby, et al., 2004; Statistics Canada, 2007). This has policy implications that extend beyond the Child Support Guidelines, given that many parents do not have the means to support children. It is especially a concern for women who may not have benefits at work, especially with the economic trend to hire part-time employees in poor paying service sector industries.

Social support

The types of social support people perceived as helpful varied. Family support for mothers was often seen as more crucial than social support from friends because it included functional support such as childcare and financial resources. Social support was seen as helpful, *but only* when it was not accompanied with advice (Kitson, 1992).

Even though new intimate relationships and remarriage were found to consistently be the strongest indicator of positive adjustment for adults (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Demo & Acock, 1996; Marks & Lambert, 1998; Tschann et al., 1989; Wang & Amato, 1990; Weingarten, 1980), they were not shown to have good durability in that they did

not last long. Roughly half of cohabiting situations commencing immediately after divorce are short-lived, usually ending within a year (Seltzer, 2000). In addition, it was found that new marriages were beneficial primarily for men rather than for women (Coysh, Johnston, Tschann, Wallerstein, & Klein, 1989) although other studies disagree (Booth & Amato, 2001). Part of the reason remarriage may not be beneficial for women may be due to children's reactions and relationships with their mothers' new partners. Women often have primary care of the children, especially when they are very young. Therefore, considering how new relationships affect children is an important determinant for women as to the feasibility of remarriage.

It is apparent that adjustment to divorce is not just dependent on appraisals of divorce, but on other aspects of the social environment for adults and children.

Critical review of the research

Parental divorce is treated as a static event and dissolution of the family by many research studies on divorce. Therefore, research tends to study a child's reactions as separate from parental adjustment or focused on children's relationships with the non-resident parent. Many of the studies on children's adjustment were based on group comparisons that considered neither pre-conditions nor changes that occurred after divorce. Children of divorce are portrayed as growing up in poverty, having academic problems, and being prone to criminal behaviour. But we also know that the normative response to divorce is resiliency, not dysfunction (Emery, 1994, 1998, 1999;

Hetherington et al., 1998). Harmful outcomes are contingent upon the severity and number of risks that occur in absence of protective processes in the environment.

Divorce research has looked for problems that deter good parenting, such as extra-marital stressors, interparental conflict, socio-economic decline, the health of parents, and day-to-day stressors (Grych & Fincham, 1993; Tein, Sandler, & Zautra, 2000). Specific strengths in adjustment were not the focus of the research. The salutogenic qualities that emerge are borrowed from developmental studies.

Longitudinal studies have shown a variation in adaptation over time and therefore, reasons for variation. Resilience is not defined in divorce literature, even though some literature is able to identify “better adjustment” and a “variation in response.” However, defining resilience is subjective, based on the values of the researcher and not necessarily on how the child or family feels they are being resilient (Ungar, 2003, 2005).

Overall, there is much contradiction in research results on both children and parents. Because families of divorce are not monolithic, the results are understandably varied and often conflictual. Family stress theory is predicated upon the assumption that “appraisals” of adversity and family resources are keys to successful adaptation. Perception of divorce is dependent upon problems in the marriage. Family circumstances and personal qualities determine coping styles and resources. However, analysis of divorce research is difficult because the overall context or process of family adjustment is lacking. Specifically, the parents’ appraisal of other events besides their opinion of divorce, resources, and the family’s overall adaptation are absent in the research. Emphasis was on parental appraisals and not on how the family functioned afterwards. Yet, based on divorce research, it is clear that if parents adjust, so do the children.

Divorce is both an outcome (of previous problems and circumstances) and a process leading to further life transitions, such as remarriage, addition of step-children, or new siblings born to one or both of the parents. Recent life course research has yielded rich information about changes that occur over time that affect families and children's well-being (Juby, Billette, & Le Bourdais, 2007; Juby & Farrington, 2001; Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2003; Juby, Marcil-Gratton, & Bourdais, 2004). Research based on NLSCY has shown there are numerous processes and events that can affect a child's adjustment. Divorce is seen as one of the many family transitions that may occur over time based on parental conjugal relationship choices. While this research has yielded some insight into the potential for salutogenic aspects of divorce, there has not been a focus on what parents do or how resources help families become resilient.

Much divorce research has been exclusively problem focused. Research has tried to estimate the relative contribution of individual attributes, family structure, stresses, parental distress, and family process that have resulted in conflicting results, futile controversies, and misleading conclusions (Hetherington, et al., 1998).

Based on research from child development we know that children who are intelligent, socially mature, and responsible are better able to cope with transitions in family structure (Block et al., 1986; Hetherington, 1989). Competent parenting and assignment of age-appropriate tasks helps increase social competence in children. These characteristics cannot be separated from the environment. The quality of parenting, socio-economic status, and psychological functioning of parents heavily influences a child's adjustment, regardless of his/her age or gender. Adaptation is an on going process, and even when parents and children are doing well in some areas of their lives, they could

still be struggling in other areas. Therefore positive adaptation is based on a continuum. Resilience, like adaptation to divorce, is based on a continuum not an either/or scenario. Families' appraisals of events, personal meanings, and past coping all become important when facing change, especially when the changes are associated with divorce.

From an ecological analysis, adaptation is dependent upon interaction with numerous aspects within the environment. Social and personal supports exist in all areas of the environment, which interact with personal qualities of children and parents. Adaptation cannot be separated from the sociocultural environment in which the family is situated. Research in divorce is difficult to analyze from an ecological perspective simply because the ecological context is absent. Many problems attributed to divorce may actually be a result of problems that existed prior to divorce. Therefore, divorce could lead to an improvement in a family's functioning or add to existing problems, depending on what occurs and how environmental resources are used. This is especially important in situations of high-conflict divorces or family violence, whereby financial resources are used in litigation. Environmental considerations are important in resiliency studies on children and youth, but have not been included in studies on divorce. Multi-problem families will have problems whether they divorce or not, and these problems are not necessarily caused by divorce.

Overview of the literature on risk and resilience

Resilience is a concept that emerged from studies on risk factors and their impact on children who were exposed to adversity (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992). This area of study led to analysis of the risk factors, as well as

the resiliency processes that protected or enabled children to overcome adversity. In research on children, the family was often seen as a risk factor and the unit of analysis was the children in order to determine how they coped with adversity (Patterson, 2002; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Resilience was often discussed in terms of risk or protective factors related to the child's immediate environment such as child abuse, parental divorce, and parental alcoholism, poverty, and physical and mental illness of either parent.

Whereas resiliency within families was based on family stress studies that focused protective factors or processes that intervene to help families cope with adversity (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987). Research on family stress focused on adaptive processes within the family unit. Whereas research on children facing multiple risks attempted to determine what protective factors moderated the effects of stressors, individual vulnerabilities, and environmental hazards leading to a positive adaptational trajectory (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

From these studies it was found that there were often multiple risk factors associated with an actual increase of problems for children and families. It was found that one particular risk factor would not necessarily lead to problems; rather it was a number of risk factors that occurred simultaneously that created a cumulative effect that made an individual or a family susceptible to psychopathology (Rutter, 1987). In essence, there was a synergetic interaction among risk factors that led to a negative trajectory (Rutter, 1987). Similarly, determining family resilience is based on a combination of both risk and protective factors (Hawley, 2000). Maladaptive coping resulted from a cumulative effect of risk factors leading to a negative trajectory, or conversely, positive buffers may

significantly reduce the likelihood of psychopathology or even enhance functioning (Rutter, 1987). Resilience in children was found when risk factors were minimized and protective factors provided a buffering role. Risk and protective factors are not static. Risk factors and protective processes are ever changing and can be identified in all stages of a family's and individual's functioning.

Factors that are associated with family resiliency are commitment, communication, cohesion, adaptability, spirituality, connectedness, and efficacy (Hawley, 2000). As family resiliency evolves, it can lead to a positive chain of events (Rutter, 1999). Child development studies have shown that competent parenting includes warmth, the ability to set appropriate limitations, and involvement in a child's activities (Rutter, 1999; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Maintaining family rituals and customs is linked to stronger family unity, and support from extended family has been shown to be a strong protective factor (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

Protective factors that buffered the effects of adversity were an easy temperament in children, the presence of an individual who took a strong interest in the child, and a strong social network that could include church and other organizations (Garmezy, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1992). Rutter (1987, 1989, 2004) found vulnerability was affected by the child's temperament and cognitive level. Rutter (1999) also noted that a child's position in the family, the pattern of family relationship dynamics, parental supervision, and monitoring play a role in reducing risk. He found that each child was unique in his/her level of vulnerability and it was important to pay attention to genetic factors as well as environmental processes (Rutter, 1987, 1999).

Environmental processes and coping mechanisms were seen as contributors to resilience (Garmezy, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1992; Rutter, 1989). Coping mechanisms can be those that either increase risk or increase a positive chain of events that develop mastery and self-efficacy. A warm relationship with caregivers and cognitive appraisal of the negative experience were found to be factors associated with a child's well-being (Rutter, 1999; 1987). Rutter concluded that resilience involves a range of processes and mechanisms that occur before, during, and after the adversity (1999).

The family's interaction with the ecosystem is a protective factor that has been found to help children overcome multiple stressors. In fact, Werner and Smith (1992) found that one of the strongest protective factors for children living in extreme adversity was having a strong supportive relationship with an adult outside of the family system. In their study, the family system was so problematic that children often needed to detach themselves from the dysfunction of their parents and actively find role models and supports outside of the home in order to achieve resilience (Werner & Smith, 1992). A child's and family's positive affiliations with formal institutions like the church were viewed as protective mechanisms, especially when a family or child was living in high risk circumstances (Masten, et al., 1990).

Rutter (1999) noted that five broad areas emerge when studying how risk factors interact with protective mechanisms. The first is interactions between various risk factors creating a cumulative effect and therefore a higher potential for psychopathology. The second is the temperament and individual characteristics of a child, which can lead to increased or decreased vulnerability. Third is the direct impact of risk on the individual, or if there are indirect effects. Fourth are positive or negative chain reactions that occur

over a prolonged period of time that play a major role in determining whether the risk experiences will lead to psychopathology or resilience (Rutter, 1999). The fifth issue, which needs to be considered in risk experiences, is how the risk is moderated, including how individuals cognitively and affectively process their experiences and the resulting relationships. Therefore, if divorce leads to a trajectory of risk, it can reduce family post-divorce functioning. Coping during and after divorce will depend on the personal qualities of custodial parents and family dynamics. Overall life histories and environmental influences provide important contexts for how children and families will adapt to divorce.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The concepts that informed this study were drawn from ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Garbarino, 1977, 1982, 2001), a salutogenic perspective (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987, 1994), and family stress and coping theory (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983a, 1983b). All three frameworks will be explained separately but are interrelated and complementary.

Ecological theory has been valuable in studies on resilience because has shown that the way resilience is defined and achieved depends upon the socio-environmental location of families, individuals, and groups (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1997, 2005; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005). An ecological framework includes an analysis of interactions among personal qualities, social relationships, neighbourhood characteristics, and community factors that influence stability, and aid in adaptation to adversity and identity formation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986). Based on ecological theory, specific characteristics of individuals do not predict resilience but must be viewed in interaction between all components of an individual's or family's sociocultural environment. Studies on child development and resilience have identified personal, social, family, neighbourhood, and community characteristics that are associated with resilience.

A salutogenic orientation looks at factors that promote health rather than factors that contribute to problems. Resilience and health are based on a continuum, rather than an either/or proposition (Antonovsky, 1979). A salutogenic perspective considers any phenomenon that contributes to combating stress and adversity. When using a salutogenic

perspective to study resilience, the focus is on factors that contribute to health and positive adaptation in conditions of risk and adversity. A salutogenic approach is a pivotal component of family stress and coping theory, which stresses appraisals of the stressful event and resources.

Central to salutogenic orientations is one's *sense of coherence*. A sense of coherence refers to a worldview in which stressors are seen as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1987). The way a situation is viewed varies from person to person and family to family because it is based on their unique sociocultural-environmental location and in this way ties in with ecological theory.

A sense of coherence is defined as “a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic, feeling of confidence that one’s internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected. (Antonovsky, 1987, p.19)

A sense of coherence has been described as a culturally inclusive concept that is pivotal in determining how one copes with adversity (Antonovsky, 1994). It refers to people’s perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals of their situation. A sense of coherence posits that people give meaning on three levels: the stressful situation, identity, and their worldview (Antonovsky, 1987). Family stress and coping theory has integrated a sense of coherence as a fundamental aspect contributing to resilience (McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, & Futell, 1999). A sense of coherence within family stress and coping theory refers to families’ appraisals of their circumstances when faced with adversity. A sense of coherence has also been related to the *family schema*, which is

similar to a sense of coherence but not the same (Antonovsky, 1987; Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1987, 1988, 1993). Family schemas have been defined as:

A generalized structure of shared beliefs, goals, expectations, and priorities shaped and adopted by the family unit over time, thus formulating a generalized informational structure against and through which information and experiences are compared, sifted, analyzed, and processed. (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005, p. 36)

Similar to a sense of coherence, a family schema can guide and legitimate family behaviours and patterns by leading to the development of family meanings, which promote a sense of meaningfulness and comprehensibility (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). Family schemas play a critical role in the family's appraisal of the stressor, definition of the situation, and determination of a coping strategy the family will use, as well as the degree to which new patterns "fit" the schema or whether the schema should be altered to fit the new reality (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). For a family to restore balance and harmony after a crisis requires a change in patterns of functioning so that congruency can be achieved between current family functioning and the family schema. It recognizes the interactive component between the families' identities and their circumstances. Family meanings change to adapt to the current situation while perception of stressors determine coping.

Family stress and coping theory has been used to explain and describe variability in how families respond to crises, which is applicable to family adaptation after divorce (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b). The focus of analysis has been on the family members'

interpretation of the stressful event, the demands created in context of normative everyday demands, and resources within the family or in their environment (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b). Ecological theory has determined how stressors are perceived and what resources are utilized to cope with adversity.

1. Ecological Theory

Ecological theory had its origins in human ecology. The term *ecology* was developed from the Greek word *oik*, which means “place of residence” (White & Klein, 2002, p. 200). This theoretical perspective applies to individuals, families, and other entities such as schools or workplaces. Ecological theory is relevant in sociology, geography, political science, economics, and human environmental relations (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005). This wide array of interrelated disciplines came to be known as home economics but developments in the 1970s extended it to individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and families (Hook & Paulucci, 1970).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulated a model of ecology for human development that takes into account influences in all environmental contexts where development takes place. All facets of the social environment are viewed as having power to produce change for individuals and families (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992). Because development is considered to be interactional between people and their environment, concepts such as niche, adaptation, connectedness, and embeddedness are stressed (White & Klein, 2002). Human development is considered a process based on the exact conditions and interactions within the environment at any given time. There are several basic assumptions of this theory:

One basic assumption is the emphasis on interaction between individuals, families, and their environments. In this assumption, individuals and families are shaped by and, in turn, influence their contexts. The family is one of the contexts that shapes and contains individuals.

The second basic assumption is that there are several different levels within the environmental context that shape and influence individuals and families. These are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These different levels of the environment are nested in the ecosystem in which the individual and family is situated at a particular time. Microsystem involves direct and concrete interactions between an individual and significant others, such as children and parents. Mesosystem is defined by interrelations between two or more microsystems, such as teachers and parents who are involved with children. The exosystem refers to other systems in the environment that have indirect influence on individuals and families including policies and norms within society. The macrosystem is the cultural context in which the systems are organized.

The third basic assumption is that all of these levels of the environment interact on an ongoing basis with each other and create a context. All individuals and families develop in contexts with contextual characteristics that are influenced by other contexts.

Inherent in these three assumptions are other theoretical propositions. One of these assumptions is that of *adaptation*, the concept that people adapt to their immediate environment but also interact with it and thus influence their environment. Another assumption is that individuals and groups are biological and social in nature, thus genetic traits such as intelligence require interaction with the social environment, a nature-nurture

interaction (White & Klein, 2002). Other embedded assumptions are that humans are dependent upon their environment and dependent upon other human beings. Time is a critical factor in this theory because it reflects biological age and maturity as well as the resources and constraints in the environment at any particular time. It points to the fact that over the course of life there are common developmental changes that occur. In addition, human interactions are organized within the environment. Finally human behaviour can be understood on several levels. The main concepts are *ecosystem*, which contains all of the environmental relationships and interdependency of its parts (White & Klein, 2002). *Niche* refers to patterned and relatively stable unique locations of individuals and families. *Adaptive* range refers to the limits or range to which a person can adapt in a particular environment (Ibid.). Ontogenetic development is the internal structure and organization of individuals such as age, or genetic influence.

As stated previously, all systems within the environment are interactive and nested within each other, which shape the context of the environment for individuals and families. The qualities of the environmental resources are considered as well as the interactions between various components within one's niche (Garbarino, 1977).

Ontogenetic

Using ecological theory as an organizing framework to understand family resilience suggests five levels of analysis. The first is ontogenetic development or change as a result of internal processes, such as genetics, biological make up, and age (White & Klein, 2002). Personality, genetics, age, and health interact with changes associated within the family structure, such as divorce as well as changes external to the family (new

neighbourhood). For example, from child development research we know that pre-existing personal problems for parents affect choices in partners thus increasing the likelihood of divorce and problems during and after divorce (Rutter, 2004). From research on divorce we know that problems in the marriage are related to the problems in divorce (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Therefore, problems of divorce may be due to mental health problems of parents as demonstrated in research on high conflict families (Johnson & Roseby, 1997).

Microsystem

The next level of analysis includes the microsystem, which represents day-to-day interactions within the family. Child development and family development is incumbent upon day-to-day interactions and parenting. Family functioning provides the immediate context in which children may be born and for parental interactions, parenting, and divorce. Parenting prior to, during, and after divorce will affect children's adjustment. Parenting stressors will also affect the parent's ability to cope. The transition to a single status parent is often met with role strains and conflicts as one parent manages the household alone. In addition, a parent moving out affects the day-to-day interactions between the children and the non-residential parent.

The types of contact children have with parents, teachers, coaches, childcare providers, and the children's attachment and relationships with both parents are important in understanding the process of divorce and how families adjust when parents separate. In addition, as parents remarry, this introduces new stepparents to children, and possibly new stepsiblings when children are born into parents' new relationship. As demonstrated

in studies, the entire process of divorce may represent numerous transitions over time. Interactions between all components of the immediate environment must also be considered. If stepparents try to replace the role of biological parents, it may create additional conflict, or if they remain supportive to children, it may supplement parental roles. A change in one area of the family affects all other areas. When parents no longer live together, family functioning is affected.

Mesosystem

A mesosystems includes interactions between two or more systems that may have direct or indirect effect on family members. It refers to the interrelationships and influences between systems that affect an individual's or family's circumstances. An ecological analysis includes determining how biological makeup and the quality of parenting influences the family. It looks at interactions in the neighbourhood, community, or economic factors that shape the quality of life for children, parents, and families. In divorce this could include a single parent needing flexible work hours to accommodate meeting the needs of children, or conflict between parents who no longer live together. It also refers to changes in financial circumstances when parents divorce and the risk of a family moving to a low income and perhaps a problematic neighbourhood. For children considerations could be between school and home, or between recreational activities and school.

Exosystem

The exosystem consists of other systems that have direct influence on the family, such as the court rulings that could impose limits on parenting times or other conditions that affect a family in divorce. The third level of analysis is the ecosystem that includes other interactions the family has on a regular basis such as school, neighbourhoods, work places, peer and social groups, church, and recreational activities. All of these influences have an impact on how families function and adjust after divorce. If children have friends whose parents are separated it can provide a reference point to see how they fit with their peers or in their community. It could also include children associating with a negative peer group and the influences this creates on family life, such as being introduced to drugs, or becoming involved with dangerous activities.

For parents, a positive influence could result from having a supportive workplace that allows them some flexibility when they have to be at appointments or with their children. Organizations such as church membership have been associated with resilience as well as positive recreational activities. Having supportive friendships and extended family support are needed for parents who make the difficult transition to single parenting. Constructive social support could enable parents to problem solve and plan for positive events in the future. Influences from a family's immediate environment can enable either positive or negative coping. Clearly, if the parents' social networks encourage deviant behaviour or excessive use of alcohol, the influence will not be constructive or as beneficial as if the parents associated with people who could provide support, corrective feedback, courage, and clarity in problem solving.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem consists of the cultural and societal beliefs about divorce, which influence social policy and programs offered in the community. This includes formal services such as family court; court annexed services (such as parent education seminars for divorced parents); and other services such as custody assessments, mediation, and counselling services to help families adjust. This aspect also includes societal attitudes towards divorce, which can further stigmatize or normalize this transition. How divorce is perceived may be influenced by the sociocultural milieu of the family. A mesosystem analysis would include how work policies influence family life (such as required travel away from home or over time) or how school policies (such as school closures) influence children's adaptation. All components of the environment need to be considered in interaction with each other, not necessarily as separate units.

From an ecological perspective, family resilience and individual development are considered fluid and ongoing over the life course. Human development is not a static event. As such, various interactions in the environmental context occur that can foster individual strengths, build mastery, and provide opportunities to build resilience. In ecological theory, the family is considered one of the many microsystems that influence an individual's development and divorce is only one of many transitions that may occur over time. The family is seen to occupy a niche in all social systems and is influenced by a variety of systems that enhance functioning or increase risks. Over time there could be various risk factors and protective processes, to which a family is exposed, and parental divorce may be only one. Depending on the resources within individual family members, within the community and in the macrosystem, divorce transitions could result in a

positive trajectory of change or have a negative spiral effect for the family. Change and development is always seen in interaction between an individual and their immediate environment, in context of the broader sociocultural system in which they are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The risks and opportunities in the environment will affect coping and adjustment as will the goodness of fit between the opportunities or protective processes within the family and community. Therefore, how divorce is handled varies depending upon the family's sociocultural location, resulting in much diversity.

Cultural variations and traditions are multidimensional with individual and families having simultaneous memberships and participation in a multiplicity of contexts, such as rural, urban, suburban setting, language, age, gender, race, family configuration, religion, nationality, socio-economic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology, migration, and stage of acculturation (Falicov, 1995). Belonging to multiple contexts and having simultaneous memberships results in even more fluid, unpredictable, and shifting groups, which makes generalization more difficult. Contexts may overlap and membership could be partial, resulting in unique ecological niches (Falicov, 1995). An ecological perspective allows for inclusion of the family's entire multidimensional location in understanding how divorce is perceived and how the family adapts. An ecological perspective may yield insight into common themes that foster resilience and healthy family functioning.

2. Salutogenic Approach

A salutogenic model is based on explaining what contributes to a positive continuum of health rather than seeking to explain why people have problems (Antonovsky, 1987). Using a salutogenic approach in research means that personal strengths, abilities, and resources are the focus of inquiry, rather than a pathogenic orientation that seeks to determine the cause and impact of specific risk factors or adversities. "Salutogenesis makes a fundamentally different philosophical assumption about the world than does pathogenesis" (Antonovsky, 1994, p. 5). Using a salutogenic approach means that family resilience is seen on a continuum and risks are ubiquitous. It looks at the nature of individual or family processes that lead towards resilience or health. Looking for positive adaptation, "one can move beyond post-Cartesian dualism and look to imagination, love, play, meaning, will, and the social structures that foster resilience"(Antonovsky, 1987, p.9). This means that there is no dichotomous classification of people who are considered resilient or pathological, rather it involves searching for the total story of the human being [or family], by looking for factors involved in maintaining resilience, rather than focusing on stressors. It changes the nature of the question from what causes dysfunction to what underlies the movement towards healthy functioning.

Based on a salutogenic approach, "the consequences of stressors are not necessarily pathological but could also be salutary, contingent upon the nature of the stressor and the successful resolution of tension" (Antonovsky, 1987, p.12). In other words, the consequences of stressors could bring about positive resources and qualities in the family unit or in the individual. Salutogenesis considers sources that facilitate active adaptation and focuses on how resources were mobilized to cope with the stressors at

hand. This approach does not look for “magic bullets” for resilience but rather the combination of various resources and attributes that help people overcome significant adversity. Salutogenesis is a study of persons and families that are moving toward the healthy end of a continuum based on wherever they are on the continuum.

The basis of a salutogenic perspective is a sense of coherence, which is considered a protective factor (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). The concept of a sense of coherence originated from studies on health of individuals by Antonovsky (1979; 1987). As already noted, this concept has also been integrated in family stress literature as part of the family’s appraisal of the stressor and their resources (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b; McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, Elver, & McCubbin, 1994; Patterson & Garwick, 1994). A sense of coherence is based on parents’ cognitive perceptions and appraisals of the situation, and secondary is the family’s evaluation of their ability to cope, their resources, and options (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b). A sense of coherence essentially means to whatever extent the parents are able to see the adversity of divorce as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful, they will be able to mobilize their resources to adapt and cope.

The term comprehensible refers to a belief that the problem is clear (Antonovsky, 1994). It means that parents are able to make cognitive sense of divorce (Antonovsky, 1987). It means that they are able to see the problem in an ordered, consistent, structured, and clear manner (Antonovsky, 1987). By seeing events in this manner, experiences can be coped with and challenges can be met.

Manageable means that the family (or individual) not only understands the problem but believes that they have the resources to cope (Antonovsky, 1994). This does

not necessarily mean that one is “in control” but that they have faith that they will have the resources to manage. “To the extent that one has a sense of manageability, one will not feel victimized by events or feel that life treats one unfairly” (Antonovsky, 1987, p.18). It is similar in meaning to the construct of “self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is based on the instrumental aspect of coping leading to the belief and knowledge that they have mastery to adequately and successfully cope with the stressors at hand. It takes into account the past ability of the family to meet normative changes and face adversity in the past.

Meaningfulness “refers to the extent that one feels that life makes sense emotionally [and to make sense] of the problems and demands posed by life are worth investing energy in, are worthy of commitment and engagement”(Antonovsky; 1987, p. 18). Essentially, this concept refers to the family’s appraisal of the stressor in that they believe it is meaningful to resolve this problem. A key aspect of this concept is its emphasis on motivation and commitment (Antonovsky, 1994).

In family stress literature, a sense of coherence has been referred to as the family’s ability to give meanings on three levels: about the stressful event, identity as a family, and their worldview (McCubbin, 1995). I have referred to parents making sense of divorce because divorce is based on parental decisions, not children’s. As such, parental belief systems and self-efficacy become important buffers to stress. The parents’ subjective appraisal of their capacities and self-determined sense of mastery determines how they will cope to help children adjust. When parents decide to separate, their personal sense of coherence becomes an important determinant in how they will overcome this transition. In essence, it means that parents with a strong sense of

coherence believe if “she or he understands the problem and sees it as a challenge, they will select what is believed to be the most appropriate tool for the task at hand” (Antonovsky, 1994, p. 8).

Similar to ecology theory, Antonovsky (1987) has identified several resources in all levels of the environment that contribute to health [resilience]. He has referred to these as *generalized resistance resources (GSRs)* and includes such factors as material resources; knowledge; intelligence; ego strength; mastery of flexible, rational, and farsighted coping strategies (problem solving and planning skills); social supports; commitment to one’s group; cultural stability; and stable values and beliefs (Antonovsky, 1979). These resources exist in all levels of the environment and interact with stressors to increase a salutogenic response and positive adaptation that will contribute to resilience (Ibid.). Resources will enhance one’s sense of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. “A sense of coherence offers an explanation of how these resources may contribute to health” (Antonovsky, 1994, p. 8). It can be stated that similar to risk and resiliency research, a strong sense of coherence will positively interact with *protective mechanisms or processes* in the environment.

The concept of coherence is culturally inclusive, in that the character and meaning of stressors and the nature of coping vary based on the sociocultural context of the family (Antonovsky, 1994). In this way, a sense of coherence includes the environmental context as pivotal in how people cope. Parental and family resources are culturally and environmentally determined. From a salutogenic perspective, resources are socio-culturally defined as:

Money and knowing someone, social support and organizational membership, fight and flight, active and passive, confronting and denying, internalizing and externalizing - these were all resources or behavioral strategies which might or might not be useful in confronting a given stressor, which were or were not normative in different cultural contexts. (Antonovsky, 1994, p. 12)

Selection of particular resources is dependent upon the sociocultural location of the family. Environmental context shapes individuals and families. It has a crucial impact on how stressors and coping strategies are defined (Antonovsky, 1994). Specific resources will depend upon the immediate environment in which the family is situated. Their sociocultural environment shapes individuals and the manner in which parents help themselves and their children adapt. Therefore, family resilience is not based on specific resources as these will vary from family to family, but on what they had in common which was a strong sense of coherence. Antonovsky (1994) hypothesized that “seeing the world as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful would facilitate the selection of culturally appropriate and situationally effective resources and behaviors” (p. 12).

3. Family Stress and Coping Theory

Family resilience can be examined from the perspective of family stress and coping theory (Boss, 2002; McCubbin, McCubbin, & Thompson, 1995; McCubbin et al., 1994; Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Much work done in the area of family stress has been by family sociologists, with a focus of inquiry on family adaptation, not individual adjustment. Resilience is described as successful adaptation or bonadaptation, meaning a good outcome to severe and often cumulative stressors that are normative and non-

normative (Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987; Patterson, 2002). Because the focus is on adaptation and adjustment, family stress theory has considered the salutogenic aspects in family functioning. In considering resilience, “family crises do not carry the stigmatizing pejorative value judgment that the family unit has failed, is dysfunctional, or in need of professional treatment” (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005, p. 31).

Family crisis theory was first established by Hill (1949) to explain the impact of stressors and understand how families responded to war separation and reunion. It was later renamed family stress theory and developed to include an *ABCX* model to describe how families responded to adversity. In this model *A* is the family’s meaning of the stressor, which interacts with *B*, the family resources available to the family, and *C* which is the family’s definition of the stressor, and *X* is how the family adapts. This model was used to predict and explain how a family experienced and adapted to crises. Hill (1949) described it as a roller coaster effect, which was later elaborated upon to describe post crisis adaptation resulting in the *Double ABCX Model* (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b). This model emphasizes the recovery phase. In this model, *aA* includes the pile up or accumulation of life events and changes; *bB* is the family’s perception of their resources and ability to rebuild protective resources; *cC* is the family’s appraisal of the situation or adversity; and *xX* is the family’s adaptation, reflecting the outcome of family change from the crisis situation. In essence, this theory states that families try to balance the demands caused by the crisis and everyday living with their resources.

Family stress theorists have been able to highlight the internal functioning of families that enables successful adaptation within context of their sociocultural environment (McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, Elver, & McCubbin, 1994). Knowledge

from family stress theory has been expanded upon based on literature from family systems theory and family therapy to provide therapeutic guidelines (Walsh, 1998). The central properties of family life that lead to resilience are cohesion, flexibility, and communication (Walsh, 1998). These are grounded in the *Circumplex Model* of family systems, which has been used as a tool for family assessment (Olson, 1986; Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1989).

A sense of coherence is pivotal in family stress and coping theory. This theory takes into account how appraisals affect family adaptation. Family stress theory posits that a family's adaptation to stressful life events is based on three factors: their definition of the stressful situation (in context of normative stressors); their appraisal of their capacities, resources, and abilities; and their regenerative power (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b; McCubbin et al., 1994). When demands exceed a family's resources, the family could change their perception of the stressor, reduce their pileup of demands, or increase their resources (Patterson & Garwick, 1994).

The concept of a sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987) was introduced to this model and it was renamed "The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FARR) Model" (McCubbin, et al., 1994; Patterson, 1988). This framework added focus on family processes (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983a, and 1983b). Four key constructs that are emphasized are family demands, family capacities, family meanings, and family adjustment.

This theory states that families engage in active processes to balance *family demands* with *family capacities* which interact with *family meanings* to arrive at a level of *family adjustment* or *adaptation* (Patterson, 2002). Adjustment refers to families' abilities

to make the necessary changes in functioning so as to accommodate the demands and stressors brought on by the non-normative event or crisis. Positive adaptation involves alterations and changes in family functioning. Family resources, demands, and meanings emerge from all levels of the environment.

Two levels of meanings were differentiated: situational and global meanings. Situational meanings are based on the family's subjective view of the demands and their capacities (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Global meanings are encompassing beliefs about their family and their relationship with the larger community, or how they saw themselves in a broader societal context. How a family appraises a situation determines how they cope and what resources they use based on their socio-environmental location.

Early critiques of family stress theory stated that it failed to account for the multiple levels of the social system, individual, dyadic, familial, social networks, community, and cultural/historical (Reigel, 1976; Walker, 1985). However, more recently, Boss (2002) advocated that family stress and coping theory considers the family's social and cultural contexts in that family adaptation includes supports in the environment, based on studies on families with chronically ill children (Patterson, 2002).

Efforts were made to include cultural variation in a family's process to adaptation in studies on ethnic minority families (McCubbin, McCubbin, & Thompson, 1995; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1997; McCubbin, 2003) and to view family strengths within the life cycle and in their ecological milieu (McCubbin, Thompson, Pirner, & McCubbin, 1988). A family's sense of coherence, which is the basis of appraisals, is considered cross-cultural in character and was defined specifically as a construct that would make sense to everyone (Antonovsky, 1994). It highlights the sociocultural context on the

character and meaning of stressors and the nature of coping (McCubbin et al., 1995). Therefore, how families appraise stressors, demands, and their resources and how they cope is totally unique and dependent upon their appraisals within their sociocultural circumstances.

For example, for families involved in the divorce transition, their choice of coping strategies would depend on the way parents perceive divorce and which parent initiated it, family values, and their history of coping with normative and non-normative demands. Coping strategies would depend upon what resources the parents and children have in their immediate environment, their perception of the associated stressors, and the cumulative demands created by divorce, as well as pre-divorce problems that have not been resolved thereby creating a pileup of demands. For example, if a family is struggling helping children adjust to school and then separate, the problems of poor school adjustment create a pileup of demands in context of the new stressors associated with the divorce transition. Their resources would depend on their environmental niche.

Parents in an urban setting may choose to live in the same neighbourhood so that their children would still be close to their friends, the other parent, and school regardless of the legal custody arrangement. In rural settings, the culture of farm families is based on the family being involved in the farming operation, which includes the children being active participants in the work. Therefore, parenting time would consider timing and seasons, which includes heavy work periods like seeding and harvest. As such, custody agreements would need to consider the farming operation, ages of children, and distance between parents' homes. Environmental and personal resources are central in how parents are involved in post-divorce relationships with their children. The need to

cooperate with nature becomes second nature to farm families, while in urban settings it is a secondary consideration. Adjustment after divorce depends on culture, family values, and the environment of the family system.

More recent developments to family stress and coping theory have developed into what has been referred to as the family resiliency model. In this model, inclusion of the environment is pivotal with the family being viewed as an interacting system in their environment. The family interacts with other domains such as their neighbourhood, community, and society (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). In this manner, ecological theory was further integrated into family stress and coping theory.

Sense of coherence & appraisals

Family stress and coping theory and a salutogenic perspective are based on the key idea that positive coping is based on appraisals, which are subjective perceptions of the stressor and resources. This concept evolved to family schemas (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005).

The family schema “represents the family’s worldview, inclusive of their culture and identity, which evolves over time and serves as a stable framework used to guide family behaviour” (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005, p. 37). Family schemas foster a family sense of coherence and positive coping. Using Antonovsky’s (1987) framework for a sense of coherence, the stressors are seen as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful.

The notion of a family’s sense of coherence was tested to determine if it contributed to resilience. It was found that a strong sense of family coherence was

associated with positive adaptation and coping with the physical disability of a spouse (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). The construct of a family sense of coherence was used to study family adaptation in family stress research. These studies found that confidence, acceptance, and positive appraisal of stressful situations in life were associated with positive adaptation (Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987). Other contributions that led to positive adaptation were health, work, and involvement in the community, in other words the environment. Similar to a salutogenic perspective, a strong sense of family coherence acts as a stress buffer and contributes to successful coping with stressors and a higher level of family adaptation which in turn leads to family experiences that reinforce a sense of coherence (Ibid.). In other words, there is an interactive effect between successful coping and a sense of coherence.

Family meanings

Froma Walsh has defined beliefs as the “heart and soul of resilience” (1998, p. 45). In family stress and coping theory, meanings emerge on three levels: their appraisal or definition of the stressor and demands, their identity as a family, and their worldview, or how they see themselves in relationship to systems outside of the family (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Family meanings are more than individual appraisals and include existential feelings such as social integration, meaningfulness, and the purpose of life (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; Cederblad & Hanson, 1996; McCubbin et al., 1995). Similar to a sense of coherence, family meanings define and frame a problem which influences how they deal with it. Walsh (1998) saw beliefs as the core of all family functioning and central to the concept of family resilience.

Family beliefs are anchored in the cultural values, social position, and experiences of the family over time (Falicov, 1995; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). Family meanings, cultural traditions and rituals play a critical role in organizing and maintaining family unity, as well reducing ambiguity and uncertainty about complex stimuli, thus enabling a coordination of responses (Patterson, 2002; Walsh, 1998, 2002). Meanings, appraisals, and responses create patterns, which build capacity or resiliency in successfully managing normative changes (Boss, 2002; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005; Patterson, 2002). When a family is confronted by non-normative challenges or traumatic events, their history of successful functioning in dealing with normative stressors is considered a protective capacity (Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987).

Meanings provide a powerful protective or salutogenic influence that shapes the nature and extent of the risk (Patterson, 2002). When disastrous events occur, family identity, goals, and purpose of life are altered (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Family meanings, values and beliefs need to change in order to cope with the unexplainable and provide hope (Patterson, 1993). Causal or explanatory beliefs offering a multiplicity of attributions to explain problems are considered characteristic of high functioning families (Beavers & Hampson, 1990). Signs of family resilience in families and parents include perseverance, courage (often with support), sustaining hope (Brunner, 1984), optimism (Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Seligman, 1995), beliefs about success and failure (Brooks, 1994), positive illusions (Taylor, 1989), transcendent beliefs (Beavers & Hampson, 1990), and beliefs about God and involvement in religious communities (Wright, Watson, & Bell, 1996).

Concept of demands

In family stress theory the concept of demands includes normative and non-normative stressors. When there is a traumatic event that directly affects the family it results in a pileup of demands. Normative demands are expected changes that occur in the life cycle of the family and non-normative events refer to discrete events or stressors that expose the family to risk and often crises (Patterson, 2002). Non-normative demands are unexpected and severe, often constituting significant risk. Even though normative demands are predictable (such as the birth of children, children starting school, or entering adolescence), they are often difficult transitions and require adjustments and changes in family functioning. If normative change occurs while a family is facing adversity these transitions will be affected.

In the family stress literature, the term *pileup of demands* is used to describe an accumulation of stressors when needs are unmet and more problems are generated (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983b). A pileup of stressors is often precipitated by adversity or it can be due to normative and non-normative transitions that occur simultaneously or arise as consequences of the family's efforts to cope. As such, divorce can be considered a significant adversity, because it causes changes in the family's structure and when combined with normative changes within the family, it results in a pileup of stressors.

Normative demands include "daily hassles" of living as well as the family's personal history of unresolved conflicts (Patterson, 2002). Families' histories of successfully meeting normative demands builds mastery and self-efficacy, which increases the likelihood that they will be resilient if faced with significant risk or a traumatic event (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). The reverse of this is also true in that

when families have had difficulties meeting normative demands, the result is cumulative, and a pileup of unmet family needs leads to a downward trajectory placing them in high-risk status when faced with adversity or non-normative demands.

Families' definitions of demands are based on community and cultural contexts of the family's ecological milieu (Boss, 2001). In this way, family stress and coping theory overlaps with ecological theory, because a family's socio-cultural environment influences identity and subsequently their interpretation of adversity, and how they cope. Therefore, a contextual analysis of the adversary is important that takes into account past problems, environmental influences, and identity. For example, problems preceding divorce often predict problems during and after divorce (Ambert, 2002; Justice Canada, 2002). Divorce occurs in context of normative stressors. We know that most divorces occur within the first five years of marriage and reasons are often attributed to difficulties in managing the transition to either a marital or parenting role (Ambert, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2005). However, if reasons for divorce were also because of addiction problems, family violence, poverty, and mental health problems for one or both of the parents, and they had difficulty managing normative stressors, it is likely that their lack of history in resolving past problems will create a pileup of stressors during the divorce. As such, the divorce transition will be affected by dynamics resulting from these problems and not just the divorce itself.

In fact, leaving a destructive marriage could lead to improved functioning for parents and children who are not exposed to as much conflict. How this transition occurs depends upon the family's environmental context. In some families, divorce is common and accepted. In other families it could be interpreted with much shame leading to a

withdrawal of support from the extended family. However, if the family never fully approved of the marriage, it could be viewed as a positive change even if divorce was not a common experience for the family. Therefore, perceptions will affect coping.

Family capacities

Another link with ecological theory is that family resources, coping methods, and capacities are dependent on the sociocultural context of the family. Family capacities include two aspects: concrete psychosocial resources (what the family has) and how they cope (what they do) when dealing with adversity (Patterson, 2002). Family capacities include internal family dynamics and relationship strengths. When parents separate, the personal coping skills of parents are needed to manage this transition. If demands significantly exceed capabilities, the family will experience crisis, or significant disequilibrium and disorganization as they try to meet new demands (Patterson, 2002). In family stress theory, crisis is viewed as a turning point in which major changes are required in the family's structure, function, interaction, and meanings. Crises can either lead to improved functioning or deterioration in functioning.

Bonadaptation

After a traumatic or non-normative event, bonadaptation means that a family adapts to the level of previous functioning or surpasses their previous functioning. It means that the family was able to reduce demands, increase capacities, or change meanings to overcome problems to show positive adaptation or resilience (Patterson, 2002). Hill (1949, 1970) wrote about the roller coaster model of family stress whereby

after facing severe adversity families either return to a level of functioning at, below, or above their pre-crisis level.

Protective capacities exist on three levels: within the individual, within the family, and within the context of the community. Aspects that lead to resilience are family cohesiveness, the family's ability to meet individual needs, and their history in dealing with relational issues, especially conflict (Walsh, 1998). Within the family, protective processes to overcome adversity are flexibility, ability to show affection, concrete task assignment, clear planning, and giving clear direction (Walsh, 1998). These processes are considered protective because they serve as the basis for decision making so that the family can accomplish its core functions as well as respond to stress (Walsh, 1998, 2002). Walsh (1998, 2002) identified three key areas in which resiliency emerges within a family. These areas are organizational patterns (flexibility, connectedness, socio-economic resources), communication process (clarity, open emotional expression, collaborative problem solving), and belief systems (making meaning of adversity, positive outlook, transcendence, and spirituality).

As I described these theories, I discussed how they complement and reinforce similar concepts. Similar concepts between a salutogenic perspective and family stress and coping theory are appraisals and a sense of coherence, which are fundamental in how families adapt. In addition, ecological theory encompasses family stress and coping theory and a sense of coherence by providing a means of coping and determining resources. Family perceptions of stressors, their resources, the pileup of other stressors, and their ability to cope are based on the family's sense of coherence (Patterson & Garwick, 1994), which leads to coping strategies. Resources used to cope depend upon

specific sociocultural and environmental location of each family. In turn, their environment shapes individuals' and families' values and beliefs, which influences their appraisals. Based on their sociocultural location, a family interprets and makes meaning of adversity in a unique manner, which determines what resources are used to cope. The manner in which adversity is perceived is unique to each family and depends upon the internal functioning of the family, their history, and their appraisal of the situation. These theoretical approaches posit that if individuals and families have a strong sense of coherence, family schema, or appraisals, they will be able to overcome adversity. Resources used to cope are qualities within people, families, and their immediate environment. Resources they use will be based on their appraisal of what they need to meet demands. There is great variation in how people and families cope with adversity and "resilience is both a process and a capacity by which families can emerge as resilient" (Patterson, 2002, p. 352).

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology I used in this study to capture the process of divorce from a salutogenic perspective followed by my research findings that show unique pathways to family resilience after the transition of divorce.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the research methodology used for this study. First, I define narrative research and discuss how this methodology complements the theories explained in Chapter 3. I discuss the relevance of narrative methods, provide a definition of “stories,” and tie this into the purpose of this study.

Secondly, I explain the research design, including a description of the pre-test for the interview guidelines. I continue to describe the data collection process, starting with the selection criteria and screening and concluding with the process of recruitment of participants. Next, I address ethical issues and challenges, including risks and benefits, consents for parents and children, anonymity and confidentiality, compensation for participation, plus conflict of interest issues and power relationships between researcher and participants. I describe the interviewing process, guidelines, the research interview and transcription, plus the process of analysis. I end this chapter with a discussion of reliability and validity.

This qualitative study is based on narrative methods to understand how families overcome the divorce transition in a manner that reflects positive adaptation. As is typical in qualitative research, the sample size is smaller with a focus on thick description. I interviewed seven parents who experienced divorce and one child, an 11-year-old boy. My key research questions were designed to understand the origins and maintenance of resilience in post-divorce families. The focus was on the manner in which families overcame the stressful transition of divorce so that children benefited and parents were

able to function in society. The “family” as a whole was the unit of analysis, not parents alone, although family adjustment to any stressful experience depends on the leadership of parents. This is especially true in divorce where it has been shown that good mental health of custodial parents, good social supports, and good parenting skills will help the children adjust (Wallerstein, 1986). Because divorce is the dissolution of marital status for the parents, the key informants or storytellers were the parents, although the questions were about family and parental adjustment. The emphasis was on parental perceptions of family resilience.

Part 1 - What is narrative research?

Narrative research is a study of stories. It is not a homogeneous concept and embraces a range of methods (Neander & Skott, 2006). By nature, it is subjective and interpretive and there is no one method. It has to do with “how protagonists interpret things” (Bruner, 1990, p.51 cited in Riessman, 1993, p. 5). Others state, “narrative research ...refers to any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials...it can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p.2). Riessman has stated that a precise definition is ambiguous and refers to narratives as:

A particular kind of text organized around consequential events in the teller’s life... taking the listener into a past time or “world” and to recapitulate what happened then to make a point, often a moral one. (Riessman, 1993, p.67)

Narratives are stories, which emerge in the context of an in-depth interview, often in response to a particular question (Mishler, 1985). Narrative accounts are retrospective

and reflective efforts often to cope with negative life outcomes and to deal with the impact of change and loss (Borden, 1992). Personal narratives reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences. Narratives are analyzed for connections between psychological, sociological, cultural, and political dimensions of human experience (Patton, 2002). Through narratives, people try to make sense of how things have come to pass and understand whom they are becoming in reference to where they have been.

The use of narrative methods provides unique and rich data yielding an in-depth understanding of real life problems and solutions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Narrative research has been characterized as a method for “giving voice” to those traditionally marginalized. It holds out the promise of providing a complete and complex picture of social life by highlighting the ways in which culture and society shape individual lives (Hendry, 2007). Narrative methods are based on an egalitarian research relationship that honours intersubjective modes of knowledge production (Munro, 1998).

Research methods should always be selected to best fit the research question (Lieblich et al., 1998; Patton, 2002). I thought narrative methods would be best to capture the transition in divorce. Narratives are based on retrospective accounts, often of difficult times, whereby details of the interaction between the environmental factors and the person are included. In the past, Catherine Kohler Riessman used narrative methods in her study on divorce (1990). As well, narrative methods have previously been used to investigate transitions in the life cycle such as transition to fatherhood, transition of immigration, and divorce (Lieblich et al., 1998). Understanding the complexity of change during transition is the focus of this study. Narrative approaches have been used “to learn

about a social phenomenon, or historical period, or explore a personality” as well as to “represent the lifestyle of subgroups in society” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 3).

Narrative methods are used as a means of understanding continuity and change over time, including the means to make sense of lived experience, particularly to adversity (Cohler, 1991). Riessman has said that stories are constructed where “there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society” and to make sense of difficult life experiences and trauma (Riessman, 1993, p.3). Divorce is often experienced as a traumatic family crisis and narrative methods are able to yield the rich data of *how* families overcome this transition. Understanding the details about how personal qualities and resources help in divorce is an area that has not yet been carefully explored in research.

Fit with theories

Narrative methods have become a valid means of knowledge production in social science research (Fraser, 2004; Lieblich et al. 1998; Riessman, 1990, 1993, 1994). By using narrative methods to analyze and interpret stories, the culture, social world, and identity of participants is revealed; therefore, narrative research has the potential to create new knowledge (Fraser, 2004). This methodology stresses the importance of environmental influence in constructing meaning. Using a salutogenic perspective considers how the environment contributes to resilience, and through the use of narrative analysis the participants’ sense of coherence will be accessible. In these ways narrative methods are consistent with the theoretical frameworks I selected and an appropriate methodology for this study. The meaning of divorce is constructed and interpreted

depending on the socio-cultural location of each participant. Use of narrative approaches would yield rich data about the details of divorce transitions that are based on the unique circumstances of each family.

In context of family stress and coping theory, the adversity in this research is divorce. Despite its frequency, divorce is still regarded as an unexpected life transition and there are few norms to guide families going through divorce transitions (Ahrns, 1994; Riessman, 1991). All circumstances of families are unique and families experience divorce differently. Understanding how families manage the complexities of this transition is the goal of this inquiry. I want to discover how decisions were made, what personal qualities were needed, what personal meanings were derived from the experience, and how resources were used. This kind of detail is revealed in stories. I am interested in the determinants of change, not just in identifying risk and protective factors. My research interests are to understand how people negotiate these factors so that children's needs are met and the families are able to maintain or achieve resilience. The study of stories offers a lucid understanding of the social meanings of divorce for families.

Relevance of narrative research

Narrative analysis is appropriate for theory development and research in practice (Mishler, 1986b). Studies in resilience have proven that the context and culture of individuals facilitates resilience when people face adverse circumstances (Ungar, 2005). In fact, personal definitions of resilience are based on culture and the phenomena under investigation (Ibid.). Family and life stories reveal cultural and social patterns through the

lens of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Stories provide translucent windows into the culture and social meanings for individuals and families.

Lives must be understood within the complex context of culture, and subsequent study either of the text of ethnographic inquiry or of the psycho-analytic interview must preserve the recognition of context, including that of ethnographer and informant or analyst and analysand. (Cohler, 1994, p.169)

Narrative analysis examines personal meanings that reflect identity and culture. However, narratives are not necessarily taken at face value as complete and accurate reflections of reality (Lieblich et al., 1998). Stories are constructed around core facts of life, which are viewed through the perspective of the individual being interviewed. Because the story is subjective, it may not represent “historical truth” but still contains “narrative truth” about the identity of the individual (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 8). Consequently, life stories about events, hardships, and transitions will contain information about personal identity and with proper use can provide researchers with keys to understand historical truth and culture. Despite debates about “factual grounding, informative value, or linkages to personal identity...the life story constructs and transmits individual and cultural meanings” (Lieblich et al. 1998, p.8).

Narrative research fits with postmodern thinking in that it acknowledges the existence of multiple frameworks of discourse and recognizes individuals as experts in their experience (Fraser, 2004). Specifically, Fraser has said:

With the capacity to recognize people’s strengths and engage people in active, meaning-making dialogues, narrative approaches – notably those informed by

critical ideas – may help social workers move beyond a strict problem focus to more generally explore social phenomena. (Fraser, 2004, p. 181)

Fraser (2004) has gone on to point out that narrative analysis in research has gained great popularity over recent years as postmodern methods have become legitimized.

With greater acceptance of postmodern research methods, personal storytelling has become a valid means of knowledge production in postmodern research methods. (Fraser, 2004, p. 180)

Narrative methods have been used by many academic and professional disciplines including history, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, law, medicine, nursing, psychiatry, education, and social work (Lieblich et al, 1998; Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 1993). Within social sciences, narrative research has been used to understand the lived experience of individuals to an event or phenomena that involves a complexity of individual and social elements (Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). The increasing use of narrative research has led to disagreements among scholars as to the precise definition of narrative inquiry (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). The term has come to mean an entire life story as used in history and anthropology, or stories of experience as means to illustrate how identity is constructed in social sciences (Ibid.). Narratives provide context for individuals through the use of stories (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007). In sociolinguistics, a story is referred to as a discrete unit of discourse in an answer to a single question (Labov, 1982).

What are stories?

People are storytellers by nature. Stories provide coherence and continuity to life's experiences as well as to individual identity (Bruner, 1996; Gee, 1991; Mishler, 1986b). One of the most direct channels in exploring the inner world of people is through their stories about life and experienced reality. People use cultural modes of reasoning to organize their experiences, and cultural meanings are conveyed through the stories that are told (Fraser, 2004). Stories shape and construct one's identity and reality. In therapy, narrative approaches have been used to reconstruct past adversities so that these events can become integrated into identity (White & Epston, 1990). Similarly, stories told in research in response to questions are used to explain one's life experiences and find coherence, especially when the experiences were adverse (Cohler, 1991). Stories about our lives become a way to fashion identity. "Stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world... We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7).

Stories are context-specific and their form and content is responsive to the purposes of the interview (Mishler, 1986b). How the story is told is influenced by the context in which the interview takes place, the purpose of the interview, the nature of the audience, and the relationship between the teller/ participant and listener/ researcher (Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986b). Therefore, analysis and interpretation must consider the relationship and interview context when constructing knowledge. Personal experience is the focus of narrative analysis in qualitative research. It is based on interpretation and understanding personal meanings.

Language is not transparent. Interpretation is central in narrative analysis because the meanings and how language is used varies (Riessman, 1993). Understanding meaning

and accurately interpreting the teller's story is central in validity for qualitative research. Historical and cultural locations of participants must be considered in the interpretation of stories (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). "Methods of analyzing stories embedded in interviews involve a focus on language, significance, and context rather than standardized codes for content" (Poindexter, 2002). There is a need to listen carefully to the choice of words, meanings in pauses, and words that are stressed. Understanding and accurately reflecting meaning establishes validity or trustworthiness of the research (Polkinghorne, 2007). Justifiable results require sufficient evidence to make conclusions.

Narrative methods are pathways to understand culture and to provide narrative truths in psychoanalysis (Lieblich et al. 1998). Typically, narrators recount events that are located in particular times and places or events that are based around themes (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). "A central area of narrative study is human interaction in relationships- the daily stuff of social work" (Riessman & Quinney, 2005, p. 392). In social work practice, narrative studies show how knowledge is constructed based on listening to clients' stories or in use of reports to influence policy or agency protocols (Ibid.). The goal of narrative research is to understand the world from the standpoint of the teller's perspective. This involves being sensitive to the context of the phenomena under investigation as well as the interview process (Fortune, 1994; Goldstein, 1994). It is important to create a relationship in the interview that invites full exploration of participants' experiences. This requires careful monitoring of personal reactions by suspending personal judgment and being aware of the role of an interviewer (Fortune, 1994; Goldstein, 1994). All of these skills are common in social work practice in daily work with clients.

In this study, I defined narratives as a coherent account of the participants' description of adversity and resolution. My goal was to understand what protective mechanisms existed and how they helped. Stories were contained throughout the entire narrative often depicting and illustrating specific situations. I used Denzin's (1989a) definition of a story, which has stated that stories have a beginning, middle, and end, so that I was able to capture each participant's complete account of his/her experience. However, the meaning and interpretation of stories was based on the context of the entire transcript and interview process. Prior to the taped interview, participants shared information with me during the telephone screening and while I built rapport upon first arriving to their homes and while I reviewed ethical considerations. When I came to the participants' homes, I made a deliberate effort to engage each participant and often they spoke about their circumstances. Thus, during the taped interview some meanings were inferred based on our previous conversation and were illustrated by explicit stories.

In narrative research, primacy is given to understanding the participants' subjective meanings and theory evolves from identifying and analyzing patterns and themes in a circular process similar to "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Hypotheses and theories can be derived from a process of comparing and contrasting themes, patterns and accounts of events (Lieblich et al., 1998). In this study, experiences were described in retrospect and themes were grounded in participants' cultures, their environmental context, and search for meaning.

Purpose of study

My primary research goal was to gain insight into what personal and family qualities contribute to resilience, how and what resources are helpful, and how personal qualities and family dynamics blend with available resources to result in positive adaptation. The problems leading to divorce and how the family coped provided the context for understanding resolutions and solutions. As previously stated, some context was explained in the screening telephone interviews as well as in conversations before taping. I intentionally chose to conduct the interviews in a manner that was conducive to building trust and rapport so that the participants would feel comfortable speaking of difficult times.

The stories shared by participants provided a glimpse of what life is like now and how resilience was achieved. Each narrative was a personal reflection of individual strengths and limitations and how these characteristics influenced their children. Each story was also very much situated in time and place. The stories did not necessarily have to reflect historical truth to be of value because they were subjective experiences that reflected the phenomena of resilience. As noted in my literature review, resilience is not an individual characteristic, but a process that results from a number of complex and dynamic processes that occur over time (Rutter, 1999; McCubbin and McCubbin, 2005). The family was not a passive recipient of resilience. Parents made decisions and took action to promote resilience in themselves and their children.

Part 2 - Research methods

I conducted three pilot interviews with divorced mothers who had joint custody and primary residence with their children prior to interviewing seven parents who were the participants in this study. My research design consisted of two interviews: the first interview with the parent alone and the second interview with the parent and the children together, thereby obtaining a co-constructed story on resilience. However, I modified my research design based on feedback from the participants in the pilot interviews and those who inquired about the research. Five parents inquired about the research in a time frame from February until April 2006. All of these parents were reluctant to participate if their children had to be involved in the study. I also learned from the parents in my pilot interviews that parents were hesitant to allow children to participate in a research interview because they feared it would disrupt their children's adjustment and the interview was not intended to provide a benefit to their children. Therefore, with consent of my committee I changed the research design to make it optional to include interviews with children. The University of Manitoba Research Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board approved this change. The original ethics approval certificate for the study is contained in Appendix L and Appendix M contains the Amendment Approval to reflect the change to the research design. The research design was changed because of parents' reluctance to involve their children in the study. A commentary about the difficulties in obtaining a sample is contained in Appendix C.

Four out of the seven parents who participated felt comfortable with the research process, but were reluctant to give consent for their children to be involved in research interviews. In the end, I interviewed only one child out of the three families who did

agree to their children being interviewed. One 6-year-old child was not interviewed because his parents had separated only 13 months prior. His mother reported that he found it difficult to adjust to his parents' divorce. In addition, he was shy and did not want to talk about the divorce. The parents did not put any pressure on him to participate even though they both gave me written consent prior to asking him if he wanted to participate. The second child was 16 years old and was also reluctant to participate. He did contact me, but his mother encouraged and reminded him to do this, which I interpreted as coercion. Therefore I did not proceed with an interview with him.

In previous research on divorce, it has been demonstrated that children's adjustment and family dynamics are dependent upon parental adjustment (Kelly & Emery, 2002). Therefore, I felt that by conducting detailed interviews with parents who had custody (joint or sole) and primary residence with their children, at least 50% of the time, and by focusing questions on family adjustment, I would be able to obtain information on the determinants of resilience in divorce. I was prepared to have up to three separate interviews with parents. However, I found all of my participants to be very forthcoming in their narratives and, in fact, I was able to develop good rapport from the start. In addition, as single parents, the participants were very busy and had limited time to devote to participation in my study.

Six out of seven interviews were conducted in the participants' homes. One interview was conducted in my office at the parent's request. I developed an interview guide, which consisted of open-ended questions and prompts. The interview guides are contained in Appendices A and B. I prepared a guide for interviews with parents and a separate one for children.

Pilot test of interview guidelines and interview process

Prior to recruitment of participants, I conducted three pilot interviews with three mothers who had primary residence with their children. I interviewed two of these participants in my home office and one in her home. The University of Manitoba Research Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board approved the pilot interviews as part of my research design on November 22, 2005. The approval certificate is contained in Appendix L. My primary goals from the pilot interviews were to review the quality of my research questions and determine needed changes. All of my questions were open-ended but I wanted to obtain feedback as to which questions were most pertinent and opened up conversation. During the pilot interviews, I used the informants as resources for feedback. I reviewed questions for the children with them as well as conducted the research interview as planned. All three of the participants felt comfortable and open in giving feedback about the process and the questions. This was then used to refine the questions.

I chose participants who were in three stages of the family life cycle when they separated, as stated in the selection criteria. All were women with whom I had a prior relationship and they volunteered to participate and contribute. I did not complete a full analysis of these interviews but wanted to provide an overview of the participants. All three participants were mothers who had legal joint custody and all had primary residence with their children. Although all the fathers were involved, the children did not share residences. All of these women worked throughout their marriage and two were university educated. None of these women were remarried or in a serious relationship at

the time of the pilot study. All were active in the community involving themselves in church, fitness, and their children's lives and community activities.

The first participant was 51 years of age at the time of the interview and was separated for 4 years. Her two sons were 15 and 18 at the time of the separation. She was married for 27 years of which almost 10 years were without children. Her sons resided with her in the family home, and her husband lived two blocks away. Her strongest sentiment was that divorce is about loss and grieving. The most important thing she learned about herself was that she was an optimist and believed optimism was a "spiritual gift." She and her husband worked through the separation with the help of a counsellor. It was described as a low conflict marriage, even though there was tension, mostly they grew apart from each other and "were distant." She continued to encourage, facilitate, and support her sons' relationship with their father. She did not "want to define it [their relationship]" but called him regularly to tell him about micro details of their sons' lives as invitations for his participation. Major decisions were discussed between both parents and their sons, who because of their age and growing independence had choices to make regarding post-secondary education, such as area of study, where they would go to university, travel, and other things.

The second participant was 43 years of age and was separated for 11 years at the time of the interview. Her two children were age 5 and 1 at the time of the separation. She was married for 11 years prior to separation. She shared custody with her former husband but considered her home to be their primary residence. The children spent close to half of their time with their father. According to this participant, the greatest support

was having flexible work hours so she could be home with the children if they were sick, or adjust her hours based on their schedule.

The final participant was a 45-year-old mother who was separated for 7 years. Her three children were 8, 6, and 4 years of age at the time of the separation. She was married for 9 years. The primary reason for the separation was her husband's alcoholism, which she defined as a "breach of trust, especially financial." Her narrative was about the importance of counselling before and after separation. In this story, the main concern was wife abuse consisting of emotional, verbal, and physical violence that extended to the children. Obtaining on-going professional help was this participant's key to achieving resilience. She recognized the need for couple counselling both prior to and after the separation in addition to specialized counselling for alcoholism and his violence towards the children. Another part of achieving resilience was having a lawyer who was prepared to advocate for her when the children were assaulted. He obtained court orders for supervised visits. This forced her husband to deal with his anger issues and lack of parenting skills. At the time of my interview she described her relationship with her former husband as "better friends than before." It was an unanticipated consequence of divorce.

Two of these women initiated the separation because of their husbands' affairs and had never obtained a legal divorce. They came to agreements about parenting and child support without legal intervention of any kind. The third participant needed extensive legal involvement because of her former husband's alcoholism and violence. All three of these participants had primary residence with their children and all of the fathers were involved with their children in varying degrees. The third participant's

husband saw his three children separately at his request because he could not handle all of them together.

Similar to the findings from the NLSCY (Juby et al., 2004), legal custody orders of these participants did not mean that children shared residences. Their narratives also represented variation in divorce experiences. Each family required different supports to emerge as resilient. The mother with preschool children needed flexible work hours and good childcare. The mother with teenagers found counselling helpful but mostly depended on her friends, personal values, good parenting, and flexibility. The mother with school-aged children and an alcoholic former husband required extensive forms of counselling and other professional services as well as court intervention before, after and during the separation, whereas the other two families did not have a need for the court's intervention.

Data collection for the study

Selection criteria

I recruited participants using purposeful sampling methods based on predefined criteria. Criteria for selection were based on divorce research and family resilience theory. From the literature review, positive indicators of resilience in divorce would include children who have good relationships with both parents; parental cooperation or lack of conflict, overt or covert; child-sensitive parenting skills; the absence of mental illness or disruptive personal problems for either parent or family unit; and good family functioning at both homes leading to a sense of stability and belonging. However, using a salutogenic perspective, perfect families of divorce often do not exist, in that they may be

managing very well in some areas of life but still struggling in other areas. It is often by “struggling well” that resilience is achieved (Walsh, 1998). However, these attributes did provide some guidance for my selection criteria of participants. Prior to interviewing participants, I conducted screening by telephone and obtained demographic information to determine if the participants met the research criteria. A copy of the screening guide is contained in Appendix D.

The criteria and rationale I used to provide guidelines are as follows:

1. That the parent has some form of legal custody of their children, either joint, shared, or sole custody. Having legal custody was important in obtaining parental consent if the children were to be involved in research.
2. That the children resided with the parent for at least 50% of the time. The focus of this study was on the family. As such, divorced parents needed to have significant parenting time with their children. This study did not focus on non-residential parents' relationship with their children.
3. That it had been 2 years since the initial separation. I wanted to interview families who achieved some balance and stability after the parent's separation. Research shows that the initial 2 years of divorce adjustment is often fraught with crises and instability (Emery, 1988; Thompson and Amato, 1999). However, I interviewed two parents who had only been separated for 1 year but both had completed all legal and practical aspects of their divorce. They had established a stable schedule for parenting times and all financial issues were resolved. Both contacted me based on information from the courthouse and wanted to be included. Both had preschool children and

reasons for separation were their husbands' extramarital affairs. They were included in the sample.

4. That this was the first divorce for parents. Research shows when there are multiple divorces and remarriages this could indicate other problems that potentially create on-going instability, such as active alcoholism or mental illness. In addition, remarriage increases the likelihood of stepparent and stepsibling relationships, thus involving other transitions that were not the primary focus of the study.
5. That there were no current legal child custody proceedings. My concern was that this might create a potential conflict of interest for me as a researcher. I did not want to be conducting research at a time of on-going instability nor did I want to compromise my role as a researcher. I was mindful of my professional reputation with the judges and in the legal community. I have been an expert witness in Queen's Bench Court in matters involving custody, domestic violence, and in determining access and custody in parental homicide situations. I did not want to be implicated in any matters currently in front of the courts.
6. That there was no recent [within 5 years] history of suicide attempts or violent behaviour. I chose this criterion to eliminate people who were in the midst of an emotional breakdown or who were violent.
7. I deliberately selected families to represent three stages of the family life cycle: those with preschool children, those with school-aged children, and those with teenagers. I wanted to note variations in adaptation across the life span. I did inquire about ages of children at the time of the separation. I obtained two families for each stage, except for parents with preschoolers where I obtained three families.

Recruitment of participants

Based on previous research on divorce, I contacted the courthouse and family law lawyers to obtain participants. Bacon (2003) approached lawyers and the courthouse in her research on Parent Education Sessions for Separated or Divorced Parents in Saskatchewan. In addition, divorce research by Carol K. Riessman (1990), *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships*, obtained her quantitative sample from the courthouse and based her qualitative study on those she selected from the overall sample.

I interviewed a total of seven parents and one child. I acquired my sample from the Court of Queen's Bench, Judicial Centre of Regina, Saskatchewan and through the cooperation of family law lawyers in Regina. All details regarding my efforts to obtain a sample are in Appendix F. Through the cooperation of the Court of Queen's Bench, Saskatchewan, copies of the *Invitation for Participation* (Appendix G) were mailed out with each divorce judgment from February 13, 2006 until August 23, 2006. Using this method I received 3 inquiries out of a total of 217 judgments during that time frame. All three individuals were included in my sample. Data collection stopped in August because I obtained my sample of 6 families, two at each of three stages in the life cycle. In fact, I obtained a sample of 3 families with preschool children giving me a total of 7 families.

Simultaneously, I met with seven law firms in Regina. At these meetings I described my research and encouraged the lawyers to provide a copy of the *Invitation for Participation* to their clients whom they thought might be good candidates. A copy of the law firms I met with is found in Appendix F. This method yielded 6 inquiries of which I

interviewed 4 parents. Two did not meet the selection criteria. One individual did not have her children residing with her and another was in the midst of litigation.

In February 2006, I attended the monthly meeting of the Canadian Bar Association, Family Law section to describe my research and encourage those who attended to provide a copy of the *Invitation for Participation* to former or present clients. Using this method I did not obtain any inquiries.

Many lawyers suggested that I contact the Collaborative Law lawyers to obtain a sample in addition to the methods previously described. I met with the President of the Collaborative Law Lawyers of Saskatchewan [Ms. Sherrie Cybulski at the time] and described my research. She sent out information about my research and the *Invitation for Participation* via email to all the Collaborative Law lawyers in the province. A copy of her email is contained in Appendix F. I received one inquiry using this method in late in September 2006, but had already acquired my sample by this date. A commentary on difficulties experienced in obtaining a sample is contained in Appendix C.

Prior to recruiting my sample, I made arrangements with the director of Catholic Family Services in Regina [Jim Appleby at the time] for counselling for participants if needed. This service was not required. A copy of the letter from Catholic Family Services is in Appendix O.

Part 3 - Ethical issues and challenges

Risks and benefits

I am a social work educator and a practising social worker in Saskatchewan therefore I adhere to the Canadian Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics (2005). The principles and values that underlie my professional role are also important in research. In social work research, the principle of nonmaleficence means that there must be no harm done to individuals who participate in research, or in practice. Risks are weighed against expected outcomes to ensure that participants of the research experience no harm nor face undue hardship (Antle and Regehr, 2003). The "accepted risk" of this research was that I wanted to explore an emotionally sensitive topic. The key risk was the potential for unresolved or emotionally painful issues to resurface as we discussed the participants' divorces. The focus of inquiry was based on a salutogenic perspective whereby the aim is to determine how families are able to positively adapt during and after divorce. Therefore, I did not anticipate that my questions would cause emotional pain but I could not be certain of this. In addition, I provided a stipend of \$25 as a gesture of appreciation and travelled to participants' homes so as to reduce any inconvenience to them.

However, in light of the fact that divorce can be a very painful subject, my plan was that if I noticed any emotional distress in the research process, I would discontinue the interview and encourage the participant to obtain professional help through Catholic Family Services, an agency in Regina that specializes in services to families where separation and divorce has occurred. Throughout the research process I was vigilant for signs of emotional vulnerability, both when screening and conducting interviews. During

the interviews emotional experiences were discussed, and I was prepared to stop the interview if there were any signs of emotional distress. Divorce is an emotionally laden topic and many participants were very emphatic in stressing their dilemmas and obstacles.

In conducting my research, there was only one incident where I did not conduct an interview because I thought it might be potentially harmful for the participant. In this situation, both parents consented to an interview with their 6-year-old son. Upon interviewing the mother, I realized that the parents had been separated for 1 year and during the first 3 months this child regressed and still cried wishing his parents were together. His mother asked him about an interview and he told his mother that he “did not want to talk to anyone about his parents having separate houses.” She did not pressure him to participate. Therefore, in consultation with his mother [my participant], we decided not to involve him in the interview.

It is difficult to predict risks because emotional distress could occur after the interview. Prior to obtaining consent, I ensured that the parents knew we were going to discuss how they overcame hardships of divorce. As such, some sensitive issues or unresolved emotional issues may surface in the interview. I carefully reviewed consents during my telephone screening and in person prior to conducting each interview so that participants were aware of the nature of this research. The review of ethical considerations is contained in Appendix E and consents for parents are contained in Appendix H. Consents for children are included in Appendix I and J, one consent is for children over 12 years of age and the other was for parental consent for children to be involved.

Because the focus of my study was also on positive aspects and strengths, I realized that participants might find unintended therapeutic benefits in that they become aware of personal strengths, which could build self-esteem. Clearly, my goal was not to do any form of therapy but problems were discussed from the perspective of how difficulties were overcome. In using narrative approaches, participants were given freedom to construct their stories without any interference. However, by the nature of my questions, they may have reconsidered divorce from another perspective. While none of my participants expressed this realization during my interviews, three of them have contacted me to “see how the research was going” and to inquire about my analysis. Other benefits may have been indirect in that participants could feel they were contributing to a greater good by making a meaningful contribution to knowledge-building that could help other families.

During my interviews, many participants expressed a desire of wanting to help others and contribute to knowledge building. Many felt they had learned important lessons and wanted others to benefit from their experiences. I found that despite their very severe time limitations, they were genuinely interested in participating. Overall, I believe I acted responsibly and respectfully so that families were not exploited, but rather contributed to bringing about a greater good.

Consent for parents (Appendix H)

In social work research, autonomy and self-determination are ethical principles that govern consent (Antle & Regehr, 2003). In research, these principles mean that participants clearly understand the nature of the request and that they have choice in

participation. All of the participants received the information sheet about the research and called to inquire. These principles apply to the manner in which I treated participants prior to and during the research process in that I was transparent about my purpose and intentions. Part of informed consent is to ensure parents and children are given sufficient information about the study and its aims to permit them to make meaningful choices about the potential risks and benefits of participation. I clearly outlined the study, the process, risks, and limitations at the beginning of each interview and in the telephone screening interview. There was no deception in the process of completing this study.

Another aspect of informed consent includes sufficient time to fully consider risks and benefits of participation (Antle & Regehr, 2003). This was the main reason I reviewed the consent forms at the time of the initial telephone screening. I asked screening questions and ensured that each participant was aware of my purpose and the research process. It was clear that we were going to be discussing the divorce and the family's adjustment, as well as how they addressed problems. I deliberately spoke of this in advance of our interview because I wanted them to have a chance to consider the information. When I first met with each parent, we again reviewed the consents for his or her participation.

None of the participants expressed any concerns or doubt about being involved in the interview. They demonstrated clear understanding of the purpose and intent. A common concern expressed by the parents was that they could not guarantee that they would have time for two interviews. Having two interviews was not mandatory although it was my hope that they would be able to participate as a family. The most pressing concern for most of the parents who participated was that they did not want their children

involved. I honoured their choice, which eliminated the need for a second interview. Therefore, I interviewed each parent participant only once.

The parents' reasons for not wanting children involved varied and have previously been discussed. In some cases, participants did not wish to involve the other parent in discussions of consent when there was joint custody, but mostly participants expressed concern about the potential harm to the children. When it became apparent that I would most likely not obtain consent from most of the interested participants/ parents, I changed the research design so that children's participation was not mandatory.

Consent for children (Appendix I and J)

In ensuring informed consent with children, it is important that child participants have the mental capacity to understand the nature of the request, anticipate consequences of their consent, and can legally give consent. I prepared consents for children that are contained in Appendix I.

Children are more frequently included in the research agenda, the roles of the child and the parent become increasingly complex in the consenting process, as the independent rights of the child come to be recognized and protected. (Antle and Regehr, 2003, p.41)

In addition to considering children's rights, I was investigating an area where custody and divorce legislation is relevant, thus parental rights and responsibilities are relevant as well. Therefore, I requested consent from the custodial parent for children under the age of 18 years before approaching the children for their consent. Parental consents are shown in Appendix J. In cases of joint custody, both parents were required

to provide consent for children to be involved in research, regardless of which parent was the participant. Independent from parental wishes, I prepared consent forms for children over the age of 12 years to sign (Appendix I). I asked the one child participant if he knew what the study was about and the reasons he was speaking to me. He did and wanted to sign his own consent, even though he was only 11 years old. I reviewed the consent with him and explained aspects of it. By having children sign their own consents, I ensured children's wishes would be honoured independent of their parents. I prepared separate consent forms for participation for all children 12 years of age and older. In this situation, the boy's father, my research participant, explained the research to his son prior to our interview to determine if he wanted to participate. His father consented for him to be involved. The father had sole custody.

I used the age of 18 years for parental consent for children to be involved in this study to be consistent with federal legislation of the *Divorce Act*, 1985, (Section 2(1), and with provincial legislation of the *Children's Law Act*, 1997 (Section 2(1), Statutes of Saskatchewan). I felt it was important to use an age of consent that is consistent with provincial and federal legislation. In law, it is clear that there is no magical age when a child reaches adulthood. Children's rights and privileges vary depending upon the responsibility. The law bestows some adult rights and responsibilities on individuals under the age of 18 years depending on the nature of the responsibility and individual circumstances, including the child's mental competence and ability to understand consequences and the decision at hand. For example, youth are permitted to drive when they are 16 years old and they have a right to consent (without parental knowledge) to

some medical treatment decided on a case-by-case basis, sometimes as young as 14 years of age (Public Legal Education, Saskatchewan, 2007).

Based on the *Divorce Act*, 1985, Queen's Bench Court Judges in Saskatchewan have jurisdiction over children until the child is 18 years of age. While it is questionable if a judge would override a youth's responsible choices (over the age of 16), the fact is that judges can make custody orders for children until they are 18 years of age. In Saskatchewan, the Queen's Bench Court Judges order *Voices of the Child* assessments for children over 12 years of age (and sometimes younger) whereby the child's opinions, attachments, and preferences are considered in custody and access matters. Children's choices are legally honoured as frequently as possible. At times children's voices and input into decisions affecting themselves are considered at a much younger age based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1989. "The Convention requires governments to assure children who are capable of forming their own views the right to express those views freely in matters that affect them, and to give their views due accord in institutional decision making" (O'Conner, 2004, p. 33).

In making decisions regarding consent, I considered other family legislation that pertains to children, such as the child welfare legislation in Saskatchewan. The *Child and Family Services Act, 1989-1990* defines a child as "an unmarried person actually or apparently under 16 years of age" (Section 2(1d)) but it does allow for provisions for youth who are 16 or 17 years of age to consent to residential services (Section 10(1 and 2)) and under exceptional circumstances social workers are able to apprehend a person who is actually or apparently 16 or 17 years of age and in need of protection (Section 18(1, a, b, *Child and Family Services Act, 1989-1990*). Provisions are made to for

protection of youth who are not mentally competent to consent to residential services, yet might still be living in situations that are considered to be of harm to them.

Overall, there are no clear-cut guidelines on children's consent; it depends on the nature of the request, the maturity of the child, and details of the particular circumstances at the time. After full consideration of the legal aspects, I chose to be consistent with the *Divorce Act* (1985), and to request parental consent for all children under the age of 18 years. In addition, I prepared consent forms for children over the age of 12 years to ensure voluntary participation. All copies of the consents for participation for children are contained in Appendices I and J.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality were guaranteed in this study. All interviews were audio taped on a Panasonic digital recorder, identified only by number, then transferred to my personal laptop computer and transcribed. All tapes were erased on the recorder after they were transferred to my laptop computer. Interviews were also copied onto a Lexar memory stick to use as backup should problems arise with my computer.

I transcribed two interviews and arranged to have five interviews transcribed by another person. Only numbers were used to identify each transcript. Occasionally, first names were used in the interviews. I am the only person who has access to the participants' names and identifying information of each transcript. This information is kept confidential on my personal laptop computer. All identifying information, transcripts, and a copy of the interviews saved on a digital memory stick will be kept confidential. My handwritten records from the screening are kept in a locked cabinet to

which only I have access. All information will be destroyed 2 years after completion of my doctoral degree unless in the interim and with consent of participants, I decide to do a longitudinal follow up study to further determine pathways to resilience. If any participants do not consent to subsequent studies, their personal information will be destroyed 2 years after my dissertation is completed.

I ensured anonymity for the participants in reporting my results by using pseudonyms. Any reports coming from this research in future publications will identify stories and narratives by pseudonyms. After my dissertation is approved, an outline of the research findings will be sent to each of the participants by regular mail or email, whichever they prefer. No names will be used in the outline of research findings to be distributed to the participants. This information is outlined in the consent forms (Appendix H).

Compensation

Because participants of the study are not direct beneficiaries of this research, I provided a \$25 honorarium to each participant to use as they wish. This was intended to provide some incentive and appreciation for participation. The amount of compensation was not so large as to induce participation from someone who would normally decline. Most of my participants were reluctant to take \$25 and one refused. I received funding from the Endowment Fund, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, to cover these costs and funding from the Saskatchewan Law Foundation. No coercion was used to entice participants to cooperate.

Conflict of interest and power relationships

I recognize that as a researcher I have power in determining the nature of the study, controlling the aim and structure of the interview, and completing the final analysis of results (Mishler, 1986b). I also have power in the interview by the questions I ask. I did not abuse this power by inferring responses to questions I asked. While interviewing I remained non-judgmental in my disposition, so as not to influence participants' responses. Being the primary researcher and interviewer provided me with the opportunity to carefully observe how each narrative unfolded, and to carefully watch how participants presented themselves, which assisted in my ability to accurately interpret meanings. For example, some of my participants used sarcasm, changed vocal tone, mocked discussions held with others, or used nonverbal gestures to convey different meanings. These fluctuations are not necessarily captured in the transcription, but were evident in the interview and in how I interpreted their stories in my analysis. I made field notes after each interview that described my impressions about the nature of the interview.

From an ethical point of view, I recognized the power given to me by the participants through their willingness to participate in my research. It was my responsibility to be aware of how I used my power. In this regard, I tried to stay close to meanings of participants in my representation of the results. However, I recognize that my analysis of their stories may be influenced by theory and by my personal interpretation. I have endeavoured to represent their voices accurately and respectfully.

One of my concerns was the possibility of a dual relationship with participants and conflict of interest concerns. I did not interview any former clients, even though

some of them expressed an interest to participate. I did not interview potential participants who were facing on-going custody litigation because I did not want to be implicated in any legal matters. Two of the participants were students at the university where I taught. In the telephone screening I determined that neither of them would be registered in my classes in the foreseeable future. Therefore, there were no dual relationships that could coerce participants in any manner.

Influence of the researcher in the interview process

Cohler (1994) has suggested that the quality of the narrative is influenced by the relationship, leading to a story that is in fact co-constructed between the teller and the listener. The main research instrument in qualitative research is the relationship between the researcher and participant that develops during the interview. I used open-ended questions on particular topics and themes to understand major events, processes, thoughts, and beliefs. Stories emerged in context of the interviewing relationship, which included me, so it was important to create a facilitative context for the interview. In doing so, I was careful to be respectful throughout the process and used authentic listening skills to develop trust and encourage full descriptions. I was conscious of relationship development throughout the entire process, starting with the screening and continuing to the research interviews that occurred in most participants' homes. I conducted the interviews in an atmosphere of respectful curiosity.

Throughout all the interviews, I found it was necessary to be self-aware. I knew I might unintentionally influence the story while trying to develop trust and openness. Reflexivity refers to "vicarious introspection of the observer within context of the

inquiry” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 166). It also refers to “owning” one’s voice and perspective” (Patton, 2002, p.65). In my interviews, I was the same gender as six of the participants and while I had not experienced divorce, my professional experience with families who had various transitions provided some context and familiarity in my understanding of the issues. All the participants were comfortable with me, often extending the interview to show me their home or to tell me about their work. The one male participant asked some of his male co-workers to participate in this research.

Most of my participants were middle-class and, while not affluent, they were able to provide for all the necessities in life. Three of the women had been financially “broke” in the past, but at the time of the study were managing. None of the participants were on welfare at the time of the study, but one participant was on welfare at the time of separation. I did not interview any participants of colour, immigrants, or of First Nations ancestry. It was important to be aware of similarities and differences so that I could accurately understand participants’ meanings and not impose my beliefs on their stories.

Reflexivity meant acknowledging what shaped my perspective and what voice I shared in writing the text. This was important to consider as I analyzed the interviews and represented their meanings in text. The role of theory played an important part in the formation of my research questions and in my listening and in explaining the accounts. Therefore, theory played a role in how I interpreted responses and stories. While interviewing it was important to set aside any of my assumptions and remain curious, looking for gaps, contradictions, meanings of silences, and the unsaid.

Part 4 – Interviewing and analysis

Interview guide (Appendix A)

My research questions were based on the following research interests:

- Family history, length of marriage, problems during the marriage or before the marriage, and reasons for divorce.
- The key decisions that help foster positive adaptation for the children and parents in divorce.
- The greatest hardships in divorce and how are these were addressed.
- Identifying how problems pertaining to separation and divorce were resolved.
- Understanding how parents ensured children's needs were met.

By studying resilience from a salutogenic perspective, problems were not ignored but the focus was on what helped facilitate positive adaptation in the face of adversity. In essence, I wanted to know what resources were helpful, how they helped, and how the parents were able to foster resilience within the family. Prior to the first interview I conducted a telephone screening which allowed me to find out some of the information and start to build rapport. These telephone interviews were valuable because I was able to obtain historical context. The telephone screening guide is in Appendix D and interview questionnaires are in Appendix A and B.

The telephone screening was completed to determine if inquiries met the criteria I set for this study. On occasion, several phone calls occurred between the participants and me in efforts to set up interviews. Each conversation was a deliberate effort on my part to build trust and rapport. I had one in-depth interview with each participant during which I taped the interview. Each interview was then transcribed and defined as their overall

narrative. As stated earlier, I defined stories as segments of responses that had a beginning, middle, and end point describing a situation or event in which there was logical coherence. Stories emerged in response to my questions and often were the basis of themes, which I interpreted from the overall narrative.

The interview guide used for parental interviews was based on theory and research. All questions were open-ended. Probe questions were based on ecological theory, specifically personal resources, social support, professional resources, and beliefs. I included questions about the present time because it was important to know about the participants' current supports and how family resilience was defined today. I focused the interviews on a temporal or logical ordering of events. While stories did not necessarily emerge in a chronological way, I directed the interview to identify the context so that I could better understand what helped the participants overcome adversity and especially *how*. My focus was to obtain a deeper understanding of how personal, social, and environmental resources helped with family transition through divorce.

Research interview

I was able to test the effectiveness of my interview questions when I did my pilot interviews. This helped determine appropriateness, relevance, and wording. I underlined the questions that were most useful in the interview guide. As already stated, during the telephone screening I reviewed all ethical considerations and the purpose of the study. I again reviewed the ethical consent form with participants before beginning each interview. As stated previously the ethical considerations are contained in Appendix E. I asked the participants if they understood aspects of the consent form and ensured they

knew they did not have to respond to questions they did not feel comfortable answering. All participants signed the consent form after it was thoroughly reviewed.

As noted earlier, I conducted six interviews in the homes of the participants. In scheduling these interviews, I based it around their schedules. One interview was conducted in my office at the request of the participant. She had to travel to Regina for other reasons and was free from childcare responsibilities for the day, because the children were with their father in the city.

While I did prepare an interview guide, I did not rigidly adhere to the exact wording. I ensured I covered all areas on the guide and was careful to use open-ended questions when inquiring on the main themes. I did ask probing questions and questions of clarification in response to their answers. At times I used reflective listening skills to determine if I was accurately interpreting information the participants were sharing by paraphrasing what they had said. While I did this, I exercised careful self-awareness so that I did not influence the nature of the story or co-construct the narrative. When I did paraphrase and use reflective listening, it served to help the participants take ownership of the interview by elaborating on their stories to determine that I understood them correctly. The use of reflective listening was not an attempt to infer responses.

Use of self is critical in qualitative interviewing. I approached the participants warmly and genuinely to develop rapport and to encourage elaboration on aspects of their story. When I asked questions of clarification or paraphrased, it showed them that I was trying to listen to understand them as people, not just to record their responses for research. I believe deliberate use of self is critical in research. The intent is not to effect change but to get rich description.

Others have suggested that in narrative studies “the relationship between the teller and listener, together within the cultural context of meanings, largely determine both the structure and content of the narrative story that is told” (Riessman, 1993, p. 54). This is an important point, as I tried to mirror the language used by the participant by phrasing my questions to fit the context, and I often did not ask probe questions because they had already been answered in previous responses.

Interviews are never alike. They are a product of the unique interactions between the interviewer and interviewee at that time and place, including factors such as the location of the interview, time available, emotional state, and recent events. The context of each interview was somewhat different, but I was impressed with the sincerity in which all participants ensured that our interview time was protected. Often the interviews lasted up to 2 hours. I approached each participant based on information and the rapport we developed in the telephone screening which helped me further develop rapport and an understanding of their contexts. Often participants would refer back to information they discussed during the telephone screening, or not include it in the interview because they had already shared it and inferred this context as mutual understanding. All the interviews were recorded using a Panasonic digital recorder.

Before beginning each interview, I prepared myself by reflecting on the role I would play within these interviews. I was clear that my role was purely that of a social work researcher, not of a therapist or custody assessor. It was important for me to be aware of this distinction because I have used narrative methods in therapy and in conducting custody and access assessments. In narrative therapy, stories are reconstructed so that clients are portrayed in a positive self-enhancing manner (White and Epston,

1990). I was careful not to change the meaning of responses or attempt to reconstruct stories while interviewing.

Stories arose in response to questions I asked. I was asking for retrospective accounts of how participants and their children were affected by the divorce experience, but more importantly, I was seeking to understand what they did to promote resilience in their family. The focus was not to initiate change or attempt to reconstruct their stories, but rather to explore and understand. I realize that there might have been some therapeutic benefits for parents in the interviewing process because they discussed personal and family strengths that they may not have acknowledged. I used probe questions to explore and consider different layers of the social-cultural ecology of each family and how this contributed to their adaptation.

Narrative interviews give considerable freedom to the tellers and the listeners in how they proceed (Riessman, 1993). A research interview is a social situation that involves a relationship between the listener and the teller (Mishler, 1986; Maxwell, 1992). Therefore the quality of relationship is important for the teller to feel free to speak his/ her mind. Mishler (1986b) has suggested that we must invite participants into our work as collaborators and share control of the process with them so as to better understand what their stories mean. While I attempted to be open in my approach, I recognize that I controlled part of the process by the content of my questions. It was important to use the research relationship in a manner that was facilitative to encourage participants to express themselves without fear of judgment. I endeavoured to create a supportive context with each participant that conveyed a sense of respectful curiosity but

one that did not cross over into boundaries of counselling. I was open, genuine, and empathic in the interview process.

I considered the setting when planning for the interviews. My intentions were to conduct the interviews in settings that were comfortable for participants. All the interviews, except one, were conducted in the participants' homes so that they would feel comfortable. In the telephone screening I explicitly asked if this would be more comfortable for them. Social work has a long heritage of seeing families in their home environment (Hartman & Laird, 1983; Richmond, 1917). I was comfortable offering this alternative because I have over 20 years of professional experience meeting with parents and families in their home environments. In working with families in their home environments, I knew that it was incumbent on me to "fit in" and go with the flow of family life. All participants (except one as explained earlier) stated it was more convenient for me to come to their home.

Children were not present during any interviews with parents. However, one participant arranged for her three preschool children to be in the lower area of the house while we conducted the interview on the upper level. She was comfortable with this arrangement because her children were familiar with her meeting with people at their home due to her home-based business. During this interview there were frequent interruptions by the children, but it did not appear to interfere with her ability to be candid in her responses. When the children were present I turned the recorder off while she attended to her children's needs. Childcare arrangements for the children varied. One participant arranged for his son to be in another location in the house; another parent

arranged for her son to play next door; and one interview was completed after her preschool children were in bed. Most children were in school during parental interviews.

My impressions were that all of the participants were eager to participate. I found that the process of the telephone screening helped develop rapport and often there were multiple telephone contacts to set up appointments, whereby they would share aspects of their lives, so that by the time I met the participants I already had begun a relationship with them. As I concluded my interviews I had begun to peel away layers and realized that there was more I could uncover. I reminded myself that the focus was not on “assessment” as I am accustomed to doing, but on research. In addition there were serious time constraints for my participants, in that most found it difficult to even arrange for one interview, often taking as long as 2 to 5 months to schedule time for the interview. I asked to re-interview three participants but all three found it impossible to find any time in the foreseeable future. They simply did not have time. All of my participants worked, went to school, or did both and all except two were single parents.

The length of each interview varied from 50 minutes to 2 hours in taped time, but in actual time it was a minimum of 2 hours, allowing for introductions, time to build rapport, orientation of myself and the participant to the process, and then the formal taped interview. I interviewed six participants once and one participant twice. During the second interview I also interviewed his 11-year-old son.

All of the interviews could be described as emotionally intense, in part because of the nature of the questions I asked and in part because all the participants knew they had limited time and wanted to tell me all pertinent facts related to their divorce. Divorce is an emotionally charged process and they wanted to talk about it. All parents expressed a

sincere desire to help others either by changing the system or by sharing coping strategies.

Transcription

I interviewed all of the seven participants and then listened to the tapes to get an overall sense about each story. Deciding how to transcribe interviews is an interpretative decision that is also influenced by theory (Riessman, 1993). How an interview is constituted and presented alters its meaning (Mishler, 1996).

Transcription decisions are interpretative and different interpretations can influence theory development (Mishler, 1986b). I believe it is important that we interpret others' lives in the most ethical and respectful manner possible, therefore I strived to present the text in the transcripts as accurately as possible, including pauses, false starts, nonlexical utterances, all verbal utterances, words that were emphasized, and expressions. In brackets in the transcript, I included information on how the story was told because meanings were made by the manner in which the individuals spoke, how quickly they told aspects of their story, pauses, increased rates of speech, or words spoken slowly or loudly to stress meanings. In the transcriptions, all questions and comments made by the researcher were included and clearly noted, with Q: being the question and R: being the response, to ensure no misunderstanding regarding how the interview was conducted. As Lieblich et al. (1998) said it "is quite rare for content analysis to reach meaningful conclusions when it disregards the context of utterances or discards insights that come from understanding the person and her or his story as a whole" (p. 170).

A key is presented before each transcript to illustrate the codes for the manner in which the interviewee spoke and all questions were included. For example, underlined and bolded sections showed words that were stressed; = was the symbol for sections spoken very quickly; and p was the symbol for pauses. All comments, explanations and interpretations by the researcher were noted in brackets in the transcript. I identified themes and assigned a colour code to each one; I also named each story in the transcript and used a colour to distinguish them. I regarded the entire transcription as the narrative and defined stories as longer sections of talk, which had beginnings, middles, and endings that arose in response to questions. Responses that were one or two sentences did not constitute an entire story but often provided context for other stories.

I transcribed two interviews and used the grant from the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan to hire a research assistant to transcribe interviews. The research assistant transcribed five research interviews and three interviews from the pilot study. The tapes were sent by email. To guard for confidentiality a number identified each tape, and only the first names of participants were used in the interview and recording. No surnames or identifying information was provided. The research assistant was a woman who had worked for over 12 years as a court reporter and for 8 years as a Deputy Local Registrar at the Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatoon, specifically in Family Law. She was familiar with transcription and knew the importance of accuracy. She was a mediator and obtained a Masters in Conflict Resolution Management from Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia and a Bachelor in Arts from the University of Saskatchewan. Because of her education and work experience, she was aware of the importance interpretation plays in transcription and was cautious not to interpret pauses, utterances,

or other aspects of the interview. She included all communication in the exact manner it was stated and did not to ascribe meaning to tones, pauses, or nonlexicals. I read each transcript while listening to the tapes and provided this context in the transcript.

Once the initial transcript was completed, I listened to each interview and compared it to the transcription to verify its accuracy. While verifying the transcript, I paid attention to any pauses or changes in tone, pace, or manners in which stories were told and included this in brackets in the transcript. The manner in which each story was spoken was described [in brackets] in the text; for example, long pause, spoken very quickly, or words emphasized to stress the importance. I provided explanations of interruptions that occurred while interviewing, such as dogs barking, children interrupting or people who came by unexpectedly. Overall, I made every effort to ensure that each interview was transcribed as carefully, completely and purposefully as possible so that context and interpretation of responses could be verified. Transcription played a part in my interpretation and analysis in that as I listened to interviews while reading the transcriptions important themes and patterns became evident from the data. Patton (2002) has noted that through use of inductive approaches, multiple interrelationships among dimensions emerge from the data.

Narrative analysis

My analysis took several phases, starting with the interview and including the transcription. In narrative research there are no prior assumptions or hypotheses (Lieblich et al., 1998; Patton, 2002). There are several steps that contribute to narrative inquiry, including the telling of stories or narrative interviewing, transcription, and analysis of the

narratives (Riessman, 1993). According to Riessman (1993) “analysis cannot easily be distinguished from transcription.... close and repeated listening, coupled with methodic transcribing, often leads to insights that in turn shape how we choose to represent an interview narrative in our text” (p.60). As I read the transcripts and listened to the tapes, patterns were highlighted. I defined and interpreted these patterns into themes that were shaded and put in brackets within the text of the transcription.

Narratives can be interpreted and analyzed in diverse ways. Personal narratives are not read as an exact account of what happened because historical truth is not the primary issue. Life stories develop and change with the passage of time, and narratives depicting life stories are a product of context, audience and relationship (Lieblich et al., 1998). Stories are subjective and based on the perceptions and interpretations of participants. Subjectivity is distrusted in mainstream social science research, which values context-free laws of explanation of causal relationships and generalized explanations. In narrative research it is precisely because of subjectivity that narratives are valued to understand social life and culture (Riessman, 1993). Because narrative research is used in a variety of disciplines and for different purposes, there is no comprehensive model for analysis and no systematic methods for reading of narratives (Fraser, 2004; Lieblich et al. 1998; Riessman, 1993; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Narrative studies in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and social work have been used to investigate different subgroups of society, age groups, transitions in the life cycle or transitions during specific periods, or in cognitive sciences to study memory, development of language, and information processing (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Narrative analysis is interpretative and interpretations are subject to “changes over time, with changes in the reader, the context of reading, or subsequent changes in theory” (Cohler, 1994, p. 169). Different methods of analysis lead to different interpretations of interview data thereby influencing the overall conclusions and theory construction (Lieblich et al. 1998; Pointdexter, 2002; Reissman, 1990, 1993). Narratives are analyzed based on the intended purpose of the study. The method chosen for analysis is largely dependent upon the discipline, purpose of the study, the type of information sought, and discretion of the researcher (Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986b). The focus of analysis in this study was to discover patterns and themes of resilience. The primary research question of this dissertation was to understand how resiliency was achieved in families of divorce. I also wanted to understand what processes, resources, or events lead to positive adaptation. These research interests point to a content analysis whereby hypotheses and theories could be generated while reading and analyzing the narratives in a circular motion similar to the concept of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lieblich et al, 1998).

Prior to beginning my analysis, I reviewed a number of different analytical approaches used in narrative research to determine an approach or combination of approaches that would be suitable in this research. For a more comprehensive review of methods of narrative analysis please refer to Appendix K.

The method of analysis that best suits the nature of this dissertation is the holistic-content model proposed by Amia Lieblich, Rivka Turval-Mashiach and Tamar Zilber in their book *Narrative Research* (1998). In this book, they have suggested four dimensions of analysis based on holistic versus categorical and content versus form. Form refers to

the manner in which the story is told, and content refers to information derived from the interview.

In the holistic approach the entire text or life story is analyzed as a whole. Sections of the text are interpreted in context of other parts of the story. Themes that emerge are interpreted based on the whole narrative. It is used when the person as a whole is the subject of interest.

The holistic approach is preferred when the person as a whole, that is, his or her development to the current position, is what the study aims to explore. (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.12)

A content-oriented approach aims at getting an implicit account of what happened, what themes emerged, and the teller's meaning of these events. It is used when the researcher is primarily interested in a problem or phenomena shared by a group of people. Aspects of the interview that form a theme are analyzed and interpreted.

Lieblich et al., (1998) cautioned that distinguishing between content and form is not clear-cut because content is often stated in a variety of linguistic manners that emphasize unique features of the story, personal values, or aspects that were important to the teller's identity. In this study, the manner in which participants spoke as they explained pivotal situations showed great variation. Listening for content alone did not suffice because how the story was told provided important cues for interpretation. The language chosen, expressions used, pauses, and emphasis of words gave me strong clues on how to interpret the meaning of each participant's story, important turning points and reasons key decisions were made. Their manner of speaking was noted in the transcript to aid in interpretation of stories.

In the holistic-content mode of analysis, the complete narrative provides the focus for the unit of analysis, but themes appear in the content of responses. Meanings were interpreted and analyzed in light of the context emerging from the entire interview and interpersonal dynamics between the researcher and participant. Using the holistic-content mode of analysis required listening to tapes while reading and rereading the transcripts, becoming immersed in the narratives until a pattern emerged. Recording global impressions, interpretation of meanings, determining themes, and following the process of each theme in the story are all part of the analysis (Lieblich et al. 1998). Each theme was stated in brackets and shaded in colour in the transcript. Using this method, I read each narrative several times until a pattern appeared. While I did not explicitly analyze the form, the manner in which each narrative was presented was important in understanding the meanings and was used to derive my interpretations of their meanings.

The research aims were to explore the transition of divorce and how parental characteristics and identities directed this transition to foster family resilience. Therefore, understanding the context of divorce and the nature of the teller was important in interpreting specific themes. Equally as important was the context of the family's environmental resources and processes within the family. Pre-existing problems and the family's socio-environmental location shaped their responses and coping strategies in divorce. The context was described throughout the narrative and stories illustrated various themes or aspects of a central theme.

To address my research questions, I was guided by theory in my interpretation of themes; however, I was not limited by theory and allowed themes to emerge without assumption of meanings. The context of the entire narrative assisted in my interpretation

of specific themes. While completing the analysis I attempted to determine if themes were representative of theory.

Process of analysis

I followed the general guidelines of analysis proposed by Fraser (2004). She suggested that the first phase is “hearing the story” and listening for the emotions depicted, followed by transcription, interpretation of individual transcripts, scanning across different domains of experience, linking the personal with the political, and looking for commonalities and differences in participants.

Working with narrative materials requires dialogical listening to at least three voices: the voice of the participant whose story I was trying to capture on tape and in text, the voice of the theoretical framework that provides the concepts for interpretation, and reflexive monitoring while reading and interpreting materials (Lieblich et al., 1998). Reflexive monitoring refers to self-awareness of the decision-making process of drawing conclusions from the text (Lieblich et al. 1998). In the process of narrative analysis, the reader of the narrative “enters into an interactive process with the narrative and becomes sensitive to the narrator’s voice and meanings” (Lieblich et al. 1998, p.10). Meanings, themes and theories are generated while reading and analyzing narratives in a circular motion so that my understandings paralleled construction of the conclusions and understandings reached in the study.

1. I wrote field notes immediately after each interview noting impressions and context. I noted how the participant became aware of this study; noted information obtained

from the screening and during other telephone conversations to set up appointments; and I noted my impressions and general observations.

2. I listened to the tapes and reviewed the transcripts to verify accuracy while marking off in brackets pauses; changes of tone of voice; words emphasized; and other manners of speech.
3. I listened again to each interview while re-reading transcripts. This time I paid careful attention to my interpretations of themes and noted contradictions of themes; meanings of specific pauses; gestures; and how aspects of the story were emphasized. Because I was present in each interview, some meanings were emphasized by gesture and I recorded this.
4. I gave each story a name based on the overall meaning derived from that narrative. All of my interpretations of themes were shaded and noted in brackets, as were my explanations of meanings of utterances. At this point I marked the beginning of specific stories in brackets and in a shaded area. Using this interpretative process, I formed a global impression of each participant's story and noted themes within each narrative.
5. I wrote out the themes for the stories for each participant and provided my interpretation of the context for the meanings. I noted stories in quotations to illustrate how the theme was expressed. I reported themes based on the exact quotes and inferred meanings of each participant. At times I paraphrased stories that stretched across a large segment of talk.
6. I compared themes between stories to detect differences and similarities. I compared the broad categories of themes to theory to offer insight, understanding, and

explanation of how resilience was defined and achieved. I analyzed the themes based on family stress and coping theory, ecological theory and a salutogenic perspective.

7. In my final analysis I include implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

In listening for themes and stories, I used my research questions and theory as a guide. As I listened to the tapes and read transcripts, I became attuned to the meanings expressed by the participants. I was able to develop a good rapport with each participant and I trust that responses were genuine. The process of how stories occur provides an important context for the analysis and interpretation of stories (Lieblich et al., 1998) and this was included in my notes written into the transcript when I completed the analysis.

Stories were defined by particular themes that emerged in response to my questions. I did not re-transcribe them to fit Labov's model because they were not conducted in tight sequences presented by this model.

Part 5 - Reliability and validity

The criteria for evaluation of research are reliability, validity, objectivity, and replicability, which are often expressed in coefficients or similar measures in quantitative research. It is particularly difficult, if not impossible to maintain in qualitative research, in addition, these criteria contradict the very nature of narrative approaches, which are based on an interpretative perspective.

In qualitative research, a fundamental criterion of validity requires that interpretations and conclusions follow a trail of evidence that originate in the text. (Rogers, 1998, as cited in Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 172)

Narratives can be understood and analyzed in diverse ways. A narrative is “not meant to be read as an exact account of what happened, nor is it [a narrative] meant to mirror the world” (Riessman, 1993, p. 64). Historical truths are not the primary issue because facts are products of an interpretive process in narrativization (Riessman, 1993). Individuals may construct different narratives about the same event and there can be marked discrepancies between the ordering of the telling and the ordering of the occurrences. It depends on the values and the interests of narrator. Telling about the past varies with one’s present experience and circumstances, and is influenced by time that has passed since the event and how one remembers based on their present situation. It does not remain consistent over time (Riessman, 1993).

Maxwell (1992) has identified five broad types of validity that can be used as a checklist. These types are descriptive, interpretative, theoretical, generalizable, and evaluative validity. Descriptive pertains to the accuracy of factual information, using exact words and clear depiction of events (Maxwell, 1992). This would be portrayed in the interviews, transcription, and analysis that are based on exactly what the informants say. In interpretative validity, attention is specifically paid to accurately understand meanings of the informants in the interviews, which includes what is said, how it is said and underlying intentions. Theoretical validity refers to acceptance and agreement as to whether the theories selected are valid. This study used purposeful or theoretical sampling that may be able to advance theoretical development on family resilience and divorce. It does not aim to be generalizable for the general population of families in the transition of divorce. Internal generalizability refers to the interviewing process itself (Maxwell, 1992). It involves the interviewing relationship and whether the inferences and

interpretations made during the interview were accurate reflections of participants' perspectives.

Riessman (1993) has stated that validation is a process by which we make claims about trustworthiness of our interpretations. Trustworthiness is not the "truth" as the latter assumes an objective reality whereas the former moves the process into the social world. Four ways of approaching validation in narrative work are suggested: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic use (Riessman, 1993). Others have suggested that inter-subjectivity may be used as a second content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998). One fundamental criterion of validity requires that interpretations and conclusions follow a trail of evidence that originate in the text (Lieblich et al., 1998). Hammersley (1992) has suggested two very general criteria: validity referring to "how truthful, plausible and creditable an account is and relevance, which asks whether an account is important and if it contributes to the field, previous findings, methods, theory or social policy" (p. 73). Mishler (1990) proposed the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity. Similar to Riessman (1993) he has argued that "focusing on trustworthiness rather than truth displaces validation from its traditional location in a presumably objective, non-reactive, and neutral reality and moves it into a social world – a world constructed in and through our discourse, and actions, through praxis" (Mishler, 1990, p. 420).

Lieblich et al. (1998) have suggested four criteria in the evaluation of narrative studies. These criteria are width or comprehensiveness, coherence or the way different parts of interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture, insightfulness, and parsimony or the ability to provide an analysis on a small number of concepts (Lieblich,

et al., 1998). Coherence includes the manner in which a life story is told as well as a reconstruction of the past so that a plausible story emerges (Cohler, 1991). Studying narratives requires a focus on coherence as a means of evaluating the capacity for maintaining meaning and a sense of integrity in response to changing events (Cohler, 1991).

Analysis depends on correspondence of events and ordering in the narrative account. Beginnings, middles and endings provide a sense of unity and coherence, not just a point in time. "A life story is a plausible, chronological, and coherent narrative that reconstructs the development of the present state of affairs" (Slavney & McHugh, 1984, p.279 cited in Cohler 1991, p.180). It makes distress seem logical and sometimes even an inevitable outcome of the past. Therefore, the parents' responses to the adversity of divorce would be the key organizing principles for a "good" or coherent narrative in my study. The ability to make sense of or manage meanings of misfortune would be reflected by integration of the past and present experience in resolving misfortune and preserving a coherent life story (Cohler, 1991). The study of disruptions and problems following separation provide important information regarding the manner in which adversity was experienced and how problems were resolved to preserve coherence or integrity throughout the narrative.

Psychological resilience is reflected in the ability to maintain coherence and integration of self throughout times of unexpected personal misfortune and adverse life changes or expectable life changes (Cohler, 1991). All the narratives were retrospective but because divorce is a process, stories continue to unfold after the research interview and perspectives change over time and with new experiences.

Vulnerability is shown by disruption of the personal narrative accompanied by feelings of personal depletion and fragmentation (Cohler, 1991). To understand the impact of divorce, the changing context of the past must be interpreted across the life course. It is also important to appreciate the relationship between past and present experiences and to comprehend meanings of earlier adversity and how it impacts present adjustment. A detailed understanding of narrative would permit an understanding of alternatives selected at particular points in time or factors permitting some families, adults, and children to remain relatively resilient (Cohler, 1991).

In qualitative research, there are various ways of attaining triangulation. To obtain triangulation, Patton (2002) has suggested by combining both interviewing and observations; by mixing types of samples (intensity and opportunity samples); or by examining how competing theoretical perspectives inform a particular analysis. In this research, I integrated the literature on separation and divorce in context of the literature on resilience whereby I identified some theoretical triangulation. In addition, results were interpreted based on a salutogenic perspective, ecological theory, and family stress and coping theory, which provided another means of triangulation. Because I had representation of families at three stages of the family life cycle, it also provided an opportunity to compare what resilience means across life cycles and how it was perceived in different contexts and at different life stages.

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I identified the predominant themes that emerged from each interview with the parents and from one interview with a child. I define narrative as the overall text transcribed from each interview. In the transcription, nuances, pauses, emphasis, and other forms of verbal representation were included and my interpretation was written in brackets. Linguistic mannerisms were not included in the results but did inform my interpretation. I used pseudonyms to identify participants and their family members.

In total I interviewed seven parents: six mothers, one father, and one child. Demographics describing these participants are contained in Appendix N. All of the parents were married for at least 3 years, with 17 years being the longest marriage. Four of the seven parents had completed post-secondary education and two were in university at the time of the interviews. All of the parents were employed in full, part-time, or seasonal work, including the two parents who were students. Five of the participants were from an urban centre and two participants lived in rural communities in southern Saskatchewan. I began collecting data in February 2006 and interviewed from April to August 2006. The unique circumstances of each participant and his or her story provided the context for interpretation of the themes.

Each narrative consists of various stories that were prompted by questions I asked. The stories illustrated and described various themes. Stories occurred throughout the interview and themes were evident as patterns when the entire text or narrative was

read as a whole. The meaning of each theme was interpreted based on the context of the entire transcript and interview. I completed a detailed analysis of each narrative in which I identified all themes. In reporting my results, I stayed close to the meaning of the participants' words by using quotes or paraphrases to illustrate themes.

The aim of my interpretation and analysis was to understand the lived experience of divorce with a focus on the mechanisms or processes that fostered family resilience. Using a holistic-content form of analysis (Lieblich, Rivka, Turval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998), I listened to and read each story a number of times until I could detect a global pattern. I then identified key themes within each narrative. I used a salutogenic perspective as I searched for pathways to resilience that described key parental attributes, decisions made, and resources that fostered family resilience and positive adjustment after divorce.

The results are presented in two parts: "Stories of Violence" and "Stories of Betrayal". I used broad categorical distinctions that described the reasons leading to divorce. In the literature, pre-divorce problems determine how the divorce transition is approached. Unresolved problems prior to divorce can result in a pileup of stressors compounding the divorce transition, and increasing the likelihood of maladjustment in children and severe family dysfunction (Strohschein, 2005). In addition, the nature of problems in the marriage results in the use of different resources in the environment when parents divorce.

Part 1 – “Stories of Violence”

Sadie’s Story: We survived

At the time of the interview Sadie was 37 years of age and was separated for 3 years. She was married for 5 years. Sadie had sole custody of her 5-year-old son. The father had no recent contact with his son. Reasons for divorce were her husband’s alcoholism, his increasing violence, emotional abuse, and extreme control. Sadie described her husband as very dangerous, unpredictable, and vindictive with a province-wide warrant out for his arrest.

Sadie married after both parents died from cancer. She was vulnerable and wanted someone who could do practical things. When her husband’s need to control turned to abuse, she knew she could no longer continue to stay in the marriage. Sadie participated in this study at the request of her lawyer and she hoped that by sharing her story no other woman would have to face the same adversities she faced when trying to protect her son. Sadie told her story with much passion and courage to live a life of “hope and promise...and not stop living.”

Finding safety was central in Sadie’s story. This theme reoccurred throughout the narrative, showing local and global coherence (Mishler, 1986b). Secondary themes illustrated her perseverance in overcoming the injustices she faced, taking responsibility for choices she made, and her resourcefulness in finding safety through formal and informal supports. There was irony in this narrative because the organizations designed to protect children and families from abuse were portrayed as enabling and perpetuating harm to her preschool son.

Family resilience is safety

The pathway to resilience was her determination to survive and lead “a normal life.” These sentiments provided the context for my interpretations.

I seriously do mean the fact that I am here shows resilience because he wanted to kill me. He wanted me to kill myself...he wanted me to give up Billy⁵...and I wouldn't... I think that my ex-husband thought that I was not going to walk away 'cause he is too difficult, just like the lawyers were difficult. They said, “Get used to it; it's always going to happen; it's never not going to go away,” and I found the right people, I worked and worked until I found the right people, I didn't give up.

As shown in research on domestic violence, violence does not end by leaving a relationship; in fact, it increases during the initial separation. Definition of a good life for Sadie was based on the absence of violence and being able to enjoy the ordinary things in life.

We are a family and have been through a lot and we are still able to function in everyday life...he is succeeding in school, he's got great friends, he's a personable human being and I am able to do the same things in life...Everything is regular life now; we go about our business...We do what we need to do...I struggle with the bills... and that's normal life, right? That's [the] good things.

All actions taken during and after the separation and divorce process were to promote safety and recovery from abuse. Ensuring safety required careful planning skills. These skills were especially important for a mother leaving a very controlling spouse because of the increased safety risks when leaving. The goal of all actions taken were to

⁵ Billy is the pseudonym for her son who was 2 years of age at the time of the separation.

provide as much stability and consistency as possible for her preschool child. Sadie's story stressed the need for age appropriate parenting skills, planning, and perseverance as keys to resilience. The following story illustrates Sadie's actions to put safety first while still demonstrating child-centred parenting.

The fact that my little boy knew he couldn't make sounds in the house because daddy might get mad was pretty telling to me that it was way past any kind of normal situation... He always told me that Billy was his son. He was his property; I was just there and better watch my step...I better do whatever I could to please him... I told my husband ..."I am leaving... You have to get things straightened around in your life. I can't be with you; it is dangerous for our son".... The biggest thing when we moved that day was I wanted to make sure that his room was set up...I left ...as much stuff as I could...I took certain toys...I took his bed, his bedding.... I told him that we have a brand new house that we are living in, his brand new room, and... he was really excited that his room was there... He said, "Where's daddy?"... I said, "Daddy is not going to be coming here; daddy isn't going to be living here right now; you can still see him".... I won't make promises to him. I said, "Your daddy loves you and we moved here because we need to be safe"...

The early stage of separation was contrasted to the recent times where her son had stability in the home.

He has a sense of consistency and security. He knows that he is safe with me. I've always been his touchstone. He's very, very settled. He knows his daddy is not okay for him.

Perseverance in overcoming injustice

In this narrative, stories of perseverance and domestic violence overlap with themes of injustice. During the separation her husband made numerous attempts to force reconciliation and when that did not work, he accelerated to harassment and death threats, leading to a constant state of unpredictability. Her husband's actions led to Sadie's perseverance to find the right people who could help her find safety. The right people were counsellors from an outreach program for victims of abuse, a lawyer that took her concerns about safety seriously, police protection by way of a restraining order, and judges who made orders that ensured safety. However, this story shows that concerns about domestic violence, stalking, and control were not taken seriously and perseverance was required to find safety.

To be told by the police, stop complaining; to be told by...child protection that they can't do anything about it; to be told by the judge, "Oh come on, his dad just loves him"; to be told by every lawyer, after calling about 15 lawyers before I got the one that I finally stayed with, "You are just going to have to get used to it; it is never going to go away, nothing is ever really going to get better.".... He called me at 4 o'clock in the morning saying he was going to kill himself or kill Billy. He would torture me as much as he could. He would take Billy and tell me he was never coming back ...He won't sign an agreement on visitation time.... He was always trying to get me back, ...say[ing] "We have to talk." And I never knew where I would see him; he'd find me places and say, "Oh, I saw you were parked here; you were there." He was always watching me. ... He slashed the tires on my

car and then came over to fix them the next day, saying, "I can't believe someone did this to you," and being the hero.

The domestic violence counsellors and social workers that heard and believed Sadie were helpful. They encouraged her to obtain proper legal counsel, to plan for safety, and to access resources. Practical services that did not take away her personal autonomy were the most valuable: services such as providing transportation, finding safety, and going with her to the police.

She [name of domestic outreach counsellor] kept saying, "You don't deserve this; you have to keep trying to find the right lawyer; you have to figure this out." She took me to the police...I had been to the police many, many times and until I went with her with 55 tape-recorded threatening messages...they finally listened.... I went into hiding; she met me; she picked me up and took me to be safe. It was because after I left, that's when he threatened my life more specifically and he kicked in the storefront where I was working... I realize that if you didn't have someone behind you, you couldn't always get heard.

When personal death threats escalated to committing damage to Sadie's place of employment, police authorities acknowledged her concerns for safety as valid but it was through advocacy that she obtained protection.

Despite the increased awareness of domestic violence by most organizations, it was apparent that concerns about intimate partner abuse continued to be minimized or discounted by law enforcement. Advocacy was a critical component in how services were helpful. It was through advocacy from domestic violence services that police services were obtained, but only after the victim provided evidence of 55 taped death threats.

There are various patterns of domestic violence containing differential levels of risk to the children and the other spouse. The police did not account this for this when Sadie made her complaints. Sadie's concerns about safety were minimized. In this story, police services were denied without investigation until she had advocacy. Validation came as a result of complaints made against a particular officer. Sadie was able to obtain a peace bond. However, more barriers were presented by family court.

The court mandates that came down [during the time of her separation] were fathers' rights. "The father needs to be a part of this child's life forever, no matter what!" [Spoken in the voice of social policy and the courts]... You could love something but not love it well ... It took a trial for someone to actually care...I had to take my child to be tested to see if he was abused. One time...he abducted my son for 2 weeks and we didn't know where he was. When we went to court the judge said it was a misunderstanding.... Everything was played off "because daddy wants to see his kid." They didn't care about all the details.

Details of family violence are used to determine what type of violence is occurring and levels of lethality and risk involved for the family. The court did not take the mother's concerns about domestic violence seriously. In fact, it was implied that these concerns were an attempt to subvert access. A comprehensive assessment was never requested to determine the nature and extent of the abuse. In addition, the combination of substance abuse and domestic violence increased the unpredictability. Multiple problems create complicated family dynamics. In this story, decisions were made to promote the father's parenting in absence of knowing the family dynamics or risks. The father's rights for visitation were maintained by minimizing the mother's concerns about abuse. Sadie's

voice was lost. By acting without full knowledge of the circumstances, the court allowed and in fact, sanctioned abuse of a preschool child. It took 2 years to go to trial.

In the first pre-trial the judge tried to make this [conditions for parental behaviour] happen. He read the riot act to my husband... "Now there are restraining orders protecting her from you and you're a danger to yourself and you may be a danger to Billy at some time"... He was charged and convicted for threats to bodily harm...threatening to kill me. And put on probation...

In Sadie's story it was clear that the mother needed to ensure the father had access even when he posed a risk to her preschool child. Sadie's feelings of vulnerability were compounded when child protection services failed to take her concerns seriously and offer services.

"Let's just get access going. Something is going on with the mother; why won't he go?" ... I was not allowed to speak... And they'd say, "You tell that mother, to enable the visits." I mean I had police breaking down my door because my son was sick... but that visit had to go through, no matter what, even though my ex-husband's house was dirty and he wasn't capable of taking care of a sick child.... Child protection services [said] "He'll survive" and all they really said to me is, "Does he have shelter? Does he theoretically have food?" Bare minimum was all they need.... I think that it is unfortunate that bare minimum is all that they are requesting. We don't live in that society anymore; we can't ignore it.... there's an injustice in the system...

Rigid adherence to support fathers' rights by the courts and child welfare officials increased risks of harm for the child. In fact, this story suggests that the "bare minimum"

child welfare policies are putting Canada in a third world climate, whereby parental rights supersede child safety and policy is rigidly adhered to without investigation as to the particulars. Sadie's story echoes the precise objections expressed by women's groups when the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access recommended that the federal government adopt the term "shared parenting" as a presumption in custody (Government of Canada, 1999). The supposition that children benefit from both parents' involvement does not reflect reality when one parent is alcoholic, violent, and does not have good parenting skills. These are considered multiple risk factors, which create a cumulative effect in evaluating risks (Rutter, 1987). The inability to ensure safety after leaving a violent marriage created a paradoxical dilemma in Sadie's story in that child protection services would not become involved to ensure the child was safe. The other paradox was that the mother was not able to provide safety either by staying or by leaving an abusive marriage. These adversities increased Sadie's perseverance when it would have been easy to give up. The refusal of essential safety services in absence of facts was a major fault identified in Sadie's stories of injustice by the courts, child welfare, and police services.

When child protection services receive complaints about abuse or neglect from one parent against another after the court orders visitation, the court order has potential to create a dilemma. It could be presumed that the court has found the father's circumstances to be safe and suitable for children. This narrative illustrates that court orders for visitation are not synonymous with safety and good parenting.

In this story, the checks and balances of the legal system failed when supervised visits were ordered. Supervised visits are used when there are problems in regular visits

or when the court has some concern or doubt about child abuse or neglect, the benefit of visits for the child, concern about parenting skills, or when a child has not seen a parent for a long time and would not be comfortable with that parent without structure. During these visits, a supervisor is in the room to ensure safety, take notes, and generally report details of the visit. In this story, the child was terrified, but was physically forced to see his father. When he saw his father he froze, leading observers to inaccurately conclude that he calmed down when he saw his father. This alarmed Family Justice Services leading to a clarification in policy so that supervisors were not allowed to assist in ensuring visits occur. Clarification of policy was seen as a small step towards being able to ensure safety. Supervised access services were terminated in Sadie's story because of these concerns. It took a trial to achieve safety.

[Name of judge] couldn't deny the evidence; she had all of the evidence of everything from the beginning.... of all the abuse, of the threats; she had all the past court proceedings.... I went up on the witness stand for 2 days. ... My ex-husband was my own best witness.... What we were asking for was supervised access.... We didn't think we could change the joint custody.... The judge, in her closing argument [judgment] made a verdict before she even thought about it...She said, "You are a danger to society; you are a danger to everyone who knows you; your family is afraid of you, your parents are afraid of you." All these things [the judge said] that I always knew were the truth.... My family got to read the affidavits...and they got to understand. It's not a secret anymore.... And to get full custody when I thought that I couldn't get that ever. Those were unattainable and unrealistic goals...Probably the best thing about the resilience

thing for me is that it came full circle. And I think that if it wasn't [for the trial and name of the judge] it wouldn't have come full circle for me.... If the trial had gone a different way...if the judge didn't want to hear my testimony...

Trial was the key leading to safety in Sadie's story and enabling family resilience. The severity of the abuse was legitimated in trial, which validated Sadie's experience and fear. It was no longer a secret and she was believed. Triumph was defined by obtaining sole custody, enabling the mother to protect her child. Validation was defined as "full circle," meaning her experience was validated by one of the highest of societal institutions. The trial judgement empowered Sadie to protect her son but it took 2 years of perseverance and courage to pursue matters until there was a trial. In domestic violence, safety is often temporary. After the trial the father was still allowed access with his son at the home of the paternal grandparents. Sadie and her son achieved safety only after the father fled the province.

In Sadie's story there was regret and worry after safety. Problems and worries about children persist after mothers leave abusive relationships and provide safe environments for children. Divorce reduces risks, but it does not eliminate all the problems for children who have a problematic parent. Sadie expressed concern for her child because of the possibility of him repeating his father's patterns. Sadie also described divorce as a loss of a parental figure for their son and a loss of hope for a good marriage. Divorce represented freedom from abuse but with freedom came regret.

I worry about Billy repeating patterns and so the relief that his dad has abandoned him...is good in some ways and bad on other days... My son misses his father and it is unfortunate to me that Billy is not important enough to him to fix up his

life for. But the relief that he is not around everyday is a good thing. I still see everyone that looks like him.... The day that I started this amazing job, I drove down the street and thought “Ah, there will be so many good things for me and my son and our future and everything else” and then I saw someone who looked just like my ex-husband...and all perspective was gone again. Because I do feel that he is not gone for good...

The importance of functional support in resilience

Functional support means different things to different people. In this story it was a variety of formal and informal supports that offered protection until the courts provided protection from her husband’s threats of violence. Services that helped were counselling and support from domestic outreach, having good legal representation, and family support from her godmother. Sadie’s parents were deceased and she had no other family.

Domestic violence counselling was important because it empowered her to persevere until she found safety. “Not being burned out” is the manner in which Sadie described how the formal service providers were helpful. Legal advice was important to help her understand and navigate the legal system. Her lawyer educated Sadie about current trends facing the courts, providing a broader context for understanding outcomes. Family support was described in the following manner:

Well, the biggest thing ...is she knew me when I was married, although she couldn’t help me, she’s said this to me very clearly now.... Everything was supporting my decisions, encouraging me that I can do these things if I had to, understanding how painful it was to go through, and how scary it was but still not

interfering... A lot of people want to fix everything for you but she knew she couldn't and I think that by admitting that she it made it better... She was also able to help me understand how futile the system could be... You can do all the right things and injustice can still happen. [She said], "You can't take anything for granted; you have to have faith and you persevere and fight."

Having a family member that understood her whole story was important. It provided continuity and coherence to Sadie's life when she felt she had no control. Her godmother understood the imperfections in the system and gave support to persevere.

Other informal resources could not have been planned or predicted. These resources were available because of Sadie's determination to find help. Sadie and her son went into hiding with a family whom her boss knew through her church. Shelters were full and she had no other people she could stay with when she left.

Everyone here that I knew, my ex knew. I didn't have a lot of friends prior [to her separation] because I was not allowed to have friends here. So he knew where my cousins and godparents lived... He knew where my boss lived... The lady I worked for actually took me and Billy to a friend of hers ...and we stayed on their farm for about a month in hiding, until he was finally arrested and charged. It was very fast once the charges got through. I was never so terrified because we didn't know if he was on drugs or what. We didn't know if he had threatening obsessions... It was terrifying to come home...I had good advice from my godmother and counsellor: "Be cautious, be careful but don't stop living your life because if you stop living your life then he has won."

Hope and self-responsibility as keys to resilience

Personal qualities and beliefs that contributed to resilience were openness to advice from her counsellor and lawyer and the willingness to learn from adversity. There was pride in overcoming adversity with dignity and faith in the idea that “if you do things rightly and justly” and persevere, they will work out. When I asked about key decisions that enabled family resilience, Sadie spoke of her personal conviction and perseverance to find safety.

If you do things rightly and justly and not just from the skewed perspective for yourself, then it will eventually pay off. Now it was longer than it should have been in my situation, but it wouldn't have happened if I gave up on it. It would have been really easy to give in... Not giving up on finding the right person to represent me. Not giving up on the fact that I decided I was worth it and that Billy was worth it... It was never easyIt was focusing on living the life I knew we could live... I have a happy little boy who is well-adjusted. One of the sayings that I always adhere to is, “The best revenge is living well” and my little boy is not going to be disabled because of the situation. He is going to grow from it. I decided that I was not going to ignore what happened to me. I was going to learn from every single thing.... From hindsight you see everything very clearly. I am back to who I am with a future of hope and promise...I want to be a role model to my son.... I want him to be a good person growing up rather than growing up with a chip on his shoulder...

Taking responsibility for her choices was important. Personal resilience came from taking ownership of her circumstances, and not owning her husband's problems.

A lot of people in divorce aren't willing to admit to any of their faults they are too busy blaming the other person.... It is never one person that is the problem... I let Tom⁶ do the things that he did to me...He wouldn't have been able to get to me if I had [not] allowed that to happen...Billy didn't have choices, but I did.

Her recovery came from taking responsibility for her choices and provided a sense of empowerment. Developing the ability to be introspective so that she could make meaning of her life provided continuity and coherence to her story. Throughout the entire narrative, there was a focus on the future, not on living in the past.

In this story, openness led to insight, which led to finding the "right" resources, which led to safety, and finding new employment that would enable her to be financially stable for her son. When I asked about supports today, she spoke with pride about her childcare provider, new friends, and a new job. There was a strong sense of achievement. The biggest supports were functional. Good childcare was critical because her son was described as being aggressive after visitations, but her babysitter "did not give up."

Sadie's determination and hope provided continuity for her child at a time of instability.

Social support was important. Sadie found many women had stories of abuse, which reduced her sense of isolation. It strengthened her resolve to have a good life and future.

Her beliefs were reinforced: "You can make your own luck." Sadie's narrative was about how she built her future. She was upwardly mobile, had a career and a professional education. She used these resources to rebuild her life with the same determination and perseverance she used to find safety.

⁶ Tom is the pseudonym for her husband.

Chelsea's story: Turning adversity into opportunity

The second participant was a woman who was 38 years of age. She received information about this study from the courthouse. At the time of the interview, Chelsea was separated for 3 years and had been married for 8 years prior to her separation. She was the mother of two elementary-school-aged children, who were 7 and 5 years old at the time of the separation. Chelsea had joint legal custody of her children and her home was their primary residence. She was in university at the time of this study. She and her children lived in public housing accommodation and despite financial worries she spoke with enthusiasm and hope. Her former husband had parenting time on alternate weekends when he did not work and on some holidays. Chelsea was one of two rural participants.

Chelsea initiated the separation because of her husband's substance abuse, specifically his daily use of drugs but also because of his extreme control and physical abuse. Chelsea never knew her own father, which she perceived as rejection and loss. Not knowing her father led to a commitment that her children would know their father even in the face of family violence. Redefining family and promoting the children's relationship with their father in the face of violence were important premises for this narrative. A unifying theme in this narrative was overcoming abuse and control to become economically viable.

Escaping abuse as a first step in achieving economic independence

Attaining financial security after divorce was an important goal in this story. Prior to divorce, Chelsea defined herself as a "stay at home mom." The pathway to family resilience consisted of finding interim employment and returning to university to

establish a career. Chelsea's determination to support her family overlapped with barriers faced in escaping a violent marriage. Personal resourcefulness and formal community supports were important salutogenic influences in overcoming the control posed by her former husband. Achieving economic independence for Chelsea was based upon overcoming her husband's control. However, her former husband educated himself about the parameters of the law as it pertains to family violence and found a way to be legally in the home leading to a night of terror.

He said, "This is my house."... He had been violent with me [in the past]I said, "I'm going to have to phone the police." He said, "Go ahead. I've already talked to them." ... I didn't have a job. ... My children were in bed. It was minus 43 out that night ... The police basically regurgitated what he had told me.... He was just freaking on me...I phoned the police the second time they basically said, "Well, look, you can come down and get an emergency intervention order, but we're not coming out and the likelihood of you getting one of those without him even touching you is slim to none."... I said, "I'm going to stop talking to him ...I am going to go up upstairs and lock myself in my bedroom..."

In the morning, Chelsea contacted a friend who worked for Legal Aid and planned an escape. Chelsea deceived her husband by saying she was going to drive the children to school, but instead fled to a nearby city and met with a lawyer. The Legal Aid lawyer referred her to emergency services for domestic violence. From here, plans were made for Chelsea and her children to go to a women's shelter. Chelsea stayed at a women's shelter for 5 days in a city several hours from her residence. Escaping family violence is complicated in rural communities especially in the middle of cold prairie

winters because of very real and practical difficulties to access services. Chelsea was fortunate she had a reliable vehicle, a basic need for parents in rural communities. To access the shelter, she drove over 200 kilometres through a blizzard.

Combinations of personal, informal, and formal resources were needed to escape violence. In Chelsea's story, escaping the violent marriage meant relying upon her personal characteristics of ingenuity, determination, and resourcefulness and making use of informal resources of family and friends. Formal resources of legal services, shelters, and domestic violence counselling were pivotal in establishing parameters to ensure safety. As is common in situations of domestic violence, the father created barriers to prevent the mother from leaving. En route to the shelter, Chelsea was contacted by the RCMP because her husband filed a complaint of child abduction. Planning skills were critical in overcoming barriers. These skills were used when she commenced legal proceedings prior to leaving; thus he was not able to prevent her leaving with their children. Despite the crisis of the moment Chelsea was able to separate marital problems from her concerns about the children. While driving to the shelter, Chelsea contacted her former husband to tell him where the children were. This action demonstrated her ability to separate the father's role as a parent from his role as a violent husband in their marriage. It also illustrated her personal values of preserving the children's relationship with their father.

While at the shelter, Chelsea needed to re-construct a new life that included finding employment to support her children and herself. Ongoing problem-solving skills were required while at the shelter. Chelsea went to charity for clothing for job interviews and for clothing for the children; she applied for public housing in two cities but was

faced with a 6-month wait list; she applied for jobs and was referred to another lawyer in the city where the shelter was located.

Importance of understanding domestic violence by legal counsel

Legal resources were required to ensure safety. Chelsea needed lawyers to commence proceedings and to go to court. In court it was ordered that Chelsea and her husband attend mediation. However, Chelsea's temporary counsel, who she obtained while at the shelter, encouraged her to sign a biased separation agreement that disadvantaged her. Although Chelsea objected to the terms that restricted her from leaving the small town, her lawyer's reassurance that it would only last a few weeks convinced her to sign the agreement. She signed it under protest and it lasted 4 months.

I spoke to my ...lawyer about some issues that I had with it and he just said, "It's an interim agreement so just sign it. It's not going to last forever." ...I could not leave [name of town] with my children, so that meant that if the children needed medical attention or if I had to go buy groceries [I could not go]... but when I didn't have the children I was looking for a place to live. I was looking for a job... and [wanted to] design a life beyond divorce or beyond this family union.

The consequences of incompetent legal representation enabled her husband to disadvantage her in "designing a life beyond this marriage" and greatly increased her legal costs. Legal representation without considering the dynamics of violence disadvantaged the mother. In Chelsea's narrative, the father used the children as a weapon to control the mother, which parallels research in domestic violence. This agreement compromised their children's health, given that one child suffered from severe

asthma, and prevented Chelsea from becoming financially self-sufficient. In effect, her husband used legal means to disadvantage her and punish her for leaving. It was continued control. The heart of achieving economic independence meant changing a biased legal agreement. Court intervention was required to ensure Chelsea could become financially independent.

Access to financial support is critical for unemployed mothers leaving violent marriages. Chelsea obtained social assistance and knew she needed competent legal representation. Her parents covered legal costs to enable safety. Overturning the biased agreement did not immediately change after Chelsea found another lawyer because of further incompetence involving misfiling and misplacing information. When she did acquire competent legal representation, her husband orchestrated further legal delays by firing his lawyer. Therefore, all information or negotiation needed to occur directly with him, once again giving her husband direct control. Financial information was not provided until court proceedings were commenced and subpoenaed, increasing her legal costs.

All decisions were based on his own interpretation. He needed to control me, continue to throw roadblocks in my way to be able to financially, emotionally, and in every other way [to prevent me] from looking after my children.

Financial control is part of domestic violence. In Chelsea's story, she was unable to obtain alimony without court orders. An important theme that emerged from this story was the critical importance of competent legal advice especially in situations of marital violence, whereby control was central to the abuse. Her husband's actions were intended to prevent her from attaining economic independence. Other actions her husband

undertook included attempts to discredit her as a parent by reporting her to child protection for injuries that occurred at his home, and eliminating her limited economic security by dismantling her on-line business.

Perseverance and hope were critical in overcoming these obstacles. "I'm tenacious...I just didn't give up." A fair court order enabled Chelsea to become financially viable. It was clear that judicial insight and intervention were key in providing a fair parenting plan and reducing the father's control. In the initial contract the father had the children only when he did not work. However, when Chelsea found a job that required shift work, he did not want the children to move. The female judge saw through the unfairness that compromised the mother's ability to become financially secure. The judge allowed the children to move with the mother to a nearby city, and further ordered that the father drive the children to school everyday when he had them. Subsequently, they attended mediation, as per the judge's instructions. Despite concerns expressed by women's groups about mediation in situations of domestic violence, it was successful in Chelsea's story. It was successful because Chelsea obtained professional help in understanding abuse dynamics and educated herself in this area by taking university classes. In mediation, the father agreed that Chelsea's home would be the primary residence for their two children.

Setting boundaries and acquiring knowledge

In this story, the mother overcame the emotional impact of domestic violence through counselling and knowledge about the dynamics of abuse. These processes enabled Chelsea to predict her husband's behaviour and to make sense of the past without

self-blame and to recognize what to do differently so that she would not be controlled. The following is an illustration of how they learned to communicate in a manner in which she was not controlled.

We had a real conversation ... for the first time in almost 3 years...He was given an opportunity to follow through with what he said he was going to do.... I said, "We can look at being flexible...but you can't send me an email, hop in your car and come...we planned to go fishing today. You can listen to an alternative I have." I gave him choices in whether to listen to me or not. Now he understands that I'm not owned by him, nor can I be controlled by him in any way.

Chelsea learned how to set boundaries. Setting boundaries resulted in a reversal of power in their relationship. She was no longer afraid or controlled by him and it was reflected in her use of language in the narrative from "asking permission" in earlier stories to "he was given an opportunity." His abusive tactics were no longer effective and his actions were depersonalized. She was detached from the emotional impact of his control.

Turning adversity into opportunity

There was continued adversity when the children were exposed to pornography and adult sexuality at the father's home resulting in sexualized behaviour in the children. When Chelsea expressed these concerns to her lawyer she was told that she could not control his parenting time. When she went to child protection she was told they would not get involved in custody matters. In the end Chelsea acquired counselling to help her children. When poor parenting escalated to physical abuse - a burn mark on one of the

children - she took the children to the doctor and again called child protection services at the suggestion of the doctor. Once again child protection refused to become involved.

What she [child protection worker] said to me was, "If you can't work this out with your husband then what we are going to do is we are going to take the children away from both of you because you guys are hurting the children." ...He's accusing me of physically hurting my child...I haven't even seen my kids in like 7 to 10 days. And I'm trying to protect myself and protect my children and then [name of child protection worker] tells me this!

The following story represents one of the contradictions in Chelsea's narrative whereby she defends inaction by child protection but later works for this agency and obtains informal help.

I'm sure she sees it all the time. ... I was told ...that [child welfare agency] was going to be picking up [hiring] this family support thing ...and to put my name in.... I was hired and she was one of the social workers that I worked for... I also saw her as someone who could help me in my situation. Six months after I started working for her I called her up...off the record and asked what can I do? ... She just told me to document everything...just keep documenting everything.

In smaller urban communities people know each other. Chelsea heard of employment opportunities through friends, and was able to find work in the same agency as the social worker who had refused services. Because of this, she was able to obtain advice and suggestions because of her working relationship with child protection workers. In this story, Chelsea also worked part time at the first Legal Aid office where she obtained help when fleeing her marriage.

Economic security is family resilience

It was clear that the means to family resilience meant developing a career so that Chelsea and her children would not live on welfare and in poverty. A career meant she could eventually become self-sufficient. Chelsea received social assistance for a time, but it was also clear that she did not identify with being a “welfare mom.” In fact, she started a self-help group at the social housing complex where she resided because of the hopelessness and lack of future for other single parent families. Finding her identity outside of the home was a complicating factor in Chelsea’s search for economic security. She struggled to find a place for herself and relied upon her identity within her community to build her self-esteem.

I had that one social worker she would come to my house ... She said, “You know there is a place for you.... You’ve just got to find it”...because I was saying.... I didn’t have an identity anymore. I didn’t know where I belonged and ... because I’m not paid as a mother, I wasn’t appreciated as a mother, but volunteer work in my little town gave me [confidence and appreciation]...That’s one of the things that helped me realize that ...I can actually ...make a difference to myself and other people.... I took one university class, and I did really well ... and then decided to go full time and that has given me a lot of confidence, going to school. And it trickled down to my kids.

Working towards a degree in a professional occupation gave Chelsea another identity and enabled her to be a positive role model for her sons.

Developing confidence to reconstruct her identity came from volunteer work which led to paid work, which in turn gave her the confidence to return to university. All

these activities gave her an identity outside of the home domain and provided a means to rebuild her future. Hope for a better future was a reoccurring theme.

I've always enjoyed helping other people. It makes me feel better about who I am and what I am doing and what my life should be about. ... I've always held onto that... I started being a literacy tutor... Things aren't spectacular at home... It still helps me define who I am, and I don't know how other people go about doing it, but that's how I do it for me.

Ultimately, family resilience was proceeding in a direction that would lead to economic security and a career she would enjoy.

I feel like we're kind of like halfway there... I can see us being able to have our own house and be outside of social housing.... That is kind of a milestone... I am always looking forward to the future... I look at how bad things have been over the last 3 years... Even though I'm a very low-income person, in fact, I have no income. ... my kids are still in activities and ... they are still learning things and making friends and I encourage them to do that... The kids on my block all end up hanging out at my place. My kids still miss [name of town where she used to live]; they miss the small knit community... They miss the school, but ... they do like their life better now because mom and dad aren't constantly fighting.

Family resilience was defined as ordinary things such as, her children's involvement in community activities, making friends, and achieving their goals. Similar to research, the advantage of divorce for children was the absence of parental conflict. Family resilience was safety and having control over her life.

I finally realized that we do have some control of our own lives by making a plan and trying to stick with it, no matter what kind of failures that we may have, just to keep on trying....

Redefining family after divorce

In Chelsea's story, family ideals consisted of both parents together with their children. The belief in an intact family led Chelsea to compromise personal values when she reconciled with her spouse after previous separations and was eventually her reason for leaving. In this narrative, redefining family was important to make sense of divorce and to define resilience.

I...never met my father. ... They have a family when they're with dad... and we have a family ...The whole thing that I held onto for so long through my whole marriage was you have to have that mom and dad together, but life for us has been much better separate than together. And I just had to let that go because it's not the most important thing. One of the most important things is just being able to feel safe and confident and when you don't have to worry about getting beaten up and you don't have to worry about not being able to eat properly.

The values of family unity were replaced by family safety. Family did not disappear, but was redefined as consisting of two families: one with her and one with the children's father. In Chelsea's narrative, openness and flexibility were needed to accommodate these changes in family structure. She needed to be open to accepting her sons' relationship with their stepmother and in redefining family.

The paradox in this story is that by the mother letting go of her ideals of family life; she was able to give her children something she never had - an opportunity to have a relationship with their father. This allowed her to reconcile her beliefs and make peace with her past.

I think seeing my children doing better, and them actually verbalizing to me that their relationship with their father is now better than it was makes me feel like I made the right decision.

Cindy's story: Forgiveness, not just for yourself but for the children.

At the time of the interview Cindy had been separated for 16 years and legally divorced for 13 years. Cindy was 40 years old and was the only participant who was remarried. Her family consisted of her second husband, their 10-year-old son, and her two sons from her first marriage who were 18 and 16 years of age. Cindy's narrative reflected the complex family dynamics when parents remarry and have other children.

Cindy's divorce occurred when her children were too young to understand or remember their parents being together. At the time of the separation Cindy was 24 years old and one child was 2 years old and the other only 8 days of age. Cindy had sole custody of her sons and they always lived with her. Her sons regarded their stepfather as their parent because their mother remarried when they were 6 and 4 years of age. The birth of a half-sibling was regarded as a normative family transition and their brother was regarded as a full sibling. Cindy ensured her sons always had a relationship with their father and the children would see him on a regular basis that varied throughout the years depending on their activities and his schedule. However, divorce was a permanent change

that set the context for all other transitions. In this story, the children's loyalties were split between their biological father and their stepfather.

Reasons for the separation were ascribed to her husband's extra-marital relationships, alcoholism, and domestic abuse. Cindy's husband initiated the divorce by locking her out of their home 8 days after the birth of their youngest son.

The central themes in Cindy's story are forgiveness and rebuilding. Her faith allowed her to forgive and to rebuild her life. Her ability to be introspective allowed her to make changes in her life and to make use of counselling services from a battered women's shelter. Openness in obtaining help from her lawyer and a mentor all contributed to change. Trust was an important prerequisite in all these relationships, including her relationship with her new husband.

In many ways Cindy's story paralleled Chelsea's and Sadie's stories because of the common link of leaving abusive marriages. In Cindy's story, the impact of abuse and her husband's infidelity created self-doubt that existed for years after divorce. The sense that she was to blame for her former husband's affairs and abuse resulted in her choice to obtain counselling. However, she carried his harsh accusations until she concluded, "I was not the problem." This realization occurred after she learned of his continued affairs and mistreatment of women years after her divorce.

In this story, remarriage was depicted as an important contributor to family resilience. The benefits were a stepfather who was a positive role model without forcing the children to view him as their father and increased financial support for the family.

Cindy presented her story with humour. At the time of the interview she lived in an affluent area of the city and worked full time while being actively involved in the lives

of all her sons. She was concerned about her oldest son's use of alcohol and wanted him to pursue post-secondary education. Cindy's story reflected pride in her sons.

Forgiveness is a component in family resilience

Forgiveness in Cindy's narrative was pivotal to her story of divorce and was often contrasted with her former husband's anger. His anger resulted in damage to his relationships with their sons. Forgiveness was the basis of family resilience in divorce. This theme stemmed from her faith and was part of her identity. Forgiveness was important in how she made sense of divorce, overcame the effects of abuse, and rebuilt her life. Personal qualities that led to forgiveness were the ability to be introspective and to assume responsibility in her life. Forgiveness was considered part of good parenting. It was important for her children to see parental cooperation and for her to move past the anger and pain. Forgiveness allowed Cindy to move on and played a key role in her ability to overcome ongoing adversity caused by her alcoholic and abusive former husband. The theme of forgiveness starts at the beginning of this narrative as she speaks about reasons for the separation and continues until the end when she gives advice to people who are in the process of separation and divorce.

You gotta forgive when someone hurts you or else you'll never get over that anger and I think that's important to the kids. If I would still be angry with their dad and cutting him down, what kind of life would that be for my kids? I had to get to that point, which took a whole long time...I think the first 3 years after we were divorced was the hardest years because I had to learn to forgive him, and I thought of my kids. My kids are everything.

In Cindy's story, "letting go" was a means of learning to forgive. Forgiveness was necessary in rebuilding her life and described as a benefit of divorce. It was an important aspect in her ability to co-parent. "I said to David⁷ once, "We may be divorced, but until death do us part we have these kids together." Forgiveness facilitated her recovery from abuse.

Trust in legal counsel and a positive role model enabled rebuilding

Cindy obtained a lawyer through a referral from her family doctor whom she trusted. Her lawyer came to be regarded as a friend who in turn arranged for her to meet another woman who became her mentor and a source of support. Trust was key in all the supports she used. Counselling services were premised on trust and safety.

I met, [name of lawyer] my lawyer and then I went and stayed in the [name of a women's shelter] 'cause I just felt I needed to be alone, away from everybody ... It was really good there because that's where I got some counselling and I really learnt a lot about myself. I was there for my kids.... And then I got an apartment and I started my life over.... I think the 3 years that I was alone before John⁸ and I got together I really dealt with a lot.... I went to counselling. I stayed away from relationships... I was really scared. It was hard to trust... Actually I have known John since I've been 12.

In Cindy's story, rebuilding her life consisted of returning to school to become a nurse and eventually to remarry.

⁷ David is the pseudonym for her former husband, the father of her two oldest children.

⁸ John is a pseudonym for the name of her current husband.

The greatest help came from her lawyer who took her concerns seriously and who introduced her to the woman who became her mentor. Because she had the same legal counsel for 17 years, her lawyer knew her story and the adversities that she faced. Having someone know her entire story provided a sense of continuity and coherence in Cindy's life.

He [her lawyer] said, "Cindy, I want you to phone this [lady]...because she went through a really bad divorce," and then we just became really good friends and I really confided in her a lot.... I used to phone him [her lawyer] ...and I was in tears because...David would always threaten me, taking the kids and my kids mean everything to me. I went to his [the lawyer's] office and he would sit there...He just had an open ear all the time. I would phone him at home...He has helped me so much in my life and now that my parents are gone I look so much up to him... I have my faith in him. I was so scared to go through this divorce and ...this is part of my independence.

Cindy stressed the importance of a mentor in rebuilding her life. It was important to have positive role models and someone in whom to confide. Support from a mentor helped her in developing plans for her life in practical terms. Because becoming economically self-sufficient was an important goal, Cindy decided to go back to school. Her mentor also provided informal support by helping Cindy develop positive ways of coping that involved faith and forgiveness. Her mentor encouraged her to let go of the pain and learn to forgive. She was someone who provided guidance and direction in day-to-day coping.

She always – put a bigger ear out for me, and she said to me, “Cindy just let go and let God.” And it’s true, you gotta just let go. ...Then that’s [the time] when I decided, “Hey, I’ve got to do something with my life. I’m alone with these 2 kids.” ... I decided to take my nursing... and I was in my nursing when I met John.

Importance of women’s shelters and counselling

Counselling and staying at a women’s shelter helped make sense of divorce during the transition period, but ongoing counselling was needed to help Cindy understand and recover from abuse. Counselling helped Cindy set emotional boundaries and focus on her goals of rebuilding. Verbal abuse continued after the separation. Her former husband would continue to criticize and ridicule her during exchanges of the children. Safety was described as a benefit of counselling.

Family resilience was not depicted as a single event, but rather an ongoing process of making careful choices. Cindy continued to be highly attuned to signs of control or abuse. Not taking responsibility for her former husband’s affairs and not feeling his affairs were her fault came only after she discovered that he was having an affair when married to his current wife.

Around 2 years ago Lawrence⁹ phoned me at work and he said, “Mom, I’ve got to talk to you.” And he says, “My dad’s got a girlfriend for the last year and she’s got three kids.... I realized, “Okay, you are a loser.” Like it made me realize what kind of person [he is] ...It was just like everything went through my body from my head to my toe, and it was just relief, and I just sat “Okay, he’s done it to me.

⁹ Lawrence is the pseudonym for her oldest son, 18 years old at the time of the interview.

He's done it to her. He's cheated on her while they were dating. Okay, I'm glad I'm rid of him." ...I learnt a lot from it [divorce].... I found in my heart who I was. I don't let no one walk over me no more, nobody, like I won't put up with nothing. I don't like people when I see that you're manipulated or abused. I don't like negativity in life.

Finding her identity was a benefit of divorce. Regaining her power was a process. It came full circle when she realized that his affairs were not her fault. This realization was experienced as freedom - freedom from self-doubt.

Remarriage does not mean the father's role is replaced

Eventually, trust extended to her new husband who provided stability and balance by being non-reactive.

When I met John and we started dating I knew I could trust him. He was my best friend and I could say anything to him. He always sits back and he doesn't get involved. ... I always confide in him: "Don't take sides here and tell me."

Remarriage contributed to family resilience, in part because Cindy's new husband provided feedback. In Cindy's story, the children regarded divorce as "normal" and their stepfather was regarded as a parent. The children did not feel pressure to choose between him and their father and it was clear that the obligation they felt towards him was based on the good quality of their relationship. The children always maintained a relationship with their father, although this was described as problematic at times.

He's always told them, "I'm not your dad. You have your dad. You call me whatever you want," and they've called him dad from day one. I think that started

[calling him dad] because when we got married we walked out of the church and my two boys said to me, "Okay, dad." Like right away, they have always had that in their hearts. Like hockey tournaments, "Oh, I'm too busy to take Lawrence to his hockey tournament." [Spoken by the father] Well, who took him to hockey [it] was John.

There was a clear distinction in the roles between the stepfather and father. The stepfather did not put the children in the position of having to choose or take sides. The good quality of parenting by the stepfather compensated for the parenting by their father who was described as a good parent "but on his terms." The benefits the children derived from their stepfather's parenting enabled them to have more tolerance and fewer expectations of their father. Their stepfather's parenting was a protective mechanism although issues of loyalty and duality were apparent as Cindy spoke about her sons' emotional allegiance to their stepfather but their conscientiousness of obligations was to their father. Her sons managed the duality of two fathers by being loyal in different ways with both. A fundamental aspect of family resilience was that Cindy ensured that the primary relationship with their father was not replaced with a stepparent. The role of their father was important.

I just ...told them, "Your dad's still your dad. Who cares about what's happened, that's between us. He's always your dad and I'm always your mom" and that was about it..... He used to come [to get the children] every second weekend and every Wednesday, until Lawrence was 12 and then the Wednesdays stopped. In the summer holidays while they were little he took them on holidays, for 2 weeks, but I noticed after the first couple of years it was like a week after that ... The

kids [were] are in the way, but actually he was always involved [but] never involved in their sports, or school ... He loves his kids and he's a good dad, but it's on his terms, when he has the time. That's how I see it.

This story illustrated the importance of separating children's needs from adult problems. Knowing both parents was an important part of family resilience in post-divorce; the concept of family did not disappear. Family resilience was defined as the nuclear family "being together as a family doing family things." Cindy's story described regular rituals for birthdays and family vacations. All of the activities described were those that depicted family unity and belonging.

Never criticizing the non-resident parent

The importance of respecting the role of the children's father was evident as Cindy spoke about her concerns about the father's alcohol consumption but "he is still their father" and "he loves them." She did not interfere with his relationship with the children.

I knew he partied a lot... I always felt that they were safe... He is a good dad; he loves his boys; I know the boys really love him... When he's had an affair on his present wife right now and the kids came and talked to me about it, I says, "You know what? I have to be a bigger person than him," and I sat there and I said, "You know what, you guys, he's still your dad. What he does is his business, but your dad is your dad." I think they liked that.

Cindy's refusal to criticize her former husband's behaviour, even though she had concerns about his alcohol consumption, illustrated her ability to separate adult problems

from children's needs. Her intrapersonal dialogue showed her conscious decision to act responsibly and be a "bigger person." She did not criticize him nor did she not interfere with the father's relationship with his sons. Cindy's sentiments about what would help divorcing parents stressed the importance of parental cooperation and returns to the theme of forgiveness.

I seen how much my kids got hurt... I think when people get divorced, the two issues of the two parents, they should keep aside, but try and make the best life for your kids because ... you're always the parents. Their marriage is splitting up, not their family because the parents are always the parents.... I think a best gift a child --a parent can give a child is to love the other parent, and I think when a divorce happens I think you have to be there for your kids.

This story reflected her lived experience about the importance of keeping children out of parental problems. Throughout Cindy's narrative the primacy of children's needs was central in her decision making and parenting. Loving the other parent was part of forgiveness. It did not mean accepting abuse, but rather it meant setting firm boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour.

The long-term impact of divorce is difficult to determine, but it provides the context to children's lives forever. Divorce is a permanent change in the structure of a family. "Children don't have their parents together and I think that's hard on them. You are never a normal family." Prior to the interview, Cindy's former husband made a court application to vary the child support payments, and while doing this, made an application for custody of their 16-year-old son, who was only 8 days of age when the parents separated. Custody did not change when they went to court, but the proceedings created

turmoil for their son when the father asked him to sign an affidavit stating he wanted to live with his father. It was a legal tactic to force her to reduce the amount of child support. The impact on her son was that his marks dropped from straight As to barely passing, and to the mother it felt like the children were used to hurt her. Cindy consented to her 16-year-old son participating in this research. However, I did not interview him because he was reluctant to participate and I sensed that he agreed to please his mother, but in reality was tired of divorce games. The effects of divorce do not end with a divorce certificate.

Braiden's story: Lessons learned the hard way

The third participant was a father in his late 30s. Braiden was married for 8 years and separated for 4 years at the time of this study and had been in a common-law relationship for 1 year. He initiated the separation because he could no longer live constructing all his actions and comments around his wife's mood swings and depression: "I lost myself; I was walking on eggshells." They married when she was pregnant. In the initial stages of the separation they were cooperative, but this changed after his wife tried to replace his role as a father with her new boyfriend.

His family consisted of 3 children, including his stepdaughter from whom he was alienated as a consequence of the volatile nature of the divorce. The children were 12, 8, and 6 at the time of the separation. The parents had joint custody and parallel parenting of their youngest son, who resided with each parent on a week-on and week-off basis. The father had sole custody of their oldest son and the mother had sole custody of her daughter. Both children in sole custody did not have designated parenting time with the

other parent. This is the only narrative in which I interviewed a child, an 11-year-old boy who resided with his father. His pseudonym is Chris. The family consisted of Braiden, his son Chris, and his new partner. His 9-year-old son lived with him on alternate weeks.

Braiden's story reflected themes prevalent in high conflict divorces. This story is about loss and regret and was spoken with great emotional intensity. Braiden's fundamental belief was "Family is everything," and this helped him discover his identity as a person and reaffirm his role as a parent.

Being allowed to be a father is family resilience in high-conflict divorce

Unlike the other stories in this study, where the participants' roles as parents continued after divorce, this was not an assumption here. An important aspect of family resilience in context of high conflict is being allowed to be a parent. Retaining Braiden's role as a father was a fundamental aspect of resilience and was contingent upon court orders that ensured he was allowed parenting time. Family resilience was defined as "being able to...still function as a family in a separate home; it can be done." Court orders were required for the father to continue to be a parent.

When there are pre-existing mental health problems, divorce transitions are complex and often conflictual. In fact, research on high conflict divorces has found that personality disorders are common in these situations (Johnston & Roseby, 1997). These were the circumstances leading to Braiden's divorce. Because of parental conflict, the children were drawn into problems between their parents and witnessed conflict. In this story, parental conflicts led to a continual reliance on criminal and family courts to resolve problems, ultimately ending in parental alienation between the father and

stepdaughter. This story reflected desperate efforts of a father who tried to protect his children from being turned against him.

Braiden's strong belief in the importance of family was key in his story. Family ideals were based upon positive role modelling in his family of origin, providing the motivation to ensure he had an active role in his children's lives. Supports consisted of friends and family, specifically his father. In this narrative, unconditional love of his children, consistent parental expectations, and activities that fostered family unity were emphasized as determinants of family resilience. Sports contributed to family resilience as did parenting that emphasized values of respect and emotional nurturance.

I haven't lost focus why I was a father... As a parent, I truly 100% love my children with every fibre of my being...It is very important to say those things ...but it is an entirely different matter to show it. And I can show [it] to my children...First I learned how to take care of myself [and] as soon as I learned I could take care of myself then I showed them that dad could take care of them...I cook, clean , do laundry; I do it all. I believe in being very respectful. I show them respect and they give that to me and [name of his new partner].... I have the same rules and beliefs that my mom and dad had when I was growing up and still have to this day. I'm very consistent with that. You have rules but sometimes you bend them in certain situations; I mean they're just kids.

Pride and responsibility as a parent were evident as Braiden spoke of the various athletic activities he does with his children. Strong family values stressing closeness, open communication, and sharing interests were a big part of family resilience. In this story, active involvement in the community through sports contributed by fostering

family unity and belonging. Braiden believed in “giving back to the community” through his role as a coach in soccer and hockey. He also believed in helping others as he was helped.

In Braiden’s story, three interlocking themes described ways of maintaining personal stamina to cope with the adversity associated with a high conflict divorce. These were a healthy diet, exercise, and involvement in his children’s day-to-day lives. A healthy diet and exercise were necessary for self-care. Exercise led to positive coping and sports the father could do with his sons. Sports were also a way to recover his identity as a person and be the father he knew he could be. Active involvement with his children was a way of compensating for mistakes he made in the earlier stages of divorce and as a way to promote family unity. To overcome problems, Braiden needed to set a clear boundary between his role of being a parent and the conflict with former wife.

Taking personal responsibility in high-conflict divorce

The importance of assuming responsibility for contributing to problems was a turning point in Braiden’s story of divorce. Increasing parental conflict resulted in his stepdaughter refusing to see him.

It is sometimes hard to take the high road... But, ever since Anna¹⁰ has not been in my life, I have taken the high road, but unfortunately it has cost me my relationship and cost me around \$35,000 in lawyer bills to get educated about divorce.

When his stepdaughter took sides against him, Braiden knew he had to take responsibility for his part in contributing to the conflict. This event and self-reflection

¹⁰ Anna is the pseudonym for his stepdaughter whom he parented since she was 3 years of age.

resulted in changes in his approach to divorce. In Braiden's narrative, lessons were learned in retrospect. His openness to change was related to his identity as a father. The lack of positive role models and norms was a concern expressed in this story. Braiden strongly recommended the need for support groups designed specifically for men going through divorce to learn from each other and prevent mistakes. Braiden has subsequently helped other men going through divorce.

The lessons he learned reflected advice provided in parent education sessions on separation and divorce; for example, "It is imperative to not include the children in the adult conversations or fights; don't ever belittle the role that that parent plays in the child's life; and the most important lesson...learn to pick your battles: what to fight for and what not to fight for."

Shared residence does not work in high-conflict divorce

One finding in research was that the benefit of parental involvement in children's development is contingent upon the quality of parenting they receive (Kelly & Emery, 2002; Rutter, 1999). This finding was confirmed in Braiden's story. The mother was described as actively dissuading the children from having a relationship with their father. She would criticize him and undermine his parenting. On going parental conflict had a negative effect on the child in shared custody.

Devon¹¹ is not in anything and that is because [his mother] doesn't let [him] go to any of his extra curricular activities while he is in her care. That's one of our major problems.... He wants to play hockey and he's extremely disappointed that I didn't put him in "in line" hockey.... It is not very fair to him.... He's already

¹¹ Devon is the pseudonym of the child who continued to alternate residences between parents.

noticed that there is different rules [for him] than Chris and it bothers me immensely. I grounded him for a week... He all of a sudden decided that he didn't want to live with dad anymore.

It was clear that this child would inevitably feel forced to take sides. As was noted in the literature review, shared custody often evolves into an arrangement whereby children have one primary residence (Juby, Le Bourdais, & Marcil-Gratton, 2003). In Braiden's story it was evident that the children who were in sole custody with one parental residence fared better than the one who was in shared custody. However, the underlying impact of not seeing the other parent may have a negative effect later in life.

Chris is a straight A student...he is in Grade 6 and he is part of the student council: he is involved in all the school sports and he plays hockey. He's got tons of friends. He is just doing amazing...Anna is doing amazing; she is on the honour roll; she is in Grade 10 now.

Braiden's story substantiates the literature on high conflict divorces, in that court orders for shared residence cannot force conflictual parents to cooperate (Jaffe, Cooke & Blais, 2006). In Braiden's story, discipline decisions required secondary considerations about potential consequences of rejection, thereby resulting in different rules for children. The lesson from this narrative is that children ultimately pay the price when parents remain deadlocked in conflict and residence is shared. Living with one parent had advantages for children of high conflict divorces.

Hope... something to look forward to

Braiden's identity as a father and hope for a better future was necessary for family resilience. It sustained him as he fought to avoid being alienated from his sons.

I'm one of those firm believers that ...you have got to have something to look forward to. And I kept working out and eating properly...[If] you can't take care of yourself, then you can't take care of your kids. If you're healthy then they will be healthy.

Hope was based on having positive things planned for the near future. Looking forward to "just little things" provided incentive to deal with problems. This feeling of hope was reiterated in my interview with his son. Deliberately planning positive things to do gave hope and led to family resilience after divorce.

It's your character, I mean if you think that after divorce your life ends or that you have to stop being a father, that's ultimately what's going to happen...If you are a strong person and you love being a father, and know that there is a better life out there for you...then you are going to do amazingly well.... I looked forward to going hiking or golfing or playing hockey with the guys, or looked forward to the next hockey season for the boys, just little things like that. Or maybe a weekend away ...spending one night with my old buddies, just little things, maybe weekly or bi-weekly I would look forward to a special something.

In Braiden's story, social support facilitated resilience because he was given feedback and a listening ear. It was important that he had consistent people to talk to who understood all the details of his divorce. Having these people to talk to provided continuity and coherence in the crisis of divorce. Supports were friends, his father and a

counsellor. Other services included lawyers and the courts. Formal supports were helpful but in different ways: It was helpful when his lawyer educated him on reasonable expectations, and it was helpful when the counsellor affirmed day-to-day coping and provided feedback.

Chris's story - A child's view of family resilience after divorce

Chris was an 11-year-old boy who lived with his father. In his story, family consisted of parents, siblings, and his pets at both his mother's and his father's houses. There was no hesitation in describing who belonged in his family, in that his family existed but not at the same residence. His wishes were that he and his siblings lived together and he wanted to spend more time with them. Chris's regrets were that he no longer lived in his neighbourhood close to his best friend. This child did not want to spend time at his mother's residence because; "She made these little remarks when I was there, like 'You are just like your father.'"

Family resilience was defined as the good things about living with his father and was described by "how physically active we are, not just sitting inside doing nothing." Similar to Braiden's story [his father], sports contributed to family resilience. Sports and activities were an advantage: "Well, I get to go to all of my activities, unless there's some appointment or I'm sick."

Hope and positive expectations

Involvement in his family was important in Chris's story. It led to a sense of belonging and stability. The benefit of divorce was making new friends in a new

neighbourhood. Chris's story reflected the need to have positive expectations, similar to his father. These sentiments were reflected in his advice to children of divorce.

Not thinking about the bad things, think about the good things, on how you're going to make some friends, maybe you're going to a new school, meet some new people.... Never just think it is going to be horrible, because sometimes you can have fun...I know a lot of kids that went through divorce like how they are always thinking down and depressed and sad...Try to be happy and if you really aren't...just sorta pretend and maybe it will happen.

Awareness of parental relationships

What was apparent in this story was a child's sensitivity to subtle changes in tone and nuance in his father's common-law relationship that might indicate conflict.

It seems to me that dad and [name of new partner] are not getting along the way they used to. Every now and then, it's like they are agreeing in different tones than usual...it just seems that every now and then they have a little argument, a little more than in the past, I think.

At the time of the interview, the father did not report any problems in his new relationship. From a child's perspective, it was clear that interparental conflict was the most distressing thing about divorce. "It's harsh, the break up and you're right there and you see it...a big argument and ...how it happens."

Grandfather as a main support

The person who helped this child the most was his grandfather. His grandfather offered empathy and understanding. "It seems like he understands what I am talking about, 'cause I guess he had lots of family problems when he was young... It just seems like he understands." Chris referred to this theme several times in his story. His grandfather helped by "just talking on the phone, telling me how things happen and telling me things will be fine." It was important to have reassurance from someone who was trustworthy. Reassurance contributed to Chris's sense of coherence by helping him understand the reasons things occur and helping him to see this experience in a broader sense.

Synthesis of findings from "Stories of Violence"

"Stories of Violence" consisted of a total of four narratives. In the stories of Sadie, Chelsea, and Cindy, reasons for divorce were substance abuse combined with intimate partner abuse. In Cindy's story, additional reasons for divorce were her husband's infidelity and disregard for her and her children's safety: he locked her out of the home with a newborn baby and their 2-year-old son. Sadie and Chelsea initiated divorce in fear of their safety and Cindy initiated divorce because of no options of reconciliation. I included Braiden's story in this category because it depicted the dynamics of a high conflict divorce, constituting emotional abuse and parental alienation from children. In Braiden's story, his wife's mental health problems led to a highly conflictual divorce and were the reason for the marriage breakdown. In the literature,

family violence depicts a range of situations from high conflict divorces to terrorism (Jaffe, Crooks & Bala, 2005).

In Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's stories escaping violence and control were key themes of resilience. Safety was the benefit of divorce and in essence it was the core of family resilience in these stories. Sadie's story spoke of the need for advocacy and portrayed her determination to find safety through formal societal institutions. It also spoke about overcoming injustice "by doing things justly and not from the skewed perspective of yourself." Chelsea's story described her determination and active problem solving in context of continual obstructions created by her husband to punish her for leaving, including a biased legal agreement that was used as a weapon for control. Cindy's story spoke of the support of counselling and a mentor to help her rebuild her life, resulting in her ultimately being able to forgive. Chelsea and Cindy used shelters and along with Sadie, accessed the specialized services of domestic violence programs. They relied on the court to achieve safety. Court orders were needed to provide protection. In Chelsea's and Sadie's stories, child protection services were denied. Child protection did not become involved beyond investigation in Sadie's story and did not investigate in Chelsea's story. Instead, Chelsea was told her children would be taken into foster care if she and her former husband could not cooperate and Sadie was told that "bare minimum" was all that was needed to allow court ordered visitation to occur - food and shelter. Police were involved but charges were laid only in Sadie's story. All three stories of these accounts of domestic violence highlighted the importance of domestic violence services as being pivotal for women's safety.

Divorce in context of intimate partner abuse required planning for safety and learning about patterns of abuse. To overcome the barriers in leaving they needed to prioritize their needs and take responsibility for their safety by setting emotional and physical boundaries. Assuming personal responsibility for their circumstances gave them control over their own lives. It was a proactive stance. They did not assume responsibility for their husbands' violence.

Sadie assumed control over her life through trial, which ultimately gave her voice back. She was empowered because the trial judge believed her and made orders that protected her young child. In Chelsea's story, court orders and competent legal representation were necessary to revise the bias in the initial separation agreement. Mediation gave her back her power and Chelsea was able to obtain primary residence of the children. A central theme in obtaining safety was "outsmarting" her husband. Domestic violence counselling educated her on the patterns of intimate partner violence and returning to university gave her another identity and hope for a better future. In Chelsea's story, redefining family allowed her children to have a relationship with their father, something she never had. Cindy took personal responsibility by utilizing counselling services, having competent legal representation, and using the informal support from her mentor. Through these processes she learned that forgiveness was the key to personal empowerment. All three of these stories spoke about being vigilant for signs of abuse in subsequent relationships.

Economic viability was vital to becoming resilient, especially in Chelsea's and Cindy's stories. They needed to assume financial responsibility for their children. Both of these participants returned to take post-secondary education. Obtaining post-secondary

education was critical for these women to obtain employment that paid a good salary so they could provide their children with opportunities. It was clear that poverty was a concern. Occupational training was a central need for women, not low-income employment. Sadie had occupational training prior to marriage, which became an important resource that she relied on during and after divorce. Financial security was a critical aspect of family resilience especially for families headed by women.

Braiden's story was included with stories of violence because of the nature of high conflict divorces, where children are forced to align with one parent against the other. In this story, the ongoing conflict resulted in perpetual emotional abuse. His story illustrated the need for role models or mentors to learn how to assert oneself in context of parental alienation. The importance of a mentor was also highlighted in Cindy's story where the support from her mentor was instrumental in learning how to detach from an alcoholic and abusive spouse. Support from her mentor led to forgiveness and returning to school. This support allowed her to become a good parent.

In high conflict divorces, it is perplexing for professionals doing custody and access assessments to make recommendations when parents are entrenched in bitter custody battles. A salutogenic theme of preventing alienation in context of high conflict divorce was illustrated in Braiden's story. For Braiden the foundation was that he was allowed to retain his role as a parent. Other salutogenic aspects were his values as a parent and his ability to take responsibility for problems. A lesson learned the hard way was the absolute necessity to keep the children out of adult problems. Other lessons were to never undermine the role the other parent plays in the life of the child, and to not interfere in the other parent's parenting. Ultimately it was important to learn to feel

empathy for the children and to be willing to adapt his parenting to avoid the pit-falls of competition in divorce. In Braiden's story, sports were a means of reclaiming his identity and promoting family unity. He felt he needed to have hope and a sense of control in his life. Hope was exemplified by having concrete things to look forward to in the face of adversity and unpredictability.

All these participants used counselling services and were willing to integrate information. They were willing to reflect on their own behaviour and were open to suggestion. Openness was an important personal quality for parents leading to family resilience. It was demonstrated by these participants' abilities to take responsibility for themselves and to separate parenting from adult conflict. Setting clear boundaries between parental homes was integral to safety and to protect children from exposure to adult conflict. Clear boundaries ensured that there was no interference with the other parent's parenting.

The pathway to resilience varied, but central to these stories of violence was the importance of court orders to ensure safety and allow parents to retain their parenting role. For Sadie it was overcoming injustice via trial; for Chelsea it was via court orders, mediation, and counselling; for Cindy it was through clear legal representation, counselling, and forgiveness; and for Braiden it was through self-education after lessons were learned the hard way. For all the participants, court orders were central to safety and to being a parent.

In these stories the personal identity of parents contributed to family resilience. Chelsea's and Cindy's personal values about the importance of family and knowing both parents were important in redefining parental relationships after divorce for Chelsea and

Cindy. For Sadie it was ensuring her child was protected and for Braiden's son it was not being forced to take sides. The concept of family did not disappear: even in the face of violent marriages and the dynamics of high conflict divorce, the other parent's role was not replaced. Parents were not replaced with new partners and the non-residential parent's role was facilitated as much as possible while ensuring safety. All of these participants had a very clear sense of family and did not annihilate the role of the other parent even in extreme circumstances. Only Sadie's child did not see his father and it was because his father refused to comply with the court order and left the province.

From the child's perspective, salutogenic aspects included active involvement in family life and positive expectations about the future, such as meeting new friends and still having both parents. It was vital to have one person who knew the whole story. For Braiden it was his father; for Sadie it was her godmother; for Cindy it was her lawyer; and for Chelsea it was her mother. Having one person who knew them and understood all the details of the divorce was important in maintaining identity in context of change. For the child, a consistent grandparent who did not take sides but was able to provide understanding was reassuring and gave him a sense of stability. Witnessing parental conflict at the time of divorce was described by this child as, "*It's harsh* [emphasis by the teller] the break up and you're right there and you see it...a big argument." Loss was defined as missing all his siblings living together, loss of pets, and loss of his old neighbourhood. Being in sole custody in context of high conflict divorce was salutogenic because he no longer had to choose sides.

The four adult stories show various forms of domestic violence and various resolutions, each solution unique to that particular family in their unique context.

Achieving resilience was dependent upon the exact nature of the domestic abuse and personal values of the parents. Their particular situations and personal qualities determined the mixture of services and supports in their environments. Clearly, competent legal representation was vital, as was not minimizing the impact of domestic violence. The role of the court was important, first of all to establish clear boundaries to ensure safety of children and mothers in domestic violence, and secondly to ensure that parental roles were maintained in situations of high conflict divorce. Participants' personal qualities of hope, dignity, faith, planning skills, personal values, trust, openness, and taking personal responsibility contributed to what resources were used and how problems were resolved. Themes from "Stories of Violence" are depicted in the following table.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Themes from “Stories of Violence” Based on Ecological Theory

Ecological Theory	Sadie’s Story	Chelsea’s Story	Cindy’s Story	Braiden’s Story
Ontogenetic Personal qualities, Of parents and Children, genetics	Family resilience is safety -Perseverance and determination Perseverance in overcoming injustice Hope and self-responsibility -to rebuild Hope	Escaping abuse is the first step in economic independence – Planning skills & determination Redefining family after divorce- hope for a better future Hope	Forgiveness is a key component in resilience Trust in legal counsel & importance of a mentor Never criticize the other parent Forgiveness to move on	Being allowed to be a parent is family resilience in high-conflict divorces Taking responsibility for contributing to problems Hope
Microsystems Day-to-day interactions & family	The importance of family support in resilience - godmother Services of domestic violence	The importance of setting boundaries & acquiring knowledge –For safety & for children to have a relationship with both parents, functional support from parents	Remarriage does not mean the father’s role is replaced - Stepfather compensated for weaknesses in biological father	Shared residence does not work in high-conflict divorces Hope – something to look forward to, activities & sports
Mesosystem Interaction between systems	The importance of functional support in resilience – childcare allowed her to work outside the home	Importance of competent legal representation in context of violence & family life Turning adversity into opportunity (by working for agencies that she sought help from)	Importance of mentor in helping her learn to detach & forgive Lawyer who helped her find someone to talk to- a mentor	Importance of friends (in verifying the history of high conflict divorce)
Exosystem Other systems that impact family ♦ School ♦ Work ♦ Church ♦ Neighbourhoods ♦ Recreation ♦ Peer groups for children ♦ Social groups ♦ Friends	The importance of functional support in resilience - Workplace help in finding a safe place to stay; childcare; domestic violence services; lawyers; courts; police; and economic security	Escaping abuse is the first step in achieving economic independence - Post-secondary education; finding work; lawyers; courts; family support for childcare & domestic violence services	Importance of women’s shelters & counselling – To rebuild; to find her identity; & to plan a life outside of marriage	Importance of lawyers who educate clients -Importance of workplace friends; family; sports & children’s friends
Macrosystem Cultural & societal beliefs, social policy	Policies that privileged fathers’ rights over safety of child	Redefining family after divorce - Children should know & have a relationship with both parents	Remarriage does not mean that the father’s role is replaced - “We are parents forever”	Being allowed to be a parent -Redefining family

Part 2 – “Stories of Betrayal”

In this part called “Stories of Betrayal,” I continue to report findings based on the three stories where separation was as a result of infidelity or loss of hope due to spousal mental illness. Lydia’s and Theresa’s stories reflected data common to women who obtain a divorce because of betrayal: their husbands both had extramarital affairs. Divorce was not their choice, and in fact, each of their roles as a spouse was replaced prior to the marriage ending. Cathy’s story was included in this category because it spoke of the loss of common aspirations as a result of her husband’s mental health problems. For Cathy, this loss led to a sense of betrayal.

Lydia’s story: My kids are my life

Lydia’s story was about an unexpected life transition to divorce. She was in her late 20s, happily married, and did not suspect problems in her marriage. She had married her high school sweetheart and only boyfriend. They were married for 6 years but had been together for 14 years when her husband asked for a divorce. He was involved with another woman. At the time of the interview, Lydia was separated for 1 year and obtained a divorce 5 months later. The parents had joint custody of their 3 children who were then 5, 3, and 2-years-old. The children’s primary residence was Lydia’s home. Lydia was not employed outside of the home.

Maintaining consistency, predictability, and stability for the children was a central theme in Lydia’s story. Resilience for Lydia was defined as “surviving” divorce. Determination, planning skills, and hard work were necessary to ensure this survival. The children’s needs were pivotal in all decisions made during divorce.

A secondary theme was the importance of separating adult pain and confusion from the children's needs to have a relationship with their father. The importance of co-parenting was important to the children's adjustment. It was also vitally important that the mother achieve economic independence. Lydia was a university student at the time of the interview.

Lydia's story reflected normative difficulties in managing the day-to-day demands of parenting 3 young children. Supports that were most beneficial were functional supports from both families consisting of childcare, meal preparation, and transportation of the children to activities.

Stability and consistency for the children

Lydia's children provided the incentive for her to rebuild a life for herself and her children. The children were told about divorce in a developmentally appropriate manner and were reassured that they still had a father whom they would see, but this did not eliminate their separation anxiety or developmental regression. It was fundamental for the parents to act in a manner that minimized disruptions in the children's lives, which meant finding ways to facilitate the father's relationship with the children. Maintaining stability for the children meant they stayed in activities and their routine remained consistent. Lydia's definition of family resilience involved:

Making very conscious decisions, even though they are not easy, that are best for the kids...It's not easy keeping them in everything and it's not affordable...For the kids' birthdays I ask for money so I can put them in swimming, stuff like that.

Providing stability for the children was demanding: It required determination, hard work, and good planning skills as well as discernment to know what decisions would cause harm.

I'm a very determined person and I think I'm a relatively smart person ... I'm not perfect, but I'm smart enough to distinguish what is really going to be harmful and what, I think, is going to be helpful.... I focus on my kids. I love my kids. I don't ignore them...I'm not a selfish person.... They don't have to know every little detail about the divorce, but they need to know... This is the way it happened. It probably wasn't a good idea for daddy to do that, but he's still your dad. He loves you more than anything. You love him.

Lydia was shocked by her husband's request for a divorce. There was no marital conflict and Lydia did not recognize signs of her husband's infidelity until after the separation. However, she was able to separate adult problems from her children's needs by child-centred decisions about how the divorce transition would occur. She ensured their environment did not change by keeping her house, she ensured they stayed in regular activities, and she ensured they spent time with their father.

In this story, the parents believed in traditional roles regarding family, in that Lydia was the primary caregiver. They both held Christian beliefs and their values were similar: that is, that stability and consistency for the children were pivotal. These similar values led to similar ideas on how to proceed in the divorce transition.

Importance of parental cooperation

This was a story of replacement as a wife, but not as a parent. Helping her former husband learn parenting skills restored Lydia's sense of power and self-esteem. This role provided a legitimate reason to maintain a relationship with him, which eased the transition to divorce for both parents. Lydia did not use his lack of experience and knowledge as a reason to limit his parenting. There was trust as parents and the concept of family did not disappear. Lydia's identity as a mother showed an unwavering commitment to her children, which included ensuring they spent time with their father.

Lydia facilitated parenting time with the father. Because the father initially had no residence, he spent time with the children at her home where they had stability and security. He also spent time with them at his parents' residence. The father eventually moved in with his girlfriend and her 3 year-old child at the home of her parents. Moves and a new relationship created additional adjustment difficulties for the children in the short term, but the long-term goal was to ensure they had stability and the security of a relationship with both parents. Lydia supported and encouraged the children to develop a positive attachment to their father. She supported him in his parenting.

The first weekend that he [took] was taking them... he phoned me and said, "I can't do this. Can I bring them home?".... Then the following weekend ... they got through the night, but they didn't get through even 24 hours with him... He was trying to sleep all three kids at [his girlfriend's] parents' house. ... I would still let him come here and then I would go out so that the kids would still have their stability here and they would still have their dad...He would take them to his parents' house, which is only a few blocks away or the park, but it wasn't

consistent and I wanted consistency. That was my big thing with the kids, consistency and stability.

Lydia prepared the children for parenting time with their father so that it was seen as a positive thing and something to look forward to.

“Daddy loves you. Daddy wants to see [you]. He misses you. He used to be here all the time. Now he doesn’t get to see you.” So I would...pump him up as much as I could, but they just did not want to leave me. And now when he gets here, you know, it’s, “Oh, daddy’s here.” [They] get in the van and they are gone.... He is a good dad. He really is and I kept telling him that, too.... It’s not him I had the issue with. It was her [the girlfriend]. There were a few times that he ...completely forgot to feed them... It wasn’t...days or anything, but they are little. They eat all the time. I am a very scheduled person...and just because he didn’t do it the way I do it doesn’t mean it was wrong. And I told him that, too.

In this story, Lydia ensured her children saw parental cooperation.

Never criticizing the other parent

Lydia defined her relationship with her former spouse as “friends.” There was trust between the parents in their role as parents and concern that the children would not hear confusing messages from either of them.

After the first month, after Tom¹² left, we still did things, Tom and I and the kids. We would go to the park, and Tom and I would sit there and talk and the kids would play...It wasn’t anything major...It gave him time to see them, but so that

¹² Tom is a pseudonym for her husband and the children’s father.

they could see, too, that we don't hate each other. I think that that was very important. They never hear me say anything bad about him or his parenting

The parents' communication provided an avenue to discuss and resolve problems when Lydia's former husband's girlfriend made critical statements to the children about Lydia.

I phoned Tom after the kids went to bed and I said, "I didn't appreciate that, not for my own feelings, but she said something about me to my daughter in front of me." You don't do that, and that's when I suggested she take this parent education program because they tell you right in there, "Don't do that.".... I know Tom never says anything bad about me. I think the kids need to know that the parents still get along... We're still involved and that helps... They know we talk all the time and we get along really well. We don't fight. We never did fight... We'll discuss something with them.

The parents were vigilant in respecting each other's roles as parents by never criticizing each other in front of the children. Information from a seminar on parent education for separation and divorce was utilized and implemented by the parents as a joint decision and as part of their Christian values honouring family. Lydia attended this program twice, once for her divorce and again a few months later when she went with a friend. Lydia's story described how joint decisions were made with the children.

Both parents being involved in decision making for children

Everything is talked about in advance so that they know what is coming up...even if it's 3 days away. They don't have a lot of concept of time...but I like them to

know.... But they still don't want to go.... I don't totally know how much of that is truth and how much of that is what does mommy want to hear.... They are smart kids and even though I have never said to them I didn't like [name of his girlfriend]...They are smart kids and I think a lot of times they put on an act for me because when they get to [their dad's] they are perfectly fine.... I try now to give them a little more say and a little more responsibility... Mary¹³ knows that if she has a birthday party on daddy's weekend... I will phone him and ...we will talk to him, the two of us together.

Lydia knew that her children might say things to please her and not because they actually meant it, but it was not a reason to restrict the father's parenting time. According to research, fathers stay involved with their children if they are involved in decision making, pay child support, and parental conflict is low (Braver, Wolchick, Sandler, Fogas & Bray, 1993; Seltzer, 1991). In this story, all three elements existed. However, contrary to research, data from this story presents another side to the findings, stating that if fathers formed new relationships before involvement with children has stabilized, their contact with the children decreased (Juby, Le Bourdais & Marcil- Gratton, 2005b). In this story, contact was maintained regardless of his relationship status. However, it was not based on longitudinal findings as in the research previously cited. This story shows the father maintained involvement primarily because of the mother's attitude towards the father (Pleck, 1997) and her values about family. Joint problem solving was a means of demonstrating respect for the father's role.

¹³ Mary is the pseudonym for the oldest child, who was 6 years of age at the time of the interview and 5 years old at the time of the separation.

Understanding divorce based on the children's perspective

Difficulty in explaining parental separation is compounded when children are young and do not have the cognitive skills to understand. In Lydia's story, the children's fear of losing their father was a normal reaction at this developmental stage. Therefore, Lydia reassured them of his love to facilitate a relationship with and attachment to their father. This story again illustrated the ability to separate adult problems from children's developmental needs and promote a sense of family for the sake of the children. This theme was interspersed throughout Lydia's narrative.

I said "Daddy doesn't love mommy anymore. He likes her. We're still friends, but he just doesn't love me anymore," and, it's, of course, "Well, then he doesn't love me either." "Yes, he does." So that was our biggest argument.... Tom and I communicate a lot...about what's going on or what went on or what decisions should be made...so I know what goes on at his house and...I ask him, "Were the kids fine?" and he said, "They call for you at night. 'I want mommy. I want mommy.'" But it was way worse before... it will just become normal for them, especially young kids, because my kids – they'll probably never remember Tom and I together.... All they will know is, "My parents were together and then they were divorced and...they live in separate houses" but they will never actually remember us together.

Understanding how the children interpret divorce in the short term and long term was based on understanding her children's developmental stages. This knowledge was utilized as part of her decision making during the divorce transition. In the early stages of separation, the children did not want to leave their mother. Lydia knew this reaction was

normal for the ages of her children, especially in context of change within the family. Children's normal developmental reactions did not restrict access. In fact, she monitored her reaction so that she would not to add to her children's separation anxiety. She separated adult issues from her parenting. As stated earlier, the concept of family did not disappear in Lydia's story. It was redefined as having two homes.

Importance of economic independence for mothers

Even in cooperative divorces, economic security for mothers is important for family resilience. Returning to university for Lydia was portrayed as a means to an end, not a source of finding an identity as was illustrated in Chelsea's story. Returning to university was a decision based on achieving financial stability for Lydia so that she could financially support her children. An economically viable career was fundamental in achieving long-term stability for her.

I'm only taking three classes...I wanted to start in September after Tom left, but I didn't want to be away from the kids. I didn't think it was good for them and with Mary starting kindergarten I thought that's going to be a hard enough experience for her...I don't want to add to it. So I waited until January to go back to school. That gave them an extra 4 months of just mommy with no other distractions... I try to go to school when Mary is in school so that I'm home by the time the bus drops her off. I maximize my time [with the children]. ... It's not always quality time... I have homework or work... And I have support... that's good. As a parent, I'll phone my mom. ... I wanted to go back to school ... One reason for going back to school was I am now the sole provider of this house. Yes, I get

child support, but it doesn't even cover the mortgage. So I need to support my children. I need to make enough money to be able to support my children for the rest of my life. I'm going to need to go back to school in order to make more money.

Lydia needed to deliberately manage the changes associated with divorce with normative transitions in order to maintain stability. The transition of divorce, children starting school, and returning to school for Lydia were three major transitions that occurred simultaneously in context of meeting the normative demands of day-to-day functioning.

Supports were primarily functional supports from Lydia's mother allowing Lydia to manage her children's activities and routines while returning to university. Her sister provided support as well as advice on parenting. Childcare was provided by her former husband's sister, which increased the children's sense of stability, as both sides of the family were involved with them post-divorce. Lydia maintained involvement with her former husband's parents. She consulted with them regarding the financial settlement to ensure it was fair to both. Family support helped maintain stability and consistency for the children and parents during divorce.

Resolving legal matters to achieve stability

Legal matters were seen as a benchmark in the divorce process and were handled pragmatically and quickly after separation. It was important for the agreement to be finalized because that allowed both parents to reconstruct their lives as quickly as possible, providing some certainty in their lives and contributing to more stability for the children.

One of the things [that helped] was that we went to a lawyer quite quickly and started getting the separation papers done because emotionally that got everything finished and wrapped up and then I could move on.... I did everything I could to keep my house... I had to pay Tom a lot of money, but it was worth it and I had to get a bigger mortgage and I mean you have to sacrifice things and I really did get a good deal on the whole divorce thing.... My big thing was to have the kids' lives change as very little as possible.... I applied for it in November and it had only been 5 months really since we separated [when] I applied for the divorce... I finally decided even if he came crawling back - forget it. I have to move on.... I am a relatively religious girl...I'm a Christian. I believe in marriage and staying with that person... so in order for me to be okay with dating someone again or the prospect of dating again...[the divorce needed to be finalized].

Completion of legal arrangements was a symbol of closure. It was means of letting go and gave Lydia permission to move on. The legal aspect provided concrete evidence that her marriage was over and allowed her to accept that fact.

Despite providing as much stability as possible, Lydia had concerns about the impact of the stigma of divorce and feared that her children would be labelled. Her resolution was to focus on parenting and managing the day-to-day difficulties of being a single parent to provide on going stability for her children.

Cathy's story: I am a mother: I will not fail!

Cathy was the oldest participant at 45 years of age and was married for 17 years prior to her separation. She was separated for 4 years at the time of the interview and her

children were a daughter who was 16 years of age, a son 14 years of age and a daughter 11 years of age. They were in elementary school at the time of the separation. Cathy moved to Canada from California because of marriage. She was a landed immigrant and had joint custody of the children. The parents had joint custody and the children lived with Cathy but saw their father on a consistent basis, but seldom overnight. Reasons for divorce were due to on-going parental conflict stemming from her former husband's mental health problems related to depression.

The central theme in Cathy's story was the importance of good parenting as a protective mechanism for the children to mitigate the effect of her husband's instability. Other themes were facing problems directly, the need for compromise, setting clear boundaries, self-care, and social support in supporting the parental role.

Cathy lived in a small town that was described as safe, where she felt accepted. She was given flexible work when she needed it the most. Because it was a small rural community, people knew and understood her dilemma of trying to raise children and work without childcare. Therefore, she was offered work based on her children's schedule. Living in a small town provided additional coherence to her story, because "everybody knew." It was a story spoken with determination and pride in her children.

Face problems directly

Cathy's life story was presented as consisting of multiple challenges stemming from a childhood where she witnessed alcoholism and domestic violence. Her mother was killed by a drunk driver; she had a complicated relationship with a brother whom she tried to protect; a string of abusive boyfriends that she met in the "riding" industry; and a

marriage that was described as a disappointment. She faced continuing adversity while going through the process of divorce because of back surgery and pneumonia rendering her unable to work for 6 months after her separation.

In dealing with her life's challenges, Cathy's story reflected the need for coping strategies such as perseverance, time for solitude, and commitment to being a good parent as a means to build family resilience. Problems were faced directly by "taking ownership of what has happened in your life" and honestly portrayed to her children in a manner that fostered understanding without compromising her parental role.

I get that the world doesn't hand you things nicely, but I've had a way harder life, like I was abused; I was raped; I was beaten...And you have to take ownership of what's happened, not that it was right or wrong what people did to me, but you have to say, "Look, I can either wallow in self-pity or I have to rise above it." So I chose to rise above it. [As compared to her spouse] He sort of stayed in the self-pity thing and I don't mean that in a bad way, just it was his choice.

When under significant pressure, Cathy utilized meditation, tried to find pleasure in everyday things, and took time to do things for herself. Her diverse support system of friends was also critically important. Despite the problems, a common thread running throughout this story was, "I will not fail at being a great parent."

Compromises are needed, but not when it comes to children

Cathy's stories of compromise start with her marriage. She married a "nice guy" but did not love him. She compromised and had children when she did not want any. She compromised when she used Collaborative Law to avoid a protracted court battle that

could harm the children, yet felt she could have done better financially via the courts. She compromised when she chose the timing of the separation and continued to compromise post-divorce in picking her battles with her former husband. They decided to divorce but selected a separation date 3 years in the future because of the ages of the children. She stayed in the same house as her husband, so the children would be in school and she could work after separation.

Story of compromise and marriage

He was a nice guy and for me that was a change, like I have had some really tough guys... I don't know that I was really in love, but it was more of a comfort love... I regret having ever getting married, other than the fact that I have children.... I'm.... on my own raising my kids is tough; [it] is tough because I have to do what's best for them. I have to do what's best to develop a relationship for them. I have to live in an area [that is best for them] – I love this area, but I mean this is not best for my business. I gave up my life...

Compromise in having children

I actually didn't want to have kids because my dad was really abusive so I wasn't sure what kind of parent I was going to be.... He wanted four to six and I compromised saying I would have one or two and I had three so that was a good compromise.

Compromise on the timing of the separation

I wanted to wait as long as I could ...the kids would be older... People say, “Do you regret waiting?” and I think, “Not really.” I regret it because of the fact that the longer I waited the less finances that were available for the divorce settlement... Samantha¹⁴ was in Grade 1...Mark¹⁵ was old enough that he sort of understood and Jessie¹⁶ was 12 so she could help out...if I needed to go to work...She could at least be here to watch her siblings for a couple of hours and that was huge to me... I couldn’t afford to go out to work and pay for daycare. ... Cathy’s financial limitations meant planning the divorce carefully so she could be financially independent after divorce. Financial security was a pressing concern because her work was seasonal and required long hours. She could not afford childcare.

Compromise and Collaborative Law

We went through Collaborative Law – that was his choice because he didn’t want to go to court... I didn’t want my kids to go through any of that system either, because they were still pretty young. It worked out okay.... I still feel that I didn’t get what I should have gotten for our marriage for 20 some years.

The process of Collaborative Law enabled the children to maintain a relationship with their father, yet the financial settlement was compromised. The children’s needs came before financial interests even though both were important. However, there were benefits to Collaborative Law.

¹⁴ Samantha is a pseudonym for her youngest child.

¹⁵ Mark is the pseudonym for her second child. He was 9 at the time of divorce and 14 at the time of the interview. He is the only boy in the family of three children.

¹⁶ Jessie is the pseudonym for her eldest daughter. She was 12 when they separated and 16 at the time of the interview.

I also appreciated the fact that it educated me on how to deal with Gary¹⁷ because I told you I shut down, right. So [my lawyer] was really good and they educate you on how to speak... You take a different way going into the conversation and it's not manipulative, but it does work. I will say that, because I have been able to grow the relationship with Gary and the children by saying, "I feel that you haven't been a parent and I feel that it's your loss because I feel that they are great kids. ... I feel that time is slipping away from you so I feel like that's your choice." So for me to be able to say those things to him is huge.

The benefits of Collaborative Law were learning assertiveness and learning how to communicate with her former husband. The compromise was a retrospective account on how she wished she would have "fought harder."

Unlike popular discourse of custody battles in divorce, Cathy's story was about the father's lack of involvement in their children's lives. His lack of involvement compromised her work hours and therefore, her financial security. Helping the father learn parenting skills was a role Cathy undertook to enable the children to have an ongoing relationship with their father. In contrast to the theme of compromise, family resilience was defined as survival and a commitment "not to settle and when it comes to my kids, I will not settle." Cathy's story stressed the importance of carefully picking concerns she wished to raise with her former husband. Parenting skills and commitment to children were vital components of family resilience leading to the title, "I am a mother, I will not fail."

¹⁷ Gary is the pseudonym for her husband.

Setting clear boundaries is critical to cooperation

Cathy developed skills to set clear boundaries between parental homes and to assert her opinions in a manner that would not provoke argument. These skills were learned during the Collaborative Law process and were a clear benefit to her in post-divorce life. In the following story, the children provided the motivation to set clear personal boundaries and ensure safety.

I think maybe if I was to gain anything from [divorce] it is that you shouldn't settle in life. That was probably the biggest thing because I settled to marry Gary because the guys that I was with before were gamblers or abusive.... and that's what my dad was, an alcoholic.... I thought I would settle with a nice guy and then after the divorce, [there] was a nice guy and then the next guy – "Okay, this guy has got money." You're always settling for what you think is best.... With my kids I've never settled. I always do what's best for them...no matter how it affects me. I do what's best for them.

Cathy's theme of "not settling" is based on the central and unifying theme of this narrative that of putting her children's needs first. From divorce she learned how to set limits and boundaries with her former husband and others.

I'm starting to tell them, "No." Last year I did hockey for my son and the year before I did hockey for my daughter... This year I said, "No! I'm going to watch my own children."... Before I was really easily swayed because of the guilt...

The only thing that I really can get from this is not to settle.

Personal qualities of perseverance, determination, and the ability to ask for help were important in resilience and in learning to "not settle."

I can survive... That is huge for a woman because it's really tough for us to be able to ask people for favours... I do not like asking anybody for anything. I would rather go out and lift up 15 cement blocks and be crippled for 3 days than ask somebody to help me with them... I've learned to ask for help, which I didn't do - wouldn't [do] before.

Self-care and importance of social support for good parenting

The need for self-care for parents was stressed: "Without you there is no core; you are the centre of this, and you have to be able to hold yourself together." Coping strategies consisted of reading daily affirmations that helped her focus on finding pleasure in day-to-day life. Writing in her journal helped resolve her feelings. These strategies led to personal growth and helped her find strength within so that she could be a good parent. This story spoke about the quality of perseverance. Taking time for self-care was justifiable because it allowed her to be a better parent. Cathy's story also stressed the need for social support.

Similar to Cindy's story, Cathy found a mentor who had gone through a divorce and used this woman as a sounding board. Cathy valued lived experience and practical help over therapy, although she had obtained counselling. The social support from her mentor was helpful because she was able to get advice from a woman who had overcome problems of divorce in a manner that allowed her children to prosper and the mother to do well economically. Advice from her mentor gave Cathy insight as to consequences of choices and helped her to avoid pitfalls. This was the most beneficial help that Cathy obtained and is reflected in the following story:

My girlfriend, she is 62 years old.... I think of her as a mentor because if I go to her and I ask her opinion, she doesn't sugar coat it at all... She has her own home, and her boys are good, and her life is okay.... She's a great lady...I wouldn't really talk to anybody else about everything, except for her... She showed me how her road was travelled.

A mentor was someone who knew Cathy's entire story of divorce and this was important in providing a sense of coherence to her story. Other forms of social support were important for different reasons, such as for socialization or for discussion about everyday parenting issues.

Good parenting is family resilience

Cathy's story concluded with strong statements about the importance of "not settling" in ways where children's needs are compromised and in relationships. In Cathy's story, good parenting is synonymous with mothering. The father was portrayed as being uninvolved and authoritarian. Her identity was based on being a mother and was paramount in her definition of resilience: "I'm a mom, that's my living. As far as what I do to try to make income is I'm a horse coach". Being available to her children was considered the most important decision prior to and after divorce even though this decision financially disadvantaged her. Being available as a parent was an important construct in her definition of family resilience and parenting.

The most important decision that I made was to be home as much as possible.

I think a lot of women, tend to say, "Okay, I've got to go out and make a living and leave the kids behind." ... I think that you have got to be there for your

kids... I live in a nice house and I drive a nice truck but still... I think probably my best decision, and I continue to stand by this, is the fact that I stay home because I know what a difference it makes. I have so many people that think I am a wonderful mom... They [say], "Look at the job you are doing. And " How do you manage to budget?" and "How do you do all this stuff?" ... It's tough, but it's important, and to me the number one thing to do is to be there for them.

Cathy took pride in her role as a mother and defined herself as "a great parent." She wanted to ensure that her children were "strong, comfortable human beings to go into the world." Values such as hard work were part of family resilience and all the children were expected to contribute to household chores. As a parent with teenagers, she felt that she had excellent parental control and an open, honest relationship with her children based on respect. Being authoritative, yet open with teenagers was important for her to understand the motives for their behaviour and to have empathy with them. Cathy understood her children's needs. This was contrasted with her husband whom she felt was not involved enough to understand and would become authoritative when they expressed their individuality. She strongly felt that it was crucial for her children to have a parent who was there for them.

I'm here almost everyday for my kids for lunch. ... They love that.... People come to me, [and say] "How do you make your kids do chores?" (stated in a mocking voice). I'm like, "What are you talking about? (As if in shock or surprise) They live in this house! ... I talk to them! They are good kids and I think I'm a good mom in everything I do.... I'm 50 percent their friend and 50 percent their parent...

In this story, there was much parental conflict prior to separation. When Cathy decided to move out it was with careful planning after financial aspects were resolved. The children benefited from separation because it brought reprieve from parental conflict. However, to protect the children from conflict, Cathy set boundaries with her former husband.

There were times when he came to my front door and he pushed his way in and I had to push him out.... You gotta keep it safe for the kids...They were crying and those were not good scenes.

The importance of good parenting was reflected throughout this narrative: in stories about the reasons for separation; the importance of clear boundaries between homes; the facilitation of a co-parenting relationship by helping the father learn parenting skills; the utilization of coping strategies; the need for self-care for parents; social support; and positive role modelling.

Theresa's story: Getting the answers I needed

The final participant was a woman who was 33 years old and was separated for 1 year at the time of the interview. Theresa was a professional engineer and worked full time. She was married for 8 years and her 2 children who were 5 and 2 years of age at the time of the separation. The parents had joint custody of their children but Theresa's home was the children's primary residence. The father had the children 30% of the time consisting of partial weekends and weekdays. The parenting plan was flexible in that if she travelled with work, the children would be with their father.

Theresa heard of this study from information she received from the courthouse. In this story, divorce came as an unexpected life change when the woman with whom her

husband was having a relationship contacted Theresa. In the end, Theresa asked him to leave because he did not want to end this relationship. Theresa, like Lydia, was in shock.

Theresa spoke in a clear and organized fashion. Consistent with her manner, the central themes contributing to resilience were research, active problem solving, empathy, and cooperative co-parenting.

Research to find answers

In Theresa's story, a big part of family resilience was "finding out what I needed to know." Theresa deliberately researched divorce and sought out answers to questions pertaining to understanding how the children might be affected; how to tell the children; reasons for infidelity; how to reconstruct your life after divorce; and most importantly, how to reduce harm for the children. She read books; obtained counselling; talked to family; talked to a co-worker who was a lawyer as well as part of another professional occupation; talked to her lawyer; went to workshops sponsored by Saskatchewan Justice; and researched government websites on divorce. The most important decisions she made were to do research so that she could prevent further harm to their children.

[I was] getting the answers I needed... either by buying books or talking to a counsellor or talking to my lawyer.... a co-worker of mine - he's an engineer and a lawyer. He was really good in giving me perspective by saying, "Okay, Andy¹⁸ is the one who has lost all his dignity. Now don't you go and do that by doing nasty things with your divorce and trying to be unreasonable; you don't want to go to court so just take your lawyer's advice." ... That was really good ...because

¹⁸ Andy is the pseudonym for her husband.

I'm sure I would have really sunk to some really low levels in trying to get back at Andy.

Divorce came as an unwanted life transition in this story. When Theresa's husband moved out, she needed to decide how she was going to construct her life in the face of the unanticipated crisis of divorce. Divorce required a reconstruction of her identity and life plans, including how she would manage on a day-to-day basis.

I just knew that I just had to take some action (stressed by the speaker). I wasn't going to lock myself up in the house and cry for a few months. I just went out there and took action.

Theresa's personal tenacity led her to search until she found the answers so that she could handle her divorce in the most constructive manner possible. Throughout this narrative, active problem solving was an important part of Theresa's identity.

Refusal to be defeated by divorce

I read about women whose husbands cheat on them and they get a divorce and all their life plans go down the toilet and that person is definitely not me, *but it was me...* That was very hard to realize and come to terms with. I went to see a counsellor about that and I have two sisters and a brother and lots of aunts and uncles and my mom and just so many people that I could talk to so I was talking to people all the time...They are just so realistic and ... they just totally bring me back down to earth.

During the initial crisis of divorce she reached out to people. The most useful form of support was functional support. It came from her mother who provided childcare

and made meals when she was preoccupied and in shock. The importance of being able to function as a parent was critical and necessary to provide stability for children.

Family support was useful because family members validated her feelings, provided emotional support, and helped Theresa develop a realistic understanding about divorce. Family support was the means by which Theresa felt she achieved resilience to cope. As she started to accept the circumstances, Theresa started to help her children adjust. Once again she found the answers through research.

Utilizing advice to help children adjust

Parenting advice came from books when Theresa needed to know how to explain divorce to preschool children and from her lawyer to decide about legal custody. Research involved obtaining and utilizing constructive feedback from her lawyer, her counsellor, and from reading. Theresa utilized information she acquired in making decisions for the children. Joint custody was a decision based upon her research about what was in the children's best interests and becomes a secondary theme of cooperative parenting in this narrative.

I got informed and she [her lawyer] basically told me that the only way the court grants sole custody is if one of the parents is a physical threat, an actual threat to the kids. ... It was just better for the kids [to have both parents in their lives].

Research to achieve stability

Theresa learned that young children worry that the parent who stays may leave them. Therefore, to increase her understanding on how to help children, she did research

on child development and again utilized this information to provide consistent routines, stability, and ongoing reassurance. She did not want the children to fear abandonment, but at the same time did not want to provide false reassurance of reconciliation. Bedtime stories on the same theme were a means to help them adjust to changes in the family yet maintain stability.

I found out how it affects kids by buying a few books... They are written for you to read to your kids, but they have little tidbits of advice for parents included in the same book... that you don't read aloud to your kids, but you read them yourself. I found out that kids always think it's their fault that their parents broke up and they secretly wish their parents would get back together, and that they need stability so they feel insecure. "Well, if daddy could leave then mommy could also move out of the house kind of thing".... I read these books to them, like probably once every week or every 2 weeks at the start and now about once a month. I'll remind them ... "It's not your fault. It's a grown-up problem between mommy and daddy. We really wish we could stay together, but we just can't live together anymore, but we both really still love you. We won't be moving back in together and we'll both take very good care of you and mommy is not going to move out of the house"... That's the same thing I say every time, just to remind them. So there's that ritual that is done everyday ... plus, about once a month I remind them about it not being their fault.

Everyday routines were described as conducive in providing stability and predictability for the children. "The little day-to-day things because they matter a lot...

talking to each other on the phone and keeping in touch ... probably the bedtime ritual routine is one of the really good predictable things in their lives.”

Empathy is needed for co-parenting

Throughout Theresa’s story she demonstrated the importance of openness in utilizing advice whether it came from books, lawyers, or from trusted friends. Decisions on how to tell her children were based on researching children’s needs, researching family dynamics during separation, and feeling empathy for her children. Empathy was most apparent in the way this story was told. Empathy for the children included her ability to regain parental control based on children’s needs.

I am able to put myself in their frame of mind or in their minds and know what they’ll think is fun or kind of know how to explain things to them so that they’ll understand...I’ve got a good empathy.... I learned that after we separated was that I was always giving the kids warnings.... until I was totally exasperated and blue in the face and then all of a sudden I thought, “I can’t do that anymore.” So it’s one warning and the next time, *that’s it*, like they were kind of controlling and running the scene and ... it was driving me insane so I decided that I needed to be the one in control.

Empathy for the children also allowed her to cooperate with her husband in parenting despite disagreement about their marriage. It allowed the parents to separate parental problems from parenting. Another aspect that led to the parents’ ability to cooperate was Theresa’s concentrated effort not to lose her integrity, which provided an

underlying premise for their cooperation. In effect, her personal identity was central in promoting family resilience.

The most important advice I got was that no matter what's happened to me I can't lose my integrity and I still have to treat Andy with dignity and respect. That's a value that's went a million miles in making everything kind of go as smoothly as possible – like when we were dealing with the separation and divorce and dealing with the kids... I am able to put myself in other people's shoes quite easily and see things from their side.

Maturity and insight prevented further harm. Part of the cooperative co-parenting arrangement was based on Theresa's identity and her ability to treat the father with respect and dignity. She separated her opinion of his conduct from his role as a parent. Theresa's empathy for her children allowed her to make choices based on the children's needs rather than on her feelings of anger towards the father.

I try to imagine what they are going through by imagining if my dad had moved out of the house when I was little and ... what I could do to make it as easy for them as possible.

Father's role in helping children adjust

Theresa enabled and encouraged regular contact between the children and their father. The fact that their father moved out was a difficult adjustment for the children, especially for their 5-year-old son who regressed. Her son's regression did not stop with the ongoing reassurance of frequent parenting time with his father, but it did stop immediately when her husband purchased a house and the parents established a regular

parenting schedule that consisted of overnight access with the father. Once the non-resident father had his own home, stability was immediately provided for the children who were interpreted divorce as having two homes rather than as the loss of a parent. Overnight parenting time allowed for a predictable routine of caregiving and nurturance with their father. These factors constituted consistency and stability, which helped the children adjust.

Richard says he thinks it cool that he has two houses ... But before Andy got his house...he was only picking them up for a couple of hours every other day and on the weekends he might have them for about 5 hours straight, but it was *not* nearly enough time with him. They really missed him... for those 3 months. [Richard] He was totally soaking the sheets... and then when Andy got his place and we introduced them to their other house, it stopped... It was within like 2 days of Andy getting his house they spent their first sleepover at daddy's house; they just came right back around, right back right away to what it was before.

Based on research, it was found that children benefit from parenting time but that time alone is not a measure of benefit, rather it was the provision of ongoing care and nurturance to the children that was a better predictor of how children benefit (Amato & Gilbert, 1999; Cashmore, Parkinson & Taylor, 2008; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). In this story, quality parenting time at a consistent location called home were factors that assisted in the children feeling stabile and secure.

Boundaries to co-parent

In this narrative, both parents shared in the day-to-day care of the children during the school week and for part of the weekend. While it was clear that the mother assumed the primary residence, many of the decisions for the children were joint decisions made by both parents.

Andy and I both recognize and agree that we just have to put our own petty egos or whatever aside and just do what's best for the kids...We both went to that course by Saskatchewan Justice, Parenting for Separating Parents.... Any decisions that we make...we're not going to ask the kids like, "Do you want to stay at daddy's house tonight?"... We don't even do that because then *they feel like they have to choose between us* ...so we make those decisions... We don't talk about it in front of them either. It's over the phone and they are not around when we are speaking...

Both parents made conscious decisions to separate their problems from the children's needs. They were open to advice and ensured the children had quality parenting time without feeling tension due to parental conflict. They were sensitive to their children's developmental needs and were very conscientious in their decisions not put the children in situations where they felt they had to choose between parents. They utilized knowledge from material they learned in books and workshops on separation and divorce. In addition, Theresa ensured there were clear boundaries between parenting and her personal life.

Right now we are very cooperative parents. We talk freely and openly about the kids, even things like, "Well, Jaime just won't wear anything but white shirts

anymore. What do you do about that?"... But that's about it...I don't want him knowing anything about what's going on with me personally. We still disagree on the things that were wrong in our marriage... The only time we see each other is when he's picking them up from here or I'm picking them up from his house, and it's just ... hi and good-bye and [we] exchange information about where they are going for the babysitter this week, what day they are going to my mom's and --so it's co-operative.

The ability to cooperate was demonstrated by Theresa not controlling the father's parenting. Even though she had concerns about her husband's parenting, she did not use this as a reason to reduce his parenting role. For example, she knew the father was not firm with the children and when they did not listen he would lose his temper. The fact that he was not a perfect parent was not confused with her issues regarding his infidelity and did not translate into preventing or restricting his parenting time with the children. Like other mothers (Lydia and Cathy) in this study, Theresa assisted him with his parenting by lending him reading material on parenting during divorce, which he accepted.

He just lets them go so far ...then all of a sudden he'll just snap and get really mad and lose his temper, but he shouldn't have let it get that way in the first place.... He doesn't realize that when the kids aren't listening to him it's not something personal against him. It's like they're – they hate him or something, ... and he did ask me for that that [parenting] book.

Theresa did not approve of her husband's extramarital relationships and spoke openly about wanting to prevent their children from meeting or being involved with this woman.

From her research she realized that she could not control his parenting or who he was around when he had the children. Theresa knew she needed to accept this fact.

Acceptance of things she could not control facilitated cooperative parenting.

I told Andy that I don't want her around *the kids at all!* Even though I know I can't control who he has around the kids and there is nothing that the court is going to do ... unless that person is abusive to the kids.... he said he is just going to move on with his life and there is nothing I can do.

Once again, research and educating herself on the aspects of the law was the means by which Theresa was able to understand limitations on her control. However, her life story provided the context for this realization. Her dad died when she was 22 years of age and her family cared for him prior to death. This experience taught her that in life people do not have total control over their own destinies. It also showed her how strong she and her family were. Therefore, while going through divorce, she knew she was capable of dealing with adversity and accepting things with which she did not agree or of which she did not approve.

When I was 22 my dad died of cancer and we took care of him at home for that year, from when he was diagnosed to when he died. That was a major life event for me where I learned how strong I was and my family was.

When she was confronted with divorce, Theresa knew she had strength to get through it and knew she needed to actively problem solve so as to maintain stability for her children. Coping with past adversity taught her how to cope with divorce.

Need for positive role models and getting past self-blame

Acceptance of her lack of control was also important in understanding reasons for her husband's infidelity and ultimately in defining resilience. In Theresa's story, the stigma of pathology often associated with divorce in research was addressed. She needed to make sense of her divorce and wanted positive role models. Sentiments of self-blame were evident as she sought to understand how she contributed to problems and to understand his reasons for infidelity.

I thought ...there was something wrong with me ...For some reason nothing was making me happy anymore and I didn't know what I wanted out of life. A great thing was that once I found out I realized there is nothing wrong with me ... It wasn't me [that caused his affairs]. ...I was just elated. It was like a total realization for me.... It was something that was out of my control.

Reassurance came from her family doctor who told her she was not responsible for her husband's choice to have affairs. It was important to be reassured by someone who was in a position of trust. There is a parallel between Cindy's and Theresa's stories, in that both started to not take responsibility for their husband's infidelity as a result of reassurance from their family doctors. In Cindy's story, relief that she was not responsible for her husband's affairs produced a similar sentiment leading to the realization that she could forgive him.

He said he gets a female patient in about once a week with the same thing that happened to me and ...[he] told me over and over again that it's not my fault. He said no matter what. ... He said, "It's not your fault. It's not your fault. It's not your fault."

Redefining divorce facilitated resilience

To be able to constructively cope, Theresa redefined divorce as “normal.” Positive examples of divorce provided positive norms on how to label and manage divorce. Reading about positive examples gave her hope by hearing about positive role models which helped her to reconstruct her identity. The ability to reframe divorce from a personal failure to normal was important because even though divorce is a frequent and common experience in today’s society, it is still a very personal and painful experience.

I learned this through a book that I bought and read called, *The Good Divorce*.... It made me realize that (pause) this is totally normal. It happens to all kinds of people all the time because I felt ... like I’m alone...So the best thing that I learned was probably from that book...was that it’s normal and it happens to people all the time and the majority of people that go through it they make it as good an experience as it can be because ... you hear just about the bad stories in the movies and stuff... I didn’t know that these people existed or they actually made it as good as possible for everybody and were cooperative and – so that was probably the best thing that I learned.

Theresa’s advice to social workers was to educate people about positive role models.

The social worker could let them know that it can be a positive thing and it happens to all kinds of people all the time and there is a good way of going through it and you are normal...To say that there are people out there who made it as painless as possible even though, it is terrible, but just not make it any worse... The biggest thing for me was finding out that it’s more normal than staying

married ... and realizing that there are all kinds of people out there that are going through it and doing it in a positive way.

Synthesis of findings from “Stories of Betrayal”

“Stories of Betrayal” was chosen as a category because reasons for divorce were due to spousal infidelity and betrayal of hope for a good life together. There were three stories reflecting infidelity: one was included in “Stories of Violence.” In each of these stories, the children were pre-schoolers when the marriage ended. Cindy’s children were 2 years of age and 8 months, and Lydia’s three children were all under the age of 5 years as were Theresa’s two children. Two of these participants (Theresa and Lydia) completed all legal divorce proceedings within 1 year as a means of finding closure, moving on, and restoring stability as soon as they could. Both heard of this study through information from the courthouse. Cathy’s husband’s mental illness left her in the role of a sole parent - a form of betrayal. Therefore, her story is included in this category. Cathy’s children were school age at the time of the separation.

A predominant salutogenic theme across all these narratives was good parenting. All decisions were made on the premise of benefiting the children by reducing instability. In Lydia’s story, maintaining consistency, predictability, and stability for the children was a central theme reflecting family resilience. To achieve resilience, Theresa’s story illustrated the importance of several factors: both parents being able to set aside adult issues from parenting; openness in utilizing information; establishing good parental control; and the importance of a consistent home for the non-residential father in helping the children adjust. Cathy’s story reflected the importance of good parenting throughout

the children's development; when her children were teenagers, parenting was described as being authoritative. Involving them in household work contributed to their sense of belonging thus fostering family resilience. Family resilience was based on honesty, hard work, shared values and having predictable time with their primary parent, the mother. Cathy defined family resilience as "not settling." Children's needs were paramount in decisions made in the divorce transition.

Consistently, the predictability and stability of having one parent at home was seen as the key to family resilience. None of these children alternated weeks between parental homes, even though they were in legal joint custody. All three stories spoke of the need for involvement by both parents. While the mothers in all three stories (Lydia, Theresa, and Cathy) retained primary residence as a means of providing stability for the children, they remained very committed to facilitating a relationship between the children and the non-resident parent by enabling frequent access, encouraging the children to attach with the other parent, involving them in decision making, and helping the non-residential parent acquire parenting skills. The importance of family was a value that did not disappear in divorce regardless of the hurt and pain caused by infidelity or betrayal.

Family values and resilience were related to the identity of the parent who had primary residence for the children, the mothers in this study. The mothers' values and beliefs regarding family were fundamental in ensuring the children had a relationship with their fathers; they all established a co-parenting relationship with the father. In fact, in all three narratives, the mothers not only facilitated involvement with the fathers but also helped the fathers develop parenting skills. Inept parenting by fathers was not seen as a reason to restrict or terminate access. Having a relationship with both parents was

seen as a benefit in their children's development. In addition, helping the non-residential fathers learn parenting skills was part of the process to ensure children had as much stability as possible. Because of the young ages of the children at the time of separation in Lydia's and Theresa's stories, they will never have memory of their parents living together. It will be normative for these children to have parents who reside in two separate homes, but with whom they do not spend equal time. In other words, spending equal time with each parent did not determine the quality of the relationship. It was more dependent upon the mothers' attitudes and values and the fathers' ability to provide good parenting. But as shown in Cindy's story, which represented a longitudinal view, divorce is a permanent change in family structure and has long-term implications for children. Cindy's narrative showed that while changes do occur over time, it was important for children to have stability and predictability of a primary home.

The methods used to help non-resident fathers acquire parenting skills varied. Lydia's story showed the importance of staggering access and providing direction in how children's needs were met, without the expectation that the father do things the same way. Theresa's story reflected the ability to utilize information acquired from research. She lent the father books at his request. She did not give advice. In Cathy's story, the children were all school age and she learned to communicate with her former husband in a different manner so as to encourage his involvement. This story also showed the need to set clear limits when children were hurt. At one point there was a crisis because of a violent outbreak when the father beat his teenage daughter because she did not immediately comply with a request. Cathy refused to send the children to him until he obtained counselling as a pre-requisite to having the children at his home. Through the

process of using Collaborative Law Cathy learned how to establish firm but respectful boundaries to protect her children. People in her rural community were part of safety plans so that the children were always protected and she was able to work. Ensuring the father had good parenting skills enabled her to financially support the children.

All of these stories showed the importance of personal qualities such as determination, active problem solving, attentiveness to children's needs, openness to advice, and the ability to set clear boundaries separating parenting roles from spousal roles. Separating adult problems from parenting required clear boundaries so that the parents were able to share parenting responsibilities. Clear boundaries in Lydia's and Theresa's stories were developed to ensure stability and predictability. Again, this was a deliberate decision made contingent upon their children's developmental levels. When the children were young, parents needed to communicate and share information. Therefore, clear boundaries between adult issues and children's needs, and a clear distinction about what information was relevant to the children was necessary. Communication about the children was a necessary part of co-parenting.

Clear boundaries enabled cooperative parenting and protected the children from parental conflict, which was a salutogenic benefit of divorce in Cathy's story. Relationships with former spouses were defined primarily as cooperative for the sake of the children. Only in Lydia's story was the father described as a friend. Cathy and Theresa described these relationships as cooperative but limited only to the children's needs.

All of the participants in this category utilized counselling services and information from parent education sessions, mentors, and lawyers. Openness to advice

was critical in being able to utilize information. Openness and the ability to be introspective allowed them to take responsibility for their choices. While counselling was used, it was only part of the solution. Obtaining knowledge was vital to all participants. Theresa's story showed the importance of research to find the answers she needed to make decisions that facilitated her children's development. All participants wanted clear directions on how to proceed and sought positive role models and mentors. The themes emerging from the previous stories are contained in the following table.

TABLE 4
Comparison of Themes from “Stories of Betrayal” Based on Ecological Theory

Ecological Theory	Lydia’s Story	Cathy’s Story	Theresa’s Story
Ontogenetic Personal Qualities of Parents & Children & Genetics	Understand divorce from children’s perspective -Empathy for children and being smart enough to know what will harm the children and what will not	Face problems directly Compromise in having children -Fears that because of her family of origin she would not be a good parent	Research to find answers to questions of divorce Refusal to be defeated by divorce Decision not to lose her dignity
Microsystems Day-to-day interactions & the Family	Stability and consistency for the children Importance of parental cooperation Never criticizing the other parent Both parents being involved in decision making for the children	Compromises are needed but not when it comes to the children Compromise in timing of separation -ensured children were all in school so she could work Compromise and Collaborative Law - Children’s need to have a relationship with their father over advancing her financial interests Setting clear boundaries is critical in cooperation (with the other parent) Good parenting is family resilience	Utilizing advice, information, and services to help children adjust Research to achieve stability Empathy needed for co-parenting, for the children and former spouse Importance of the father’s role in helping children adjust Clear boundaries between personal life and parenting needed to co-parent Importance of good parental control
Mesosystem Interaction between systems	Ability to utilize information from parent education seminars on separation and divorce	Importance of a mentor in decision making	Utilization of all information she found to help children adjust and to co-parent
Exosystem Other systems that impacted the family ♦ School ♦ Work ♦ Church ♦ Neighbourhoods ♦ Recreation ♦ Peer groups for children ♦ Social groups ♦ Friends	Resolving legal matters to achieve stability- Importance of both parents’ families in providing functional support and stability, recreational activities for the children, return to post-secondary education Economic well-being	Mentor Lawyer and Collaborative Law Economic well-being	Use of help from family (functional), someone to vent to, and help from co-worker Use of information from lawyer, research, and books
Macrosystem Cultural & societal beliefs, social policy	Fear of stigma of divorce and impact on children’s development		Need for positive role models Redefining divorce as “normal” facilitated adjustment

Common themes from all stories

Financial ability to support themselves and their children

Having adequate financial resources was a prerequisite to family resilience regardless of the reason for divorce. This important theme occurred across both categories of narratives. Findings from three stories, Chelsea's, Lydia's, and Cindy's, spoke specifically about returning to school to obtain their education. Obtaining a financially secure occupation was seen as the means to obtain family resilience. All other participants had established occupations at the time of divorce. Having the ability to financially support themselves and their children was absolutely critical and central in family resilience in post-divorce families. For women, the welfare reform option of working in service industries was not seen as a viable means to support children, as income from this type of employment does not allow families to live above the poverty level. Living above the poverty line was a precondition to ensure children had access to resources such as sports and recreational activities. Having an adequate income was the foundation in family resilience. All of the participants in this study who already had a secure income saw financial resources as vital to survival and long-term security.

Counselling and education

Counselling services specifically for abused women were a great benefit for all women in the "Stories of Violence," regardless of whether these services were advocacy, safety planning, practical assistance, counselling, or shelter services. However, for parents where intimate partner abuse was not an issue, counselling was a mixed theme, in that if counselling was focused on problem solving and obtaining positive norms, it was

useful. If counselling was indirect it was not seen as helpful. The lack of positive norms in divorce is absent in much of the literature; therefore, participants relied on their own personal resources to find positive ways of coping. There was a need for having prescribed methods of overcoming difficulties in divorce. In Braiden's, Cindy's, and Cathy's stories supportive counselling was helpful because it provided them with reassurance and focused on rebuilding. Educational services were of great benefit, specifically the Parent Education Sessions for Separated and Divorced Parents facilitated by Family Justice Services. This was evident in Theresa's, Lydia's, Cindy's, and Braiden's narratives. In situations of violence it was difficult to implement suggestions coming from these sessions because of the unpredictability of aggression and poor parenting of the non-residential father.

In this study, children rarely obtained counselling except in the "Stories of Violence." Children whose parents were engaged in high conflict divorce, or those who were subjected to neglect, poor supervision, alcoholism, and abuse by the non-residential parent required counselling. Counselling services were needed because of poor parenting, violence, and addictions, not because of divorce. In this study the children in Chelsea's, Braiden's, and Cathy's stories obtained counselling. Chelsea's children needed counselling because they exhibited inappropriate sexual behaviour as a result of exposure to adult pornography at their father's home, and because of poor parenting due to his substance abuse. Witnessing domestic violence emotionally disturbed them and they required special supports to understand parental violence. In Braiden's story, his son required counselling because of high conflict between the parents resulted in pressure on him to take sides. In Cathy's story, where the parents remained together for years after

they decided to divorce, the eldest daughter obtained counselling prior to their separation because of the tension and conflict in the home. After divorce, Cathy's children were relieved. For participants who divorced with preschool children, stability, consistency and predictability in parenting were the most important resources contributing to family resilience.

Legal aspects and domestic violence

The importance of competent legal advice was critical, especially in "Stories of Violence." The roles of lawyers varied from complete trust ("he's my friend") to incompetent legal representation. A common theme was to have lawyers who educated their clients about the parameters of the law and about current themes prevalent in family law. In "Stories of Violence," it was absolutely critical that social workers, lawyers, police, and child protection workers fully understood the dynamics and impact of domestic violence accusations so that the nature and implications could be assessed before refusing to take action. This was especially important in family court where judges have the power to enable safety or to enable the abuse of children if in their orders they do not consider the nature of the violence, parenting skills, or the combination of substance abuse and violent tendencies. The court was seen as a critical resource in ensuring safety and fairness.

Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's stories showed the importance of legal intervention to provide safety. In Braiden's story, parental alienation was a predominant theme whereby legal intervention was necessary to ensure he was allowed to be a parent, which was an important pre-requisite in defining family resilience.

Importance of openness and introspection

The ability to be open and flexible was important in redefining family and in redefining divorce. This quality allowed parents to rebuild their lives. Introspection allowed the participants to take responsibility for their choices, find forgiveness, set clear boundaries for safety, and live their life based on future aspirations. Openness and introspection enabled participants to take responsibility regardless of the cause of divorce. It allowed people to utilize information from counselling, parent education, and other resources. Integrating information allowed participants to establish clear boundaries that enabled co-parenting and finding safety.

The overall results describe a process defining how resilience was perceived and achieved in families of divorce. Findings showed that pre-existing problems defined the methods of coping and also what resources were used. Family resilience stemmed from the identity of the parent who had primary residence for the children. Their values determined how the post-divorce family was defined, what resources were used, and how children maintained relationships with the non-residential parent. The parent's identity and the exact circumstances of family life, including the developmental needs of children, determined the process of family resilience. In situations of domestic violence, competent legal representation, clear court orders, and counselling services specific to domestic violence were essential to find safety. In all the stories, childcare was an absolutely vital resource to parents with young children. Functional and practical support from family was a key to family resilience. Social support was important as a means of meeting adult needs but also as means of providing corrective feedback that helped parents determine how to conduct themselves in the face of divorce. All of the participants spoke about the

need to have one consistent person to talk to who knew their life story before and after divorce. Having a consistent person to confide in provided coherence and stability to their identity in the midst of change.

Personal qualities of perseverance, determination, and hope were paramount in overcoming obstacles. These qualities enabled active problem solving and clarity in separating parental issues from children's needs. The primary parent's identity as a parent was critical in achieving family resilience. Parental beliefs enabled both constructive coping with the adversity of divorce for adults and good quality parenting. In none of these stories did the concept of family disappear. Family was redefined and non-residential parents were not excluded. Divorce was redefined so as to not pathologize parents or children. Overall, good parenting while facing divorce was one of the most protective mechanisms for children that enabled family resilience. Central to family resilience was the definition of family. In the following table, all the findings are contained from both "Stories of Violence" and "Stories of Betrayal."

TABLE 5

Comparison of Findings from “Stories of Violence” and “Stories of Betrayal” Based on Ecological Theory

	Stories of Violence	Stories of Betrayal
Ontogenetic Personal characteristics of Parents and children, Genetics	Perseverance & Determination ♦ To find safety ♦ To overcome injustice ♦ To find the right resources ♦ To ensure the father had a role only if children’s safety was not jeopardized ♦ To advocate for their children’s safety ♦ For a father facing alienation it meant pursuing legal avenues to ensure he would have access and contact with his children	Perseverance & Determination ♦ To achieve stability and harmony within the family after separation ♦ To keep researching so that children’s developmental needs were primary to decisions made ♦ To ensure the father had a meaningful role with children ♦ To separate personal hurt and betrayal from co-parenting with former husband
	Resourcefulness & Flexibility ♦ To overcome unpredictable barriers ♦ To find safety when unexpected things occurred ♦ To use information to plan for safety in all occasions ♦ To live on a tight budget	Resourcefulness & Flexibility ♦ To be able to redefine family and destigmatize divorce ♦ To use information from books, counsellors, lawyers, and parent education seminars on separation and divorce ♦ To live on a tight budget
	Planning Skills ♦ To leave an abusive marriage ♦ To find accommodation that was safe ♦ To predict their husbands’ violence after divorce ♦ To balance work with being home for the children ♦ To balance demands of school, work, and parenting	Planning Skills ♦ To be home for children and work ♦ To ensure children’s needs were met and regular activities continued ♦ To balance demands of school, work, and parenting
	Problem solving skills & Analytical thinking ♦ To protect children and self from husband ♦ To find resources that would ensure protection from fathers ♦ For the father who was caught in	Problem Solving Skills & Analytical Thinking ♦ To research problems and questions of divorce ♦ To be able to utilize and apply what they have learned ♦ To help fathers acquire

	parental alienation dynamics, it was to understand the dynamics and to learn how not to be a part of them	parenting skills
	Self –Responsibility & Ability to Self-Reflect ◆ To understand abusive relationships ◆ To take ownership of their own life ◆ To learn forgiveness ◆ To learn how to emotionally detach ◆ To not take responsibility for husband's violence and substance abuse ◆ To learn how to set clear boundaries for protection ◆ For a father in high conflict it was to understand how he contributed to the problems	Self Responsibility & Ability to Self-Reflect ◆ To understand reasons for infidelity ◆ To not take responsibility for their husbands' infidelity ◆ To take ownership of their life ◆ To learn how to set clear boundaries to separate personal emotions from parenting and enable co-parenting
	Personal Values ◆ Belief in family but not when safety is a concern ◆ Openness in learning from the experience of marriage and divorce ◆ To learn forgiveness, not reconciliation and not to forget ◆ To accept their inability to change the other parent ◆ The importance of safety before being together as a family ◆ Life does not always turn out in expected ways ◆ For a father in high-conflict divorce values reinforcing the importance of family was central in rebuilding and disengaging in parental conflict ◆ Divorce was a means to reducing harm for children ◆ Hope for a better future and children's success	Personal Values ◆ Belief in both parents being involved ◆ Openness in learning how to apply information from separation and divorce seminars ◆ Belief in the necessity of children having a good relationship with both parents ◆ Belief in children having a primary home residence ◆ Importance of family in children's development ◆ Importance of fathers in children's development ◆ Life does not always work out as you want it ◆ Empathy for children ◆ Divorce was a feared as risk for children's development ◆ Hope for a better future and for children's success in life

Microsystems Day-to-day interactions The Family Unit	GOOD PARENTING ◆ To ensure children's needs for safety were not compromised during fathers' parenting time ◆ To protect children from witnessing parental conflict and to protect them from experiencing abuse ◆ To be attentive to children's needs, but to be unable to protect them without court orders that ensured safety ◆ To use resources to find safety and to help children overcome problems ◆ To have empathy for children & get help for them when they were been affected by abuse, addictions, or mental illness ◆ For a father in high conflict it meant to learn to care for all the children's needs and to never be critical of the other parent	GOOD PARENTING ◆ To ensure children adjusted and to build family resilience ◆ To be attentive to children's needs ◆ To ensure they had good parental control ◆ To develop consistency, and stability in the home ◆ To have empathy for children's feelings and developmental needs ◆ To involve children in the family and home functioning ◆ To be accepting of parental differences by not being critical of other parent
	Parenting when children are in transition phase between homes ◆ To know when to obtain professional help for children who were mistreated and abused by fathers ◆ To balance not being critical of fathers with taking action to protect children from future abuse or maltreatment ◆ To obtain help for children who are torn in high-conflict divorce	Parenting when children are in transition phase between homes ◆ To give children time to adjust to being home ◆ To accept differences between homes by allowing children time to adjust ◆ To distinguish between parental differences and harm to children's development
	Clear Boundaries ◆ To obtain court orders to ensure there was no abuse ◆ To be able to stand up to former husband and address concerns so that children's' needs were not compromised ◆ To not interfere with the other parent's parenting time in situations of high conflict divorce	Clear Boundaries ◆ To be able to have conversations with the other parent that were only about children's needs and schedules ◆ To separating adult problems from parenting

Mesosystem Interaction between systems	Formal services and safety ♦ Interaction between personal problems and parenting for parents who had mental health, abuse, or addiction problems ♦ Interaction between court orders, police and safety or lack of safety for mothers and children ♦ Between counselling services and their ability to establish safety and rebuild ♦ Between openness to new information and the ability to apply knowledge about abuse and addictions so that safety was achieved	Formal services and parenting ♦ Interaction between competence and good executive functioning of primary parent and parenting ♦ Interaction between financial aspects of divorce and the ability of the family to find stability, in that if financial matters were settled quickly, the children were able to achieve stability faster ♦ Between parent education sessions on separation and divorce and the parents' abilities to integrate and utilize this knowledge in day-to-day life in their home
Exosystem Other systems that impacted the family ♦ school, ♦ work, ♦ church, ♦ neighbourhoods, ♦ recreation, ♦ social groups for children & parents	Domestic Violence Services ♦ For safety counselling and planning ♦ To understand the psychology of men who are controlling and abusive ♦ To be able to take responsibility for their life and make plans	Counselling ♦ To learn how to cope as a single parent in an unexpected divorce, to learn what boundaries need to be set and how to set them, to understand reasons for infidelity
	Police – needed for safety	No police
	COURTS ♦ Critical for safety and to enforce all aspects of court orders for parenting time ♦ Orders were important to provide structure and boundaries so that the mothers and children were safe and could rebuild their life without interference ♦ Court orders were seen as critical for survival and safety	LEGAL DIVORCE ♦ Courts were not used, all decisions were made by parents in consultation with legal counsel, information from books, trustworthy friends, and from information on parent education ♦ Legal aspects were important to start planning for the future ♦ Legal aspects were viewed as a means to an end
	Recreation ♦ To build family unity and belonging in high-conflict divorce ♦ To provide stability for children	Recreation ♦ To provide stability and consistency for children in the midst of the changes of divorce ♦ To ensure children had a normal life
	Mentors ♦ To learn how to detach and forgive	Mentors To give advice on implications of decisions

	Post-secondary education ♦ For mothers to work towards a profession that would provide an income above the poverty line	Post-secondary education ♦ For mothers to work towards a profession that would provide an income above the poverty line
	Friends and family ♦ Having someone to hear the whole story was important to provide a sense of coherence for parents – someone who knew everything that happened ♦ To understand dynamics ♦ Family was important for functional support (childcare) and financial support for legal costs	Friends and family ♦ Family was a functional support (childcare, and made meals) during the early stages of divorce ♦ For parenting advice ♦ Someone who heard the whole story provided a sense of coherence to the primary parent ♦ Important to have someone to talk to, vent, and to help parents balance their perspectives without eliminating the other parent
Macrosystem Cultural and societal Beliefs, social policy	Safety is normal ♦ Staying in a marriage is secondary after safety ♦ Divorce is legitimized if safety is a concern	Divorce is normal ♦ Provision of parent education sessions were most useful ♦ Stigma attached to divorce was a concern for children ♦ Stigma means something might be wrong with you and it was important to redefine divorce

In the next chapter I will analyze the results according to the theoretical perspectives chosen for this study. This study was based on a salutogenic orientation, ecological theory, and family stress and coping theory.

Chapter 6

Theoretical Analysis

Introduction

The key research questions of this study were to understand the process of family resilience when families navigate divorce transitions. I wanted to know what parental decisions were made that facilitated family resilience and how resources in their environment contributed. Other research interests were to gain insight into how personal and environmental resources blend in a manner that contributes to resilience. By using a salutogenic orientation, I searched for personal qualities in parents, the family, and in their environment to determine what resources were useful in promoting wellness in context of divorce. The participants were parents who had primary care and responsibility for their children. Therefore, the findings were interpreted through the views of parents and the use of theory. This chapter provides an analysis of these findings based on concepts from ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), a salutogenic perspective (Antonovsky, 1979, 1984, 1994), and family stress and coping theory (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983a, 1983b).

This chapter is broken down into three parts. The first part of this chapter discusses how family resilience is a subjective definition based on the socio-cultural location of the family. In essence, family resilience was essentially found to be an ecological concept. The primary parent's values, beliefs, and appraisal of adversity determined how family resiliency was defined and maintained. Resources that helped were dependent upon the parent's identity, the pre-existing problems in the marriage, and the immediate environment. This analysis was based on ecological theory.

The second part integrates concepts from the salutogenic perspective and family stress and coping theory to show that the primary parent's sense of coherence determined the process of divorce and how they defined resilience. Overall, family resilience was described as an ongoing process, rather than an outcome. To positively cope and adapt after divorce, parents' cognitions and beliefs about marriage, family, and the stressors associated with divorce determined two things: what resources were needed to help children adjust and how family was redefined. The parents' beliefs and values about family were interrelated with problem solving and coping. How they coped led to redefinitions of divorce and family. These redefinitions in turn aided in coping.

The third part of the analysis is not related to the three theoretical frameworks used in this research. It provides an analysis of intimate partner abuse based on the literature, laws, and policy.

Part 1 – Family resilience and ecological theory

In the preceding chapter, findings were presented reflecting the salubrious effects of divorce with a focus on defining the nature and processes contributing to family resilience. Studies based on a salutogenic perspective strive to determine what contributes to wellness and health. Health or wellness is seen on a continuum, in that people may be doing well in some areas of life, but struggling in other areas. Similarly, the overall findings from this study depicted resilience as an ongoing process in that participants felt their families were doing as well as could be reasonably expected, but there were still day-to-day hassles and areas in life where they were struggling. Family resilience was

described as a process, and successful functioning of parents, children, and harmony in the family unit were seen as indicators.

The participants defined resilience as having a regular life, being safe, being meaningfully employed, and seeing success for their children and themselves. Fundamentally, resilience was depicted as ordinary life, but what constituted an ordinary life varied based on the socio-cultural-economic environment of each family at that time.

Ecological theory considers all facets of the social environment as influences on how people adapt and live life. It looks at interactions and not static qualities or variables in how people or families fare. Similarly, Antonovsky defined resources as socio-culturally determined.

Money and knowing someone, social support and organizational membership, fight and flight, active and passive, confronting and denying, internalizing and externalizing – these were all resources or behavioral strategies which might or might not be useful in confronting a given stressor, which were or were not normative in different cultural contexts. (Antonovsky, 1994, p. 12)

There is no one right way to cope with adversity. All the families coped in a variety of ways depending on their exact circumstances and particular concerns. Personal histories, pre-divorce problems, dispositions, and the ages and personalities of children shaped coping.

In ecological theory, an ontogenetic level of analysis takes into account personal characteristics that influence adaptation, such as age, gender, health, mental capacity, and biological make up. This level of analysis includes personal characteristics in interaction with other facets of the environment. In this study, the ontogenetic analysis contained

subjective appraisals of the marriage, demands of divorce, and resources. The participants who were living in highly conflictual and abusive marriages saw divorce as the solution. However, in low-conflict marriages divorce was not a choice until after it was discovered that their spouses were unfaithful. Even though the participants may have initiated the legal divorce, it was in response to their husbands' actions and choices to maintain intimate relationships, rather than remain married. Personal choices about how to cope were determined by the participants' appraisal of their entire situation, including their financial ability to support the family, the children's ages and needs, and practicalities about where they would live. However, the demands of divorce were largely as a result of pre-divorce problems. Domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health problems of one of the parents greatly complicated the divorce transition, necessitating the use of various resources to meet the demands and provide for safety of children and women.

Appraisals of divorce and marriage were based upon the beliefs and values of parents. In addition, appraisals of their resources determined the types of resources that were sought and how they were utilized. Ultimately, the identity of the parent who had primary residence of the children was pivotal in helping children cope and in determining how the non-residential parent was involved. The custodial parents' personal coping styles, approaches to problem solving, and the manner in which they utilized resources fostered resilience and to a large measure reflected their personal identity. Personal qualities of custodial parents that promoted resilience were perseverance to ensure safety and meet children's needs, determination to financially support their family, resourcefulness in researching answers, and openness in utilizing resources to achieve stability within the family unit.

From a microsystem level of analysis, resources were dependent upon the participants' unique circumstances, their location in the province, ages of their children, and demands of day-to-day life, work, and school. Divorce is a transition that changes the structure of the nuclear family; therefore the immediate family is most impacted. To achieve stability for the family, functional support from family was consistently described as the most helpful. Achieving family stability and building resilience was dependent upon the ability of the parent who had primary residence. It was important that the primary parent to have empathy for the children and base their parenting on the children's developmental ages.

A central finding contributing to resilience was the need for children to have a consistent residence. All the parents spoke of the importance in redefining family and some spoke about the need to redefine divorce (Theresa). Despite the need for children to have a primary residence, the primary parents did not eliminate the other parents' parenting role. Involvement with the non-resident parent was maintained and facilitated to provide stability for children's development. While spousal roles changed as a result of divorce, parental roles were not eliminated. However, the importance of establishing clear boundaries between parental roles and adult problems was described as fundamental in ensuring the children had good relationships with both parents. Communication between parents varied from non-existent in Sadie's story to open discussions about the children in Lydia's and Theresa's stories. Communication was critical for the parents to discuss the needs of younger children and to coordinate parenting time around activities of older children, as demonstrated in Cathy's and Cindy's stories.

To achieve stability for the family, the primary parent often facilitated and encouraged parenting skills in the non-residential parent. Methods such as staggering parenting times, giving tips without the expectation that both parents be identical in their parenting methods, sharing books on parenting, utilizing information from parent education sessions, and joint decision making were used, with the primary parent having final decision-making control.

Social support from others in the form of listening, giving support and advice, and doing recreational activities was helpful to the participants. However, all the participants described the importance of having one person who had heard the entire story as critical in overcoming the divorce transition. One person who knew the whole story provided coherence to parents' identities during a time of crisis and uncertainty. Cathy's story underscores the importance of different friends being helpful in different ways. She had friends at different ages to meet a variety of needs, such as someone to talk to about parenting, someone to go out with, someone to listen to for advice, and others to provide feedback. Social support was important to all the participants so that they could persevere and cope. It was also used for constructive feedback. Two participants (Cindy and Cathy) spoke of their mentors who provided positive role models in divorce.

Analysis of resilience based on mesosystems considers the interactions between two or more systems that may have a direct or indirect effect on the family. Mesosystems refers to the interrelationships and influences between systems that affect a family's circumstances (Garbarino, 1977). Findings showed interactions between personal qualities of parents and parenting, in that parents who were open, utilized resources in overcoming the problems of divorce in a manner that did not hurt the children. On the

other hand, parents who had substance abuse problems, anger management problems, or mental health problems had a detrimental effect on their children. Parents with personality problems complicated the divorce transition. Their personal problems affected their parenting and their ability to address problems in a manner that did not adversely affect the children.

The parents in this study minimized changes for children, except in situations of domestic violence when mothers fled and found alternative accommodation; they ensured that the move was to a safe neighbourhood. In situations of domestic violence, new accommodations were often in supportive environments, such as next door to babysitters or in centres where the children would have more opportunities for recreational and educational resources. Other mesosystem interactions included the impact of court orders on family life and counselling resources to help parents find new meanings that provided support to children.

In ecological theory, the ecosystem was a primary consideration in adaptation to divorce. Work that paid a reasonable wage was important as was finding an occupation that would lead to viable economic circumstances. Other affiliations for parents that provided support were workplace relationships. Many of the participants were able to get support from others in the workplace. As well, the personal identity of parents was associated with their employment, and this identity provided stability to parents in transition of divorce.

Social support is an important aspect of the ecosystem. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of social support for validation, to help with problem solving, and to provide mentorship. Involvement in recreational sports activities were also seen as

a consistent factor that provided stability in the context of divorce changes. The influences of other affiliations in the environment, such as church and coaching sports in had an impact on how families adjusted after divorce, providing additional feedback, stability, and social support. Overall, several of the participants felt an absence of positive norms to guide the divorce transition.

Macrosystem influences include cultural and societal beliefs about divorce, social policy, and programs offered in the community. All of the participants in this research utilized court annexed services of parent education for separated and divorced families. Families saw educational resources as highly important in understanding divorce dynamics and in acquiring knowledge about how to minimize the disruption for children. Once again, the ability to utilize information was dependent upon personal qualities of openness. Formal institutional services such as family court are included in this category. In situations of domestic violence and high-conflict divorces, court services were essential in providing safety and in preventing alienation. Counselling services that were specialized in the area of domestic violence were essential to help women find safety and rebuild their lives. Societal attitudes and the stigma of divorce were a concern for parents and children.

In terms of beliefs and social beliefs about divorce, the resolution for parents was to redefine divorce as normal and to redefine family as parents who did not live together. The focus was on providing stability for children by facilitating parental cooperation and separating adult problems from parental roles. In situations of violence, parenting time with the non-residential parent was defined based on safety for children.

Based on the results, all the parents who participated were concerned about how the changes in family structure would affect and shape their children's identity and development. Efforts were made to minimize disruption and promote a sense of family unity while in this process of change. The family context was a primary consideration in facilitating resilience. Much of how the family adapted was contingent upon the identity of the parent who had primary residence. All of the participants were mindful of safe neighbourhoods and finding homes that were in good areas and pleasant for children. All of the participants were conscious not to introduce too many changes at once as illustrated in Lydia's story where returning to university was put off until there was some stability and predictability.

Ultimately, family resilience was defined as an ecological concept reflecting the identity of parents who had primary residence. Specific circumstances of the family, their history, and ages of children determined what resources were needed. Central to the participants' definitions of resilience was how they interpreted and appraised the meaning of marriage and family. Parental values and beliefs about their role as parents and family identity were important.

Part 2 - Salutogenic perspective and family stress and coping theory

A sense of coherence is a culturally inclusive concept that is pivotal in determining how families and individuals cope with adversity (Antonovsky, 1994). Antonovsky (1987) has suggested that people give meaning on three levels: the stressful situation, their identity, and their worldview. A sense of coherence means that stressors are seen as meaningful, manageable, and comprehensible (Antonovsky, 1979). This

concept relates primarily to individuals but has also been applied to families (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). In this study, the key informants were parents who had primary residence for their children and some form of legal custody. Because family interviews did not occur, I could not determine the degree of cohesiveness to which family units as a whole shared a similar sense of coherence. By relying primarily on parents' views, I obtained their perceptions about themselves and their children. Given that divorce involves changes in the family structure whereby one parent leaves, understanding the primary parents' orientation gave insight in how the family unit functioned.

A salutogenic perspective views wellness on a continuum in that people can be doing well in certain areas of their life but struggling in others. A sense of coherence is multidimensional, meaning that functioning will vary on each dimension. Based on a salutogenic perspective, family resilience was not viewed as an absolute state but as a process. Findings from this study demonstrated that family resilience was indeed seen as a process. While many of the parents felt they had managed the divorce transition so that their children functioned as well as they could have expected, they also conveyed notions that family resilience was in a state of constant change. For example, Lydia's story spoke of concerns about the stigma of divorce having negative effects on how others viewed her children. Cindy's and Cathy's stories voiced concerns that their children carefully plan their futures. Braiden's story reflected pride in the success of his children's academic and social achievement, despite the parental high conflict in the early stages of divorce, but also expressed concern for his son in joint custody, in that he suspected his son would soon choose to remain in his home because of conflict with his mother. Sadie and

Chelsea both spoke of their children's difficulties due to their fathers' substance abuse and violence, but were successful in overcoming these problems.

In previous research on families with a disabled spouse, it was found that a strong sense of coherence was related to positive coping for families (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). This study supported this finding. To cope with divorce, whether it was initiated by that parent or not, it was important that the primary parent make sense of divorce in a manner that would facilitate positive coping and achieve stability for children. In this regard, all the participants viewed family and more specifically, their children's well-being, as meaningful and worthy of emotional commitment. In addition, their values about the importance of family increased their resolve to navigate the divorce transition in a manner that would not harm their children. Divorce did not mean the end of the family; it meant the end of the marriage. To positively cope, participants redefined family and established clear boundaries for each household. Even though the concept of family was important, it was not essential to have both parents together. This was especially important in the "Stories of Violence" where safety was prioritized over staying in an abusive marriage. In Theresa's story, divorce was redefined to be "normal" as a means of de-stigmatizing the term.

Meaning of the stressful situation

In family stress and coping theory, two levels of meanings were differentiated: situational and global meanings.

Situational meanings referred to the individual's and family's subjective definition of their demands [to cope with the stressful situation or adversity], their

capabilities, and these two factors were related to each other. Global meanings were defined as transcending any given situation and comprising a more stable cognitive set encompassing beliefs about the relationships of family members to each other and the relationship of the family to the larger community. (Patterson & Garwick, 1994, p. 72)

In adversity, meanings were constructed in the presence of demands, losses, and changed routines, roles, and expectations (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). In addition, meanings were often constructed after the adversity, which continued to influence and shape the processes and outcomes of family adaptation. According to family stress and coping theory, defining the stressful situation consisted of family meanings being constructed on three levels: the stressful situation, their identity as a family, and their view of the world (Patterson, 2002).

In this study, Sadie, Chelsea, Braiden, Cindy, and Cathy defined the stressful situation as staying in the marriage because of violence, control, and parental conflict due to mental illness on the part of one spouse. Staying in the marriage became untenable in Theresa's and Lydia's stories, because they could not reconcile staying in a marriage when their spouses chose to maintain another relationship. Divorce was a shock but depicted as a logical outcome in these circumstances. In situations of violence, commitment to marriage vows was secondary to the need for safety.

The participants' appraisals were directly about marriage rather than about evaluating divorce. The demands and stressors of their current marital situations were the basis of the decision to separate. Separation resulted when the demands of staying in the marriage exceeded the participants' capabilities. The adversity was the marriage. While

there was concern about the difficulties and demands of divorce, it was seen as more important to have safety, less conflict, and harmony. Ultimately, to have parents live separately was appraised as more beneficial to the children.

All of the participants valued their marriage commitment, but divergences in relationship rules led to an inability to stay in the marriage, ultimately resulting in separation. Divorce was not the preferred choice, but was seen as the only choice to find safety (Sadie, Chelsea, and Cindy) or to achieve positive family functioning for children (Braiden, Lydia, Cathy, and Theresa). Divorce was a means to make the family stronger so that children were not caught in the middle of conflict or subjected to abuse.

Divorce was also perceived as a crisis because of the multiple transitions required in roles, boundaries, and dynamics. How divorce was handled depended on pre-divorce problems. The lack of norms and positive role models to govern this transition were apparent in Braiden's, Cathy's, Theresa's, and Lydia's stories. Redefining divorce as "normal" occurred as a means of coping in Lydia's, Chelsea's, Braiden's, and Theresa's stories. In Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's stories, the divorce transition was complicated by violence and control by their husbands, resulting in their need to rely on legal interventions to ensure safety. Safety was a prerequisite to resilience.

Meaning of identity as a family

Family identity is reflected by its structure - by who is in the family and its functioning, referring to relationship patterns within the family (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). All of the participants defined themselves as the primary parent. Routines and patterned interactions were established prior to divorce and continued after divorce, even

though four of the parents had joint legal custody (Lydia, Theresa, Braiden, and Cathy). They all conveyed a sense of family unity and belonging. Identity as a spouse was shattered and permanently altered by divorce, but not their identity as a parent. Divorce did not change their identity and role as a parent. All the participants were actively engaged with their children in a primary parenting role. In Braiden's story, the children were pitted against each parent, resulting in court orders to ensure Braiden would have a role with his children. As a result, he was the primary parent for one of his sons and had 50:50 parenting time with his other son. Unlike the women in this study where it was assumed that they would continue to be involved as a parent, for the only male it was not a given assumption. In his story, Braiden had to remind himself of his values regarding family to assert his identity as a parent. His worldview reflected the importance of family.

Other findings showed that changes in family structure were minimized by frequent and regular contact with the non-residential parent. Lydia and Theresa had very young children and divorce came as a result of infidelity, not abuse. It was considered developmentally important to the children to have a meaningful relationship with both parents. In the "Stories of Violence," the children's relationship with the non-resident parent was balanced between safety and harm. Findings from all of the stories, except one, showed that the other parent was not eliminated from the definition of family, but involvement was based on safety and the other parent's availability. In Sadie's story, her child did not have a relationship with his father because of the father's unwillingness to comply with court orders that would ensure safety.

The family boundaries changed to reflect the parent with the children as the definition of family. All of the participants spoke about this realization that, "We, my

children and I, are family.” Family was redefined from two parents living together with children to one parent who had primary residence with the children. However, parental roles were not replaced even when new partners were part of the family structure. In fact, in Cindy’s story, the positive role modelling and parenting by her husband allowed her sons to have a relationship with their father without expectations that he be involved in their day-to-day activities. Family identity includes a physical and psychological presence (Boss, 2001). The psychological presence of the father as a member in the family was maintained. In “Stories of Violence,” this psychological presence led to a sense of insecurity – a feeling that safety was temporary and that family life might be disrupted at any time.

The roles for parents changed to include earning an income and returning to school for Chelsea, Cindy, and Sadie. In Cathy’s story, the roles for the older children also changed to include childcare and household chores. In Braiden’s story, the role of the father was expanded to include all household and meal preparation duties. Braiden came to realize that single parent fathers could maintain all aspects of family functioning.

Meaning of family worldview

This level of meaning refers to beliefs about life and the family’s place in life (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). As noted earlier, the environment shapes these beliefs and all the participants stressed the importance of family, as well as the conviction that things work out rightly and justly in accordance with one’s efforts. They assumed responsibility to ensure that their children were not disadvantaged by divorce.

How people relate to others is part of the worldview. Participants in this study related in various ways. Rural participants were able to access help and direction from community members who were aware of their changing circumstances. In fact, Chelsea obtained vital directions from a friend on how to leave a violent situation when her husband was able to access entry into the home. She was told of job opportunities and given information on rental accommodation. Cathy was able to use others in safety plans and find work based on her availability. Other participants accessed help from friends (Braiden, Cathy), family (Lydia, Theresa, Chelsea, and Sadie), and people in their work environments (Braiden, Theresa, Chelsea), previously discussed as social support.

According to Antonovsky (1979), the worldview also referred to the degree to which the family is seen as coherent and the degree to which families share this orientation. It is a subjective account based on the primary parent, which may differ from an account based on the family members' interaction. All of the participants strove to increase family cohesiveness after divorce. It was important to invest time into parenting to assist in increasing stability. Families with young children spoke about how their children would believe that it was normative to have parents reside in two homes. Primary parents with older children ensured that the children maintained a regular relationship with the non-residential parent when it was safe. Definitions of resilience were reflected success in their children, socially, academically, and personally, as evident in Braiden's, Cathy's, and Cindy's stories.

Comprehensible

A sense of coherence includes the concept of comprehensibility, which refers to a belief that the problem is clear (Antonovsky, 1994). It means that parents were able to make cognitive sense of divorce and see the problem in an ordered, consistent, structured, and clear manner (Antonovsky, 1987). By seeing events in this manner, experiences can be coped with and challenges can be met. It was clear that when the participant initiated divorce, plans could be made to ensure it went as smoothly as possible. However, in situations of intimate partner abuse, coupled with substance abuse, the actions of the father were unpredictable, and in fact, continual harassment increased problems of divorce. These complications lead to a lack of control over one's life and safety, which led to use of formal services in society, such as domestic violence counselling, courts, police, and child protection referrals. The lack of safety made divorce unmanageable. In Braiden's story of high-conflict divorce, there was a similar sense of lack of control because his former spouse's behaviour was unpredictable due to her mental illness. This feeling of unpredictability led to a reliance on the court system and counselling services to make the divorce transition comprehensible without being alienated as a parent. Alienation refers to a dynamic whereby a parent forces children to take sides with them against the other parent.

In the stories where divorce was unexpected, it was difficult to make sense of reasons for infidelity. Findings from Theresa's, Lydia's, and Cindy's stories spoke of the need to understand reasons for affairs. Two of these participants obtained reassurance from their doctors and all of them obtained counselling to help them not take responsibility for their husbands' adultery.

Overall, all participants obtained counselling to understand how to cope with problems and to help in redefine family so as to make the divorce experience comprehensible. Focusing on their children and career, developing new friendships, and pursuing further education were the means of restructuring their lives.

Manageable

Manageable refers to not only understanding the problem but also to having the resources to cope (Antonovsky, 1994). This does not necessarily mean that one is “in control” but that they have faith that they will have the resources to manage divorce. Several participants spoke reflected on their life story and having learned from other experiences that things do not always work out as expected. Theresa knew how strong she could be when her father died and her family cared for him at home. Cathy spoke of previous difficulties in her family of origin and the need to face problems directly. Sadie spoke of her internal convictions and determination to overcome injustice. Braiden reaffirmed his values regarding family and parenting. Chelsea needed to outsmart her husband so she could achieve financial independence after divorce. Cindy stressed her belief in forgiveness. Based on their beliefs all of the participants sought out additional resources in their environment when they were uncertain about how to cope. Legal advice, mentors, friends, counselling, and family support all contributed.

The belief that things will work out by one’s efforts and with help from others was evident as parents planned for a future for their family beyond divorce. Findings showed the importance of perseverance in finding resources and in maintaining hope. Resources included functional support from family, especially when the participants had

young children at the time of the separation. In situations where participants had school-aged children, such as in Chelsea's story, functional support from family was provided when she needed childcare after school as she was working shift work making life manageable. In addition financial resources from her family enabled her to hire a competent lawyer so that an unjust legal agreement could be reversed. Parents who did not have immediate family support depended on friends (Braiden), a mentor (Cindy and Cathy), and a godmother (Sadie). Other times, (Braiden's and Theresa's stories) family members enabled the parents to get a more realistic sense of perspective.

It was important for all the participants to have one person who knew their whole story and to provide validation. This support provided continuity and coherence to the parents' identity while they were in the midst of change. It made divorce more manageable.

Hope for a better future for their children and themselves and hope for an end to problems of divorce enabled the participants to persevere in day-to-day tasks when problems seemed insurmountable. Knowing that their children's well-being was dependent upon them led to unwavering perseverance and active problem solving to ensure they found the right resources and conducted themselves in a manner that would benefit the children. It took determination. Supports to persevere came from a variety of sources. Sadie's story described finding the right people and overcoming injustice when abuse concerns were not taken seriously; Braiden's story spoke about his friends who offered ongoing support; Cindy's story told of her faith in her mentor and lawyer; Chelsea's story reflected the importance of competent legal representation; Cindy's and

Cathy's stories showed the importance of having mentors; and Theresa's story spoke about the need for research to find the answers she needed.

To be able to manage as a single parent household, parents needed to become economically viable. Three of the participants (Chelsea, Lydia, and Cindy) did not have an established career at the time of their separation. They defined themselves as "stay at home mothers." Those who had careers spoke of the importance of obtaining support from people in the workplace. This was especially apparent in Braiden's, Theresa's, and Sadie's stories. The nature of support varied. Braiden's story illustrated the critical importance of friends who offered him a place to live at the time of separation, who listened to him, and who included him in sports, giving him a sense of belonging. This was especially important when he did not have his children. His workplace friendships provided an identity while his identity as a parent was being taken away. Work provided a sense of stability and coherence to his identity. As a form of appreciation, Braiden talked of offering support to others in overcoming the pain of divorce.

Theresa's profession and work provided a sense of identity outside of the home. A co-worker gave her invaluable advice to not lose her dignity by trying to revenge her husband for infidelity. She researched books and Internet websites for resources and used information from parent education sessions. Sadie was fleeing a marriage that escalated from domestic violence and control to stalking, harassment, and death threats. She used resources from work when she went into hiding with a friend of her boss while awaiting the arrest of her husband. Cathy was given employment based on her children's schedule. In addition, it was through her work that she became acquainted with her lawyer, whom she trusted because of their previous relationship. Work gave the parents another

affiliation that aided in the divorce transition. Work was more than economic security: it provided an identity outside of the home and another avenue to obtain support.

Divorce was complicated for the three participants who did not have an established career because it left them without an identity beyond being a parent and a wife. In these stories, the participants spoke of the need to establish an occupational identity outside of the home while in the midst of changing roles in the marriage. To women without careers, divorce was particularly devastating because they were left without financial resources. The income they could obtain in the service sector did not pay enough to support their family. Therefore, finding an occupation that paid a reasonable wage was seen as a pathway to resilience. All three of these mothers returned to university or another form of post-secondary education while they worked at marginal income jobs until they finished their education. Financial stressors were evident and a primary obstacle in divorce. Rebuilding by finishing school was most evident in Lydia's and Chelsea's stories, although it was also present in Cindy's and Cathy's stories. Cindy obtained her nursing education and Cathy remained with her husband for 5 years after they decided to separate so that all the children were in school and she could work.

All of the participants demonstrated incredible resourcefulness in managing demands of single parenting and work. Sadie moved next door to a reliable babysitter. Lydia ensured stability by staying in the family home and returning to school. Chelsea and Cindy found work and returned to school. Theresa was a master at researching everything she needed to know. Braiden purchased a home that he rebuilt and continued to parent his sons while working full time.

Part 3 – Family resilience and domestic violence

There were four stories that depicted various forms of spousal abuse ranging from physical, emotional, controlling behaviour, and stalking to high-conflict divorce, where children were forced to take sides and alienate one of the parents. Data from these stories showed the range and diversity of circumstances that define domestic violence or intimate spousal abuse. In legislation and policies governing many societal institutions, domestic violence is defined as a static variable, though it is not. These stories demonstrated a lack of understanding of variations of domestic violence and its implications leading to inconsistent actions by police, child protection, and the courts (Nixon, Weaver-Dunlop & Tutty, 2007).

Sadie's and Chelsea's stories demonstrated the difficulty in obtaining services from child welfare authorities while in the midst of separation. In her story, Sadie said that child protection services arranged for a police interview of her pre-school child to determine if there was abuse, but ongoing family support was not provided. In Chelsea's story, child protection services threatened to take her children into foster care if she and her husband could not cooperate. She had asked for help when her child had evidence of burn marks upon returning from his father's residence. A doctor substantiated the burn marks. Obtaining protection from police was equally as futile as was demonstrated in Sadie's story. She was not able to obtain a restraining order until she went to the police with an advocate from a domestic violence outreach program and produced evidence of 55 taped death threats. Chelsea was unable to obtain police intervention because her husband found a means of obtaining access to the home in a lawful manner.

There are various typologies of family violence reflecting different patterns that must include analysis of context including the intent of the offender, meaning of the act to the victim, and effect of violence on the victim (Frederick & Tilly, 2001; Johnson & Campbell, 1993). The type of domestic violence in combination with the context calls for a different response from different systems (criminal justice; civil justice including family law and the courts; child protection; health care) (Jaffe, Crooks, & Bala, 2005). Therefore, in absence of a clear assessment, services were denied. Data from this study show that police, the courts, and child welfare handled complaints in inconsistent ways.

Findings from Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's stories demonstrated that safety and survival were key reasons for leaving the marriage. However, safety in context of domestic violence is often dependent upon services from other systems such as domestic violence outreach, women's shelters, police, and the courts. These are the formal institutions designed to protect children and victims of violence. In all three stories, the fathers had access to their children, and based on data, subjected the children to harm. In Sadie's story, visitation was allowed after a 2-week abduction, after Supervised Access was terminated because the child was terrified, and after trial. According to the law, access is the right of the child. Specifically, the *Divorce Act*, (1985) states:

Section 16. (8) The court shall take into consideration only the best interests of the child of the marriage as determined by reference to the condition, means, needs and other circumstances of the child.

The best interests principle is highly subjective and open to interpretation (Banach, 1998). Psychological research forms the basis of knowledge about what is in the best interests of children. Theories such as attachment theory, maternal deprivation

research, and resiliency theory and research are relied on to support decisions made for children. The best interests standard is used to predict which parent or environment is most likely to ensure the child's needs are met so that the child develops into a productive member of society (Banach, 1998). However, judges making decisions about the best interests for children need either to be well versed in these large bodies of research and theories, or have access to other professions who could inform decision making for the particular child at hand. Knowledge about what is in the best interests of children has also been informed by the concept of the psychological parent. This concept is based on psychoanalytic theory and proposes that the parent who provides nurturance and love for a child becomes the parent to whom the child is most attached and who fulfills needs such as identity and security (Goldstein, Freud, Solnit, 1973; 1979). However the concept of the psychological parent has been criticized by legal scholars as being vague and having no empirical basis (Davis, 1988; Demibitz, 1974; Dupaix, 1987; Jenkins, 1981; Kadushin, 1974).

Societal values balance protection of children with sanctity of the family and are at the core of how decisions are made regarding the best interests of the child. Fundamentally, decisions are made based on factors related to the parents' functioning, factors related to the child, and particulars of the case (Banach, 1998). The best interests principle is imprecise, leading to decisions being inconsistent depending upon the subjective interpretation and knowledge of the person making the decision. There is no one definition and the best interests of a child depend on the particulars of each situation.

Child development research is considered in Section 16. (9) of the *Divorce Act*, (1985). However, specifically in Sadie's story, the details and implications of the father's

abusive behaviour were not assessed resulting in decisions that privileged the father's rights above the child's safety.

Section 16. (9) The court shall not take into consideration the past conduct of any person unless the conduct is relevant to the ability of that person to act as a parent of a child.

Section 16. (10) The court shall give effect to the principle that a child of the marriage should have as much contact with each spouse as is consistent with the best interests of the child and, for that purpose, shall take into consideration the willingness of the person for whom custody is sought to facilitate such contact (*Divorce Act*, R.S.C. 1985 (2nd Sup.), Custody Orders, Section 16, (8-10), p.5).

Custody and access assessments were not ordered. These assessments have the potential to inform the court about the nature and dynamics of violence, the impact it had on children or on their spouses, or of the combined risks of violent behaviour coupled with substance abuse. In Sadie's narrative, the provision of maintaining contact with each parent was a fundamental consideration of the court without regard for determining parenting abilities, attachment, or needs of the child for safety. Concerns about intimate partner abuse were not taken seriously until trial. These results lend support to research that recommended differential screening for the potency, pattern, and primary perpetrator of violence to provide preliminary guidance in identifying parenting arrangements (Jaffe, et al., 2005; Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008). An accurate assessment of risk is an important prerequisite for determining parenting plans that was overlooked in the findings from this research.

To provide some context to this analysis, it is important to note that spousal abuse allegations are an increasing concern for the justice system, but there is no research on the extent to which abuse allegations are false or maliciously fabricated (Jaffe, et al., 2008). In fact, it is estimated that approximately 50% of domestic violence allegations are unsubstantiated (Jaffe, et al., 2008; Shaffer & Bala, 2003). Substantiation of allegations is difficult, often involving information from police, medical reports, self-admissions, neutral third parties, or eyewitness accounts (Austin, 2000). In addition, the psychological status of the abuser and victim need to be considered as well as the timing and stage of legal proceedings when disclosures are made (Jaffe, et al., 2008). It has been speculated that false accusations occur due to a number of reasons, such as increased social attention to the relevance of domestic violence in child custody (Jaffe, et al., 2008). As well, in high-conflict divorces parents often harbour fear, distrust, and negative convictions about one another resulting in distorted perceptions and mutual accusations (Johnson & Roseby, 1997). Although concerns exist about the extent to which false allegations of domestic violence occur to support custody applications or other legal claims, it is critical to emphasize that failure to report abuse and denial of abuse by perpetrators is far more common (Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson, 2003; Johnson, Lee, Olesen, & Walters, 2005; Shaffer & Bala, 2003).

Findings show that a salutogenic influence by the courts occurred after trial in Sadie's story. Trial exposed the violent dynamics of spousal abuse resulting in the mother being granted sole custody. In Chelsea's story, the court acted as a protective mechanism when the judge reversed a biased separation agreement that allowed the mother to find work and live in a centre that afforded her low rental housing and employment. The court

allowed the children to move with the mother. The courts have tremendous responsibility to ensure safety for women leaving violent partners and to ensure children are safe.

Data from Cindy's and Chelsea's stories illustrated that the need for safety was balanced with the children's need to have a relationship with the non-resident father. However, findings based on these two stories show that the burden of proof was on the mothers when they expressed concern for their children's safety. Chelsea was given legal advice that the order allowing for access could not be changed unless she proved that harm had resulted. When Chelsea approached child protection services with evidence of burn marks, she was told that her children were at risk of being taken into care unless she and her former husband cooperated. When Sadie approached child protection services with concern that her former husband contacted her when he was intoxicated and threatening to harm her child, the police would not enter his residence. Child protection services told her that bare minimum was all that was required for safety. Child protection policy guidelines in Saskatchewan state:

It is important that those involved in the investigation follow the investigative guidelines which will facilitate an objective assessment to the investigation; cases involving allegations of child abuse or neglect in custody/access disputes are complex. Consistent investigative procedures will ensure that each case will be assessed on the basis of individual evidence (Ministry of Social Services, Policy and Procedures Manual entitled "Family-Centred Services", March 2004, Chapter 3, Section 11(3), p.8).

In situations where spousal abuse is a concern, the policy is unclear. It states:

Because there is such a high incidence of domestic violence in child protection cases, it is important to routinely assess or screen for it. Always ask the mother if she feels safe (Ministry of Social Services, Policy and Procedures Manual entitled “Family-Centred Services”, March, 2004, Chapter 2 Section 5 (12), p.16).

Policy goes on to describe the need to interview the mother alone to find out what kind of help is needed, and to ask for consultation from local domestic violence programs on cases where domestic violence is evident. The policy is not clear or direct in situations where mothers have left abusive relationships when there are increased risks for harm. Policy is directed towards situations in which mothers are living in situations of intimate partner abuse, not when they are leaving or have left and there is increased risk of harm. The *Child and Family Services Act* (s.s. 1989-90) in Saskatchewan does not make this distinction. It states:

A child is in need of protection where: the child has been exposed to domestic violence or severe domestic disharmony that is likely to result in physical or emotional harm to the child (*Child and Family Services Act*, s.s. 1989-90, Section 11 (a) (vi), p. 8).

Data from these stories reinforce the need for specialized domestic violence outreach services for victims of intimate partner abuse to advocate for police and child protection services and to assist in helping mothers and children find safety.

Consistent with feminist research, violence did not end when the couples separated, and in fact there was increased risk (Hardesty, 2002; Sev'er, 1997). Data from Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's stories showed that the mothers continued to be threatened and verbally and emotionally abused after the separation. Feminist research

found that abusive spouses used access as a means of punishing mothers by subjecting them to on going verbal, emotional, and physical abuse (Arendell, 1995; Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson, 1999). Access to children was a weapon used by fathers to punish mothers for leaving. Data from these narratives support these findings. Exchanges were used as an opportunity to perpetuate the cycle of abuse in Cindy's and Chelsea's stories. In Sadie's story, all exchanges needed to occur through the use of third parties because of no contact provisions in the restraining order. In Chelsea's story, a biased legal agreement resulted in children being at risk. The legal provisions prohibited her from leaving the small town with the children meaning that medical appointments could not occur, even though one child had severe asthma. She was not even able to purchase groceries when the children were in her care because that would necessitate going to another town. In effect, this separation agreement used the children as weapons to punish the mother for leaving. Data from these stories reflected a common concern about the lack of protection by police, child protection services, and the courts. It took personal determination and perseverance, as well as advocacy, counselling, and competent legal representation, which incurred great financial costs, to find safety and protection from violent partners.

The issue of substance abuse by former partners added great volatility in the process of divorce. It provided a context that was inconsistent and behaviours that were unpredictable. Specialized resources in domestic violence helped, but could not eliminate the ongoing risk.

Synthesis

Overall, this theoretical analysis showed that family resilience was an ecological concept based upon the identity of the primary parent. Resilience was depicted as a process, but outcomes were important indicators of success, resilience was described as a fragile state based on changing conditions. Positive coping was based on the values of custodial parents that determined which resources were needed and how they would be utilized. Resilience was defined as “ordinary life” and the protective mechanisms that contributed to pathways to resilience varied depending on the problem at hand and unique characteristics of the family members. Masten (2001) referred to resilience as “ordinary magic” which portrayed how resources were used in a practical manner to promote harmony within families of divorce. Practical support from family and confidantes who knew the whole story was critical for parents.

How families achieved balance and harmony depended upon overcoming pre-existing problems, which ultimately determined environmental resources needed. Resources in the environment that were most important were informal, except in situations of domestic violence or parental alienation when the courts and other legal resources were necessary. Consistently specialized services in cases of domestic violence were seen as the most useful in a myriad of ways, such as educating women about abuse dynamics, providing encouragement and advocacy, and in helping them devise safety plans. In situations where domestic violence was not a problem, educational resources were the most useful. Resources that educated parents on divorce family dynamics and children’s interpretations of divorce based on their developmental ages were highly valued. Personal qualities of parents were critical in how this knowledge was implemented. Fundamentally, all of the participants felt it was important for children to

have one primary home and a relationship with the non-resident parent to aid in achieving stability after parental separation, but contact with both parents was seen as essential to children's well being. For the one father in this study, family resilience was defined as being allowed to be a parent and was dependent upon court intervention.

Economical viability is a fundamental prerequisite in family resilience. This was especially important for mothers who stayed at home with children. Achieving economic stability was a huge component of resilience for the family and environmental resources were needed for education and work opportunities. For parents who had financial security, workplace identities and affiliations with their profession were key resources in coping with the transition of divorce.

Based on family stress theory, the parents' subjective appraisals of the marriage were central. This was in contrast to other studies on divorce based on family stress theory, which found that parental perception of divorce was crucial to how people adapt and that stressors and resources were secondary (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986; Wang & Amato, 2000). The findings from this thesis showed that perceptions of adversity were the marriage, not divorce. In this study, a pileup of divorce stressors occurred when one of the parents had mental health problems, substance abuse problems, or a history of domestic violence. This was consistent with others' findings showing a pileup of stressors that included income change following divorce, severity of divorce, mental health resources, role flexibility, rules prohibiting emotional expression, and satisfaction with child custody arrangements (Plummer & Koch-Hattem).

A sense of coherence encompasses ecological theory and is part of family stress and coping theory. Results showed that meaningfulness was based on the children's well

being and the parents' ability to redefine family. Beliefs about life and hopes for the future shaped the coping strategies used. Beliefs about life and family came from different sources, but fundamentally they provided perseverance to achieve stability and harmony in a manner that promoted resilience in children and the family unit. The importance of having one confidant who knew the whole story, including knowledge of the parents when they were together was critical in helping parents adjust.

Manageability was interrelated with the personalities of the parents, in that parents who had problem personalities, mental health problems, addiction problems, and a history of violence led to circumstances that were unpredictable and unmanageable. To make the situation manageable, finding safety was critical in "Stories of Violence." However, the fear of violence was an ongoing concern even when parents left abusive marriages. In "Stories of Betrayal," personal characteristics of openness and resourcefulness allowed parents to utilize information obtained from counselling, books, or from people in the workplace.

Comprehensibility depended upon the primary parents' cognitive flexibility to redefine family after divorce. To make meaning of divorce all of the participants sought professional counselling. However, individual needs were unique and varied from understanding dynamics of abuse; understanding reasons men have relationships outside the marriage; understanding how to cope when your children are turned against you; to wanting concrete advice and examples of how to navigate changes in roles and expectations. In all the stories, normalizing the concept of divorce was important as the participants strove for family resilience.

In the next chapter I make recommendations based on my findings and provide some concluding statements regarding the limitations of this study.

Chapter 7

Implications and Conclusions

In this final chapter I start by evaluating the research methodology. I then provide a summary of the results from this study and discuss how these findings could inform family law policy and social work practice with families and parents who are in the process of divorce. I end this chapter with a list of recommendations for practice, policy, and some recommendations for future research.

Evaluation of research methodology

The value of narrative research depends on the integrity of the researcher in how narratives are read, in how stories are interpreted, and in how data are analyzed. I was conscious not to force results into preconceived conclusions based on theory or to misinterpret the stories to reflect my values as the researcher. This was a time-consuming process, in that I had accumulated approximately 313 pages of transcriptions from the research interviews from approximately 8 hours of interviews with the participants. The writing of results was a process: the first analysis and description of themes composed 167 pages of text. This information was then rewritten to the present chapter on the findings, approximately 79 pages of text, not including summaries and discussion of comparisons between participants.

Throughout this process, I made ongoing decisions about how many stories or how much evidence to provide for readers to verify results to help them arrive at their own interpretation of themes. Writing the text in the voices of the tellers is an interpretative process based on the discretion of the researcher. For narrative research to

be trustworthy, the findings must reflect the meanings of the speakers. The identity of the participants, their values, illustrations, conclusions, and stories are the data from which meanings are interpreted and developed into themes. In this regard, personal ethics of the researcher play a major role in how narrative research is translated into text. The integrity of the researcher ultimately determines the validity and trustworthiness of results.

Translating themes emerging from the narratives into language that conveyed the sentiments of the tellers was painstaking. I realized that results and stories could be interpreted in various ways depending on when I heard and read the narratives. In addition, different conclusions could be derived when using other theoretical perspectives. In deciding how to portray the stories I used particular aspects of the transcript. However, because stories do not emerge as a unified whole, I needed to decide what aspects from the narrative comprised a theme or illustrated previous themes. Decisions also needed to be made about which stories best conveyed the tellers' meanings. In this process, certain aspects of the tellers' stories were eliminated, while important points were highlighted. Then, the overall themes were discussed in context of the entire narrative, separate from supporting illustrations and stories.

The most time-consuming and demanding aspect in using narrative methods is that of translating the themes from the interview transcripts into text for the reader. It is difficult because throughout each aspect of this process; the interpretation, analysis, and writing, I listened to three voices: the voices of the participants, the voice of theory, and the voice of the listener. From the voices of the participants I wanted to preserve their meanings and uphold the identities of the storytellers. From the voice of theory, I was conscious of the role theory played in my selection of questions and analysis, but wanted

to interpret results, as they emerged based on the participants' meanings and not on predefined theoretical concepts. From the voice of the listener, I was aware that my values and experiences would affect and possibly distort my interpretations of the stories and my analysis of them. During this process, I was completely immersed in the data as I very consciously attempted to balance the three voices, giving precedence to the voice of the teller.

In respect to how readers would interpret the text, it was very valuable to have an editor read the results and provide feedback on her understanding of the results. In addition, because this research was done in isolation, with no affiliation with other organizations or others who had vested interests, it was a lonely experience. This gave me great influence in how results were depicted to the reader. The power in the role of the researcher was evident to me. It was a power that without vigilant self-awareness could easily be misused. Therefore, it was important that I use my power as a researcher with integrity. This involved accurately reflecting the voices of the tellers while maintaining my awareness of the influence of theory and the influence of my values and experiences in my interpretation, analysis, and transcription of the results into text. I realize that language is not transparent, but interpretative; therefore, being the principal interviewer provided an important interpretative context that was not readily available when reading transcripts of interviews.

In using narrative methods to determine how families overcome problems of divorce, I was able to determine how resources were helpful and for what reasons particular resources were chosen. However, one of the unexpected difficulties in completing this study was in obtaining a sample. I believe there could be a number of

explanations for this problem. It may have been because this study was undertaken without participation of major stakeholders in family law, such as the Department of Justice (Family Justice Services), family law lawyers, or the courts. While these stakeholders were cooperative, they did not have vested interest in the research outcomes and as such, their involvement was limited and I did not have a readily available database from which to draw participants. I discuss alternative reasons for the low response rate in Appendix C. In the future, I see benefits of working with others in conducting research using narrative methods. This would provide options for a database if these individuals were major stakeholders. Working with other researchers would offer another interpretation of the data, which provides another means of triangulation and verification of results. Having other researchers read accounts and provide their interpretation of stories and analysis of results presents another screen for trustworthiness of the research. The use of narrative methods revealed valuable patterns in how people coped with unexpected loss and change of divorce. Narrative methods provided a useful understanding of the identities of the participants as they strived to make sense of divorce and spoke about how they overcame problems.

Summary of findings

In “Stories of Violence,” safety was the basis of family resilience, and in Braiden’s story of parental alienation, family resilience was predicated on the absence of parental conflict whereby children did not have to reject one parent to support the other. In the situations of domestic violence, former husbands were described as having substance abuse problems coupled with domestic violence and control issues. Because

services in society that offer safety, such as police, child protection, and the courts were refused, perseverance in “doing things rightly and justly” and determination was needed until the mothers could find safety for their children and themselves. In situations of domestic violence, it was critical to have court orders that provided protection. In Sadie’s story, court orders as a result of a trial empowered the mother to protect her son. In Chelsea’s story, safety was dependent upon changing a biased interim legal agreement that held her and her children hostage in a rural town without resources. Overcoming ongoing barriers that her husband devised to prevent economic security was instrumental in Chelsea’s story. Commitment to marriage was important for all these mothers, but not at the expense of personal safety, which made it necessary for the mothers to redefine family. In Cindy’s story, family resilience was based on her ability to forgive, which enabled her to move on in her life and facilitate an ongoing relationship between the children and their father. In Chelsea’s story, her ability to redefine family enabled her children to have a relationship with their father, something she never had. In Sadie’s story, her child did not have an ongoing relationship with his father because the father refused to comply with court orders.

Braiden’s story presented a version of family resilience because it was situated in the context of high-conflict divorce. As in the other stories, court orders were necessary, but in this story of parental alienation, court orders were needed to allow the father to have a parenting role. Competitive parenting that forced the children to take sides in their parents’ conflict was a foreign experience to the father, resulting in his playing into the dynamic and contributing to divorce mistakes. This resulted in his estrangement from his stepdaughter as she chose her mother’s side. In this story, family resilience was possible

because of the father's openness to information that allowed him to understand divorce dynamics based on his children's developmental needs. His ability to be self-reflective allowed him to make personal changes. He no longer contributed in the conflict and made amends to his children by never putting them in a situation whereby they felt they had to choose one parent over another. Findings from his child defined resilience as unity and belonging. A grandparent helped provide a sense of coherence for this child in the midst of change and uncertainty. Sports and activities that involved the whole family were a means to restore stability and unity within the family unit.

In all the stories from "Stories of Violence," family resilience was predicated upon having very clear and separate boundaries between homes. As noted in the literature review, high-conflict divorces were often a symptom of other complex family dynamics, which included psychiatric disorders of parents, domestic violence, and substance abuse problems. Clear boundaries were needed for the sake of protection and safety, as well as to avoid conflict. Clear boundaries allowed the parents to emotionally detach from their former spouses and rebuild lives "full of hope and promise."

In findings from "Stories of Betrayal," family resilience was defined as making conscientious decisions based on children's needs to have stability and predictability in their families. This was a key theme regardless of the ages of the children at the time of separation. Lydia's story emphasised the need to "be smart enough" to know what actions would pose developmental harm to children and what actions would not. Theresa's story stressed the need for research to determine all aspects of the changes associated with divorce and to understand reasons for infidelity. In Cathy's story, family resilience was her commitment to her children.

The central importance of child-centred parenting was evident in all the stories, regardless of reasons for separation. The values and identity of the primary parent shaped the family's response to divorce and determined how resources were used, specifically educational resources, so that children would not be subject to other changes while the family structure was in process of change. It was important to have stability in the midst of change by having the primary parent available to the children. However, in "Stories of Betrayal," parental values that reflected the importance of family and good parenting were not enough. It took determination, personal sacrifice, and compromise to ensure children's needs were primary while parents established separate households and lives.

To facilitate cooperative parenting, clear boundaries between parental homes were necessary regardless of the circumstances of divorce. Fathers' roles were not replaced and clear boundaries enabled parents to separate children's needs from parental problems. In "Stories of Betrayal," the non-resident fathers' involvement was encouraged and supported. The fathers were involved in decision making regarding the children and spent time with the children on a regular and frequent basis. The mothers supported the fathers' role in their children's lives. Several mothers supported and helped develop the non-residential fathers' parenting skills by offering suggestions and information about parenting, in Lydia's, Theresa's, and Cathy's stories. Helping fathers acquire parenting skills did not translate into controlling the fathers' relationships with their children. In "Stories of Violence," the fathers' involvement was predicated on safety first.

In conclusion, all of these stories conveyed the central importance of parenting based on children's developmental needs as a key component of family resilience. To find stability after divorce, it was important that the children had one primary residence.

However, there were major differences in how much contact children had with the non-residential parent depending on the non-residential parent's parenting skills and pre-divorce problems. In the stories where family violence or mental health problems did not exist (Lydia's and Theresa's stories), the fathers' had frequent contact and were involved in decisions that affected the children. In fact, the children's adjustment problems stopped once the father was able to establish his own residence in Theresa's story. The children in these two stories benefited by overnight stays and direct caregiving by the fathers, as opposed to arbitrary blocks of time spent with children. In contrast with these two situations, in homes where domestic violence and substance abuse were a problem, the children did not experience the same kinds of benefits. In these stories (Sadie's, Chelsea's, and Cindy's), parenting by the non-residential father needed to be weighed carefully against safety for children. In two stories the fathers did have contact but it was limited to weekends and holiday time. In stories where mental health was a concern for the non-residential parent (Braiden's and Cathy's), similar concerns for safety were expressed.

All of the parents demonstrated an ability to utilize information to foster resilience and positive adaptation and were open in learning how to cope so that children were not harmed. In the stories where there was violence, it meant safety planning and learning about the dynamics of violent relationships. In the other stories it meant utilizing information from parent education seminars on separation and divorce and other resources.

The two broad categories depicting the results were based on reasons for separation. Some of these stories did not neatly fit these categories. Braiden's story was

included in “Stories of Violence” because of the high level of conflict illustrating emotional violence between parents. Cathy’s story was included in “Stories of Betrayal” because of her former husband’s mental illness, which led to a sense of betrayal. Aspects of her story resembled some findings from “Stories of Violence” in that contact with the children was dependent upon the father developing parenting skills and safety was a critical determinant in how much contact he had. Cindy’s story was included in “Stories of Violence” but also had elements that overlapped with “Stories of Betrayal” because her marriage ended due to her husband’s infidelity.

Overall, the details of problems leading to divorce shaped the response to divorce. Pre-existing problems determined how divorce was handled and what resources were used. However, it was the personal values of the primary parent that determined how resources were used. In all of the stories, divorce was seen as a regrettable loss. In situations of violence, there was loss because the other parent did not want to change. In these situations divorce became a salutogenic aspect that contributed to children’s development. The salutogenic aspect of divorce in those stories was contrasted to others where there was no violence or parental conflict. In these cases there was concern that divorce was harmful to children’s development. Regardless of the reasons, divorce was depicted as a permanent change that alters children’s lives forever.

Implications for practice

Counselling that reinforces a strong sense of coherence

A sense of coherence is based on an assessment of the stressor as meaningful, manageable, and comprehensible (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987). From “Stories of Betrayal,”

the findings showed that a strong sense of coherence helped parents adjust and cope, which in turn was reflected in their parenting and their ability to cooperate with the non-resident parent. Therefore, counselling services that help parents make meaning of divorce in an adaptative manner would foster family resilience. The participants in this cohort sought counselling services to help them understand and fully comprehend the numerous changes required in roles, responsibilities, and circumstances; to understand reasons for divorce; and to understand implications of their decisions. The findings (Sadie, Lydia, Braiden, Cathy, Theresa) showed that parents valued practical help and advice. As such, it would be beneficial to parents of divorce if counsellors helped them in direct problem solving which would give them a sense of control in making divorce transitions more manageable.

Froma Walsh (1998, 2002, 2006) has written about practice implications from a family resilience framework. She suggests that the components of family resilience are based on beliefs (meaning making of adversity, positive outlook, and transcendence and spirituality), organizational patterns (flexibility, connectedness, and social and economic resources), and communication patterns (clarity, open emotional sharing, and collaborative problem solving (1998). To make meaning of crises, she has suggested the following guidelines: clarifying ambiguity; normalizing, depathologizing, and contextualizing distress; using respectful language and constructs; reframing and relabeling; instilling hope and optimism; refocusing from complaints to aims; identifying, affirming, and building strengths; crediting positive intentions; praising efforts and achievements; drawing out hidden resources and lost competence; highlighting strengths in the midst of adversity; helping families live with uncertainty; seeing opportunities in

the midst of crises; building empathic connections; encouraging a positive, future-oriented focus; and accepting human limitations (Walsh, 2006). The findings from this study support many of the practice guidelines suggested by Walsh (2006).

The participants all felt there was a lack of positive role models in divorce. In practice this means social workers could provide concrete examples of actions parents can take to help the family find stability and help parents decide how suggestions from education sessions and books can be implemented. Providing additional literature could help parents predict consequences of their actions and would provide other examples. By breaking problems down into solutions, parents could start to perceive divorce transitions in a more comprehensible manner. Instilling hope for resolution of problems and a better future is an important component of resilience (Walsh, 2002, 2006). It was clear from the findings that when parents struggled with solutions to problems, they were still being resilient by facing problems directly and by being conscious of implications of their choices.

Findings showed that when parents were able to redefine divorce, it enabled their adjustment and their children's adjustment. Therefore it is important that counsellors reframe problems so that parents do not automatically interpret divorce to mean that their children will be irreparably harmed. In fact, based on the results of this research, divorce did lead to salutogenic results in that children were not exposed to chronic parental conflict, domestic violence coupled with addictions, and poor parenting as a result of mental illness.

All of the parents obtained counselling to help them make personal sense of divorce. Therefore, counselling is an important resource that could help parents redefine

and reframe divorce in a manner that enhances their identity and reinforces their personal strengths and sense of coherence.

Counselling to help parents foster a sense of belonging and stability

All of the participants in this study were open to new information whether it came from books, seminars, their lawyers, Internet research, mentors, or counsellors. They were resourceful in researching questions about divorce and were willing to utilize information to ensure children's needs were not compromised. In practice, if parents have inflexible cognitions it would be helpful if social workers helped parents see the benefits of change and disadvantages of rigid thinking through the use of reframing and confrontation.

To help the family achieve stability and harmony, the parents spoke about the need for consistency in routines and a sense of structure whereby they were in charge. Several parents spoke of temporary instability in their parenting immediately after separation, similar to findings by Emery (1988) and Wallerstein (1986). Therefore, helping parents address practical parenting problems would enable the family to regain a sense of structure and consistency.

The findings from this study also showed the value of functional supports, especially from family, to help find stability in routines and household organization. Functional support such childcare, helping to take children to activities, or making meals reduced the day-to-day demands of the primary parent and allowed for quality time with children. Encouraging the development and use of functional supports allowed parents to absorb the changes and focus on their hands-on parenting skills. Several parents (Lydia,

Braiden, and Cathy) spoke of stability being restored through the use of regular activities and sports. It gave the parents and children something to look forward to and involved the parents in meaningful ways with their children.

The role transition in going to a single-parent family was difficult and several parents spoke of the need for self-care, consisting of healthy eating, exercise, social support, and having time away from family as important time to recharge their energy. Other parents (Cathy, Braiden, and Cindy) spoke of self-care as critical to the overall functioning of the family. The means ranged from reading a variety of literature, exercise, trips due to work, going out with friends, speaking on the phone to family members, spending time with mentors, going back to school, or being actively involved in their children's activities.

Encourage parental cooperation and by developing clear boundaries

The goal of helping children adjust did not include eliminating the other parent from the children's lives regardless of the reason for divorce. In "Stories of Betrayal," the parents spoke of finding ways to involve the non-resident parent so that the children could develop a meaningful attachment to the non-residential parent. Therefore, services that encouraged parental cooperation would help children feel a greater sense of belonging and reassurance. Findings also showed the importance of helping the non-residential parent learn parenting skills to facilitate a good relationship with the children. Helping the non-residential father become more involved was important for several reasons. Firstly, the parents were both important for their children's development. Secondly, a good relationship with the other parent meant that the children would spend

time with him and this gave the primary parent time to work or do other things. It was clear in these stories that while the identity of being a parent was important, it was also important for them to retain an identity separate from the children and parenting.

Several parents (Lydia, Theresa, Cathy, Chelsea, and Cindy) felt they developed a cooperative relationship with the other parent. In a cooperative co-parenting relationship all parents identified the need for clear boundaries between homes, between adult issues and parenting, and between personal information and parenting information. Therefore, helping parents establish healthy boundaries is an important component of co-parenting. Helping parents create good boundaries and communicate with each other so that concerns are constructively addressed is an important function that could come from counselling, mediation, or Collaborative Law.

Part of good co-parenting was the ability of the primary parent to accept differences in parenting styles between homes. Again, this finding is related to flexibility on the part of the parents. In this regard, Lydia's story illustrated the need to be "smart enough" to distinguish between differences that are harmful to children's development and those that are not. Therefore, educating parents on non-harmful differences between homes could be achieved through counselling; parent education sessions; in custody assessments; and in reading materials in order to facilitate healthy co-parenting arrangements.

The findings showed that a sense of belonging was communicated to the children, in a manner that they did not have to choose between parents or feel caught in loyalty conflicts (Cindy, Lydia, Chelsea, and Theresa). There was consistency in expectations and rules in "Stories of Betrayal." The stories where children were older conveyed the

importance of children being involved in family functioning and chores as a means of promoting a sense of belonging. In fact, from the one interview with an 11-year-old child, his definition of the good things about being with his father were being involved and helping his father build things and do sports together.

Importance of understanding children's needs and perceptions

For families to be resilient it was important that parents understood children's developmental needs and had empathy for children separate from divorce problems. All of the parents spoke of the importance for primary parents to redefine family in a manner that did not eliminate the other parent's role, but in a manner that conveyed clarity and belonging. The ability to accept changes in the family structure enabled them to develop new traditions, routines, and activities that gave children a sense of stability. A central notion in the parents' redefinition of family was that it communicated to children that family did not disappear. In fact, in Theresa's story, her young child's definition of divorce was that they "have two homes." Having a clear sense of family by the primary parent reinforced belonging and unity.

Importance of employment and good wages for family resilience

Three stories reinforced the need for all parents, but especially for mothers, to be economically secure so that they could support their children after separation. The centrality of employment that paid a liveable salary was an essential contributor towards family resilience. Avoiding the poverty trap of low-income employment was crucial. In this regard, three parents returned to post-secondary education in order to study for an

occupation that would pay enough so that children could participate in recreational activities and have the material things in life that other children have. Therefore, educational programs that lead to viable occupations are important. Three mothers returned to post-secondary education after divorce.

Findings from this study showed that only one participant (Chelsea) relied on social assistance for a short time after the separation. This participant did find low-paying service industry employment while returning to university to complete a degree in a professional occupation. Another parent, Lydia, had a home-based business while going to university and parenting three young children. Both of these participants scheduled classes when children were in school or relied on childcare from family so that they could go to school and work.

The need for childcare was primary for families of divorce to be economically self-sufficient. In Theresa's and Lydia's stories, resolving the financial aspects of divorce as quickly as possible enabled stability within the family. In Chelsea's story, she was not able to obtain child or spousal support until 3 years after the separation, which put her in a position of financial destitution. In the interim, she lived in social housing and worked in service industry employment. However, her identity was not one of a welfare mother. In fact, she started a support group for other mothers. Contributing to community was an important aspect of her identity, which empowered her to continue to overcome barriers to become self-sufficient. Resolving interim financial support for mothers is critical. It reduces changes for children in the midst of the upheaval of divorce and allows the children to adjust.

The parents who had careers found this to be an important asset in coping. Advice from co-workers was important (Theresa), and others used support from people in the workplace (Sadie to find a safe place to live, and Braiden for emotional and social support). Having an identity outside of that of a parent, provided consistency and stability for parents while in the midst of change.

All of the participants in this study were conscious not to introduce other changes until there was stability for the children. The two participants who had new partners did not re-couple until at least 3 years after the separation. The three participants who returned to school scheduled classes when their children were at school so they could maximize time with their children. All the parents were careful to balance change with as much stability as possible.

Recommendations and implications

The importance of continued funding for domestic violence programs

Different typologies of intimate partner abuse were central in this study and each story showed different pathways to finding safety and ultimately, family resilience. However, a common theme was the use of services from domestic violence programs consisting of advocacy, counselling, encouragement, as well as practical services such as accompanying women to file police reports, helping them access safe shelters, and liaising with the justice system to keep them informed of criminal proceedings. Domestic violence services were utilized in all three stories of domestic violence. Advocacy was needed in Sadie's and Chelsea's stories and Cindy stayed in a safe shelter when she was locked out of her home with a newborn infant and her 2-year-old son. It was clear in all

these narratives that the specialized services for domestic violence were essential so that women could leave. Domestic violence services provided counselling to educate the mothers about dynamics of abuse and to enable them to take responsibility for themselves, and not for their former spouse. *A key recommendation is that domestic violence services continue to be funded. These services were pivotal to mothers and children finding safety.*

The pivotal role of the court for safety for mothers and children

Central to the findings was the need for court orders that privileged safety of children and women before fathers' parenting rights. Judges were central in determining the benefit of an ongoing relationship with the non-residential father and, if there was a benefit, to determine under what circumstances. Unfortunately, the findings from this study showed that this did not occur until after there was harm to the child in Sadie's story. The father's rights for access were a primary concern for the court while the mother's allegations about violence, substance abuse, and poor parenting were not taken seriously. While injustices did occur, it was through perseverance and determination that injustice was corrected. In Sadie's story concerns were not taken seriously until trial, and in Chelsea's story, concerns were understood when the judge corrected the biases in the separation contract in a chambers application. The judges needed to be in a position to make mandatory court orders, thus pre-trial conferences were not advantageous. *It is recommended that the courts have a screening device to use in situations where domestic violence is alleged. This screening device could be utilized to determine the type of*

violence that exists and could assist in determining what type of parenting plan should be put in place that would not compromise safety for the children and mothers.

Financial resources are a prerequisite for legal services and safety

To access the courts financial resources for legal services are a prerequisite. If financial resources were unavailable, then legal services were inaccessible and safety was in jeopardy. Only one participant temporarily qualified for legal aid services, yet the courts were essential to ensure safety in context of domestic violence. In situations of high-conflict divorce and parental alienation, the court orders were necessary to ensure the father was not eliminated from his children's lives.

Risk-benefit screening to determine parenting plans

In stories where domestic violence occurred, the family dynamics were complicated because of substance abuse, which led to ever-changing circumstances and unpredictability. Substance abuse combined with intimate partner violence increased risks for spousal violence and poor parenting. In this context, the findings showed an alarming denial of services by police, the courts, and child protection. In Sadie's story, her child's distress in supervised access resulted in supervised access being terminated by Family Justice Services, only to be supervised by parental grandparents. There was no court order for a custody or access assessment to determine the reasons for the child to be terrified of his father.

The results from this study support recommendations from the literature suggesting that risk screening is needed when domestic violence is alleged and the courts

are relied upon to develop a parenting plan (Jaffe, Crooks, & Bala, 2005; Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008). These authors propose that three areas need to be assessed: potency (degree of severity, dangerousness and potential risk for serious injury and lethality); pattern of coercive control and domination, as distinct from isolated incidents is an indicator of stress and trauma; and whether there is a primary perpetrator of abuse (Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008). In this article specific questions are suggested to assess each area as a screening. In conjunction with this recommendation Family Justice Services, Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General may wish to partner with the Court of Queen's Bench, Saskatchewan to arrange for training on screening for violence and to devise a plan of implementation.

In assessing risk several factors are considered, such as the degree of severity, dangerousness, and potential risk of injury and lethality; the extent to which violence is part of a pattern of coercive control and domination (Stark, 2007); and whether there is a primary perpetrator of the violence (Jaffe, et al, 2008.). Clearly a risk-benefit analysis of different kinds of parenting plans in domestic violence is needed (Sturge & Glaser, 2000). From the literature, it is clear that differential levels of risk determine various options in parenting plans ranging from co-parenting, parallel parenting, supervised exchange, supervised access, to suspended contact (Jaffe, Crooks, & Bala, 2005). Findings showed variation in parenting plans ranging from joint custody with the mother having primary residence and the father having designated parenting time based on his work schedule (Chelsea's story); to sole custody with the father having suspended contact due to his unwillingness to follow court orders (Sadie's story); to sole custody with the father having parenting time on alternate weekends (Cindy's story).

From child development research general protective mechanisms were noted and which could be strengthened in practice. These are: decrease risk factors, reduce negative chain reactions, strengthen protective processes and reduce vulnerabilities, and bolster family and individual efficacy to gain competence (Rutter, 1987). Clearly, the question of fathers' parenting rights in context of domestic violence would depend on the quality of the fathers' parenting skills, the child's attachment to the father, and safety of the child (Rutter, 1994, 1999). *It is recommended that in situations where there are a number of factors, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, or concerns of parental mental health problems, that the courts have an in-depth assessment completed to understand the exact nature of the risks and what type of parenting plan would be best.*

Clarification of child protection policy and training in domestic violence

It was clear from "Stories of Violence" that child protection services and the police did not take mothers' complaints about child abuse or neglect seriously. There was a lack of investigation even though child protection policy includes risks of domestic violence. It was incumbent on the mothers to prove harm to children, and in one story the mother was threatened with the loss of her children (Chelsea's story), or allegations were presumed to stem from the mothers' wishes to unjustifiably terminate the fathers' involvement with their children. Yet, results from this study showed that fathers' roles were never replaced regardless of the reason for divorce. In effect, the narratives in this study illustrated that the institutions designed to protect children actually perpetuated risk for children. In Sadie's story, there was an interview with the police and child protection to determine if there was evidence for criminal charges, but if there were no criminal

charges no services offered. It is not surprising that an interview of this with a 3-year-old child did not procure evidence needed to satisfy requirements for criminal charges.

Allegations of child abuse or neglect in context of divorce have become common, especially when the courts order visitation. In Saskatchewan, child protection policy is vague in defining and describing actions necessary in situations of domestic violence especially in the context of separation and divorce (Ministry of Social Services, 2004). Therefore, it is suggested that child welfare policy needs to be clarified. In addition, training needs to be provided on methods of risk assessment and in understanding different typologies of domestic violence. This would equip child protection social workers to be better able to assess these complex families.

In addition, it is important that the systems designed to protect children are clear about the important role distinctions that exist between professions; for example, if courts orders visitation with a parent, the court order cannot automatically be interpreted to mean that risk has been assessed and found to be minimal; or if the police do not have enough evidence to lay criminal charges this does not necessarily mean that the situation is safe for children. It is the mandate of child protection services to assess risk to children regardless of circumstances; the findings showed that because complaints were not taken seriously children were harmed. *It is recommended that policy for the Ministry of Social Services be clarified regarding child protection in domestic violence situations to include training on the following: assessing different types of family violence, determining risks for the children in various situations, exploring options on how to provide safety for children, and learning how to proceed in situations where mothers are in the process of separation.*

Training for police on domestic violence

The findings showed the police refused to take domestic violence complaints seriously unless there was advocacy. In Chelsea's story, the police were unable to take action because her husband lawfully obtained access to the matrimonial home and there was no legal custody or division of property. The lack of police response increased risks for mothers and children. It appears that police do not take complaints of domestic violence seriously; therefore, they do not intervene. *It is recommended that all police services receive current training on variations of domestic violence and actions that can be taken by law enforcement that would increase safety for children and non-violent parents.*

Importance of child development literature on risk and resilience in practice

The findings from this study showed that when children had one parent with mental health or substance abuse problems, the risks for maltreatment increased. In situations of domestic violence, children often experience numerous moves as mothers seek safety, thereby increasing risks for children. Domestic violence also exposes children to being used as pawns in custody battles by fathers who attempt to use access and custody issues as weapons to punish the mothers. In this study the children who required counselling required it for a variety of reasons: as a result of abuse (burn marks due to inappropriate supervision) and neglect (exposed to adult sexuality) while with their father (Chelsea's story); because of a preschool child's aggressive behaviour after visits with the father resulting in the need for specialized childcare (Sadie's story); when children were forced to choose sides due to parental conflict (Braiden's story); or when a

child was physically beaten by a parent with mental health problems (Cathy's story). The findings support those by other researchers in child development that show that psychopathology in parents can result in problems for children (Rutter, 2002; Towers, Spotts, & Neiderhiser, 2001). In this study, children showed signs of maltreatment and emotional distress directly because of the psychopathology in one parent resulting in poor parenting, neglectful parenting, and abusive parenting.

Similar to other studies, data from this study found that the impact of one parent's mental health problems increased the risk for ongoing conflict between parents (Johnston & Roseby, 1997). This finding was illustrated in Braiden's, Cathy's, Sadie's, and Cindy's stories where substance abuse combined with violence resulted in abuse, lack of supervision, and neglect of children because of the unstable environments children were subjected to while in the care of that parent.

Parental concerns for children repeating patterns of substance abuse or violence existed after divorce in all of the "Stories of Violence." To mitigate problems for children, when parents show signs of multiple problems careful assessments on parents are needed to determine what kind of parenting plans would benefit children. Psychological assessments of parents would clarify the exact nature of the psychological disorders and the effect it may have on parenting. In this regard, evaluation of the risks and the protective mechanisms to determine the impact on children's development would be based on child development literature. *It is recommended that child development research, parenting research, and research on risk be utilized in custody access assessments in addition to research on divorce.*

Summary of recommendations for policy

1. That domestic violence services continued to be funded. These services were pivotal and essential to mothers and children finding safety when leaving violent marriages.
2. That the courts use a screening device in situations where domestic violence is alleged in order to determine the type of violence that exists and the type of parenting plans that would be least likely to compromise safety for the children and mothers.
3. That in situations where there are a number of concerns, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, or concerns of parental mental health problems, that the courts have an in-depth assessment completed to understand the exact nature of the risks and what type of parenting plan would be best.
4. That the child protection policy for the Ministry of Social Services be clarified regarding domestic violence and that it include training on how to assess different types of family violence, risks for the children, options about how to provide safety for children, and options on how to proceed in situations where mothers are in the process of separation.
5. That all police services receive current training on variations of domestic violence and actions that can be taken by law enforcement that would increase safety for children and non-violent parents.
6. That child development research, parenting research, and research on risk be utilized in custody access assessments in addition to research on divorce.

Summary of recommendations for practice

As noted earlier, many of these recommendations echo practice suggestions made by Walsh (2006) from a family resilience framework.

1. That when separated parents come to counselling that mental health professionals help parents make sense of divorce in a manner that fosters hope and reinforces their competence as parents.
2. That counsellors help parents redefine and reframe divorce in a manner that enhances parental strengths contributing to good parenting.
3. That mental health practitioners help parents to redefine divorce in a manner that builds their sense of coherence and helps them accept the realities of their situation.
4. That social workers and other mental health professionals help parents facing divorce to problem solve everyday dilemmas. Breaking problems down into manageable portions helps make the changes associated with divorce more comprehensible.
5. That social workers and other mental health professionals provide encouragement, hope, and positive examples of coping to help parents persevere when dealing with adversity.
6. That social workers and other mental health professionals help parents provide structure for children by having age appropriate expectations for them to enable adjustment and increase family stability and harmony.
7. That social workers and other mental health professionals help parents access activities for children and develop daily routines that foster a sense of unity and belonging within the family. This includes finding ways for parents to involve children in day-to-day chores and responsibilities.

8. That social workers and other mental health professionals help parents access and use functional supports to assist in the role overload during the initial stages of divorce.
9. That social workers and other mental health professionals encourage parents to be mindful of their self-care, so that they will have the physical and emotional stamina needed to face challenges of single parenting in the midst of change and instability.
10. That in situations where there is no family violence, social workers and other mental health professionals help parents redefine family so that the other parent's role is not eliminated.
11. That social workers and other mental health professionals help parents who share parenting time to set clear boundaries between parental problems and issues affecting the children.
12. That in counselling, mediation, or Collaborative Law professionals help parents distinguish between problems that harm children versus those that constitute differences in parenting because of parental personalities, thus preventing unnecessary interference. This action helps parents establish boundaries so that parenting responsibilities can be shared and parenting time is not compromised.
13. That the parent education sessions for separating and divorcing parents continue to be mandatory in Saskatchewan. Many parents benefit from these sessions and were able to utilize the information in co-parenting so that children were not adversely harmed by divorce.
14. That financial matters be settled as soon as possible for mothers who have not worked outside of the home and have primary residence of the children. Early settlement of

financial concerns allows the mothers to make plans for their future income or to gain closure.

15. That counsellors encourage mothers who have not worked outside of the home to make immediate plans to access educational resources that lead to economically viable occupations so they can achieve economic independence. Working in low-income employment does not lead to family resilience. Being able to afford activities for children and live in a good neighbourhood is an important contributor to family resilience.

Recommendations for future research

In recommending future research, it is difficult to separate divorce from other problems within the family, because divorce is an outcome of other problems. However, by focusing on resilience, salutogenic aspects of the person and environment become evident. Therefore, recommended research includes continued examination of family relationships from a salutogenic perspective where divorce is situated in context of other problems over a period of time. This research would be similar to research in child development, whereby longitudinal studies examined the impact of multiple risks on children's development (Werner & Smith, 1992). In divorce research, use of longitudinal studies are important because divorce is only one transition that may reduce or increase risks for children depending upon subsequent transitions and ongoing interactions with the environment. Other family transitions may present additional risks or protective mechanisms. Isolation of divorce transitions from the context of life does not accurately depict resources or depict the cause of problems. Recommendations for future research

include a continued focus on what helped and how resources in the environment contributed to wellness. This approach would present options for intervention and policy development. Findings from this study showed that much of what contributed to family resilience was dependent upon the primary parents' sense of coherence; therefore it would also be interesting to examine families' responses to other transitions to determine if the characteristics described in this study prevail in other transitions.

On a personal level, my research interests are to understand what contributes to wellness when families and children face significant adversities in life.

Final comments

To summarize, it was found that family resilience was an ecological concept reflecting the identity of parents. The specific circumstances of the family, their history of pre-divorce problems, and ages of children determined what resources were needed and how they were used to foster family resilience. Central to the construct of family resilience were how the primary parents interpreted and appraised marital problems and how they were able to redefine family and the meaning of divorce. The identity of the primary parent was pivotal in developing a new family identity. The most helpful resources varied. In "Stories of Violence," the court was central in ensuring safety and domestic violence services in educating mothers on violent family dynamics. In "Stories of Betrayal," family support, educational seminars on separation and divorce, and social support were pivotal.

This research is based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 7 participants using narrative analysis. As is common with small sample sizes in qualitative research, the

results are not transferable to other populations. However, I do believe that the themes depicted in these stories are applicable to other transitions that families experience. While writing the dissertation, I often found myself immersed in the themes of that particular story as I dealt with the stresses and strains of everyday life. Qualities and resources that contribute to resilience are not unique to divorce, but are applicable to dealing with other adversities in life. Coping in a manner that promoted family resilience required maturity to put children's needs first, perseverance, and openness to self-evaluation. These are the same resources required when families face other hardships. In many ways, characteristics of resilience can be described as "ordinary magic" (Masten, 2001) in interaction with resources in the environment.

References

- Acock, A. C., & Demo, D. H. (1994). *Family diversity and well-being*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Agar, M., & Hobbs, J.R. (1982). Interpreting discourse: Coherence and the analysis of ethnographic interviews. *Discourse Processes*, 5, 1-32.
- Ahrons, C. (1983). Divorce: Before, during and after. In H.I. McCubbin & C.R. Figley (Eds.), *Stress and the family*, Vol. 1 (pp.101-229). Brunner/ Mazah.
- Ahrons, C. (1994). *The good divorce*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Ahrons, C., & Tanner, J.L. (2003). Adult children and their fathers: Relationship changes 20 years after parental divorce. *Family Relations*, 52, 340-351.
- Allison, P., & Furstenberg, F.F.Jr. (1989). How marital dissolution affects children: Variations by age and sex. *Development Psychology*, 25, 540-549.
- Amato, P.R. (1993). Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypotheses, and empirical support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 23-38.
- Amato, P.R. (1994). Life-span adjustment of children to their parents' divorce. *Future Child*, 4, 143-164.
- Amato, P. R. (1995). Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypothesis, and empirical support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 628-640.
- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 1260-1287.
- Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (1996). A prospective study of divorce and marital quality. *American Sociological Review*, 58, 356-365.
- Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (1997). *A generation at risk: Growing up in an era of*

family upheaval. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Amato, P.R., & Booth, A. (2001). The legacy of marital discord: Consequences for children's marital quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(4), 627-638.
- Amato, P. R., & Cheadle, J. E. (2008). Parental divorce, marital conflict and children's behaviour problems: A comparison of adopted and biological children. *Social Forces*, 86(3), 1139- 1161.
- Amato, P.R., & Fowler, F. (2002). Parenting practice, child adjustment, and family diversity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64(3), 703-716.
- Amato, P.R., & Gilbreth, J.G. (1999). Non-residential father and children's well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61, 557-573.
- Amato, P.R., & Keith, B. (1991a). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110, 26-46.
- Amato, P.R., & Keith, B. (1991b). Parental divorce and adult well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 43-58. .
- Amato, P. R., Loomis, L. S., & Booth, A. (1995). Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring in early adulthood. *Social Forces*, 73, 895-916.
- Amato, P.R., Rezac, S., & Booth, A. (1995). Helping between parents and young adult offspring: The role of parental marital quality, divorce, and remarriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 363-374.
- Amato, P.R., & Rodgers, S.J. (1997). A longitudinal study of marital problems and subsequent divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 612-624.

- Ambert, A.M. (2002). *Divorce: Facts, causes, and consequences. Contemporary Family trends*. Ottawa, Canada: Vanier Institute of the Family.
- Anderson, K.H. (1994). Family sense of coherence: As collective and consensus in relation to family quality of life after illness diagnosis. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A. Thompson, A. I. Thompson, & J. E. Fromer (Eds.), *Sense of coherence and resiliency: Stress, coping, and health* (pp. 169-187). The University of Wisconsin System: A Center for Excellence in Family Studies.
- Antle, B. J., & Regehr, C. (2003, January). Beyond individual rights and freedoms: Metaethics in social work research. *Social Work*, 48(1), 135-143.
- Anthony, E.J., & Cohler, B.J. (1987). *The invulnerable child*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, stress and coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unravelling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Antonovsky, A. (1994). The sense of coherence: An historical and future perspective. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A. Thompson, A.I. Thompson, & J.E. Fromer (Eds.), *Sense of coherence and resiliency: Stress, coping and health* (pp. 3-20). The University of Wisconsin System: A Center for Excellence in Family Studies.
- Antonovsky, A., & Sourani, T. (1988). Family sense of coherence and family adaptation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 79-92.
- Aseltine, R.H., & Kessler, R.C. (1993). Marital disruption and depression in a community sample. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 34, 237-251.

- Austin, W.G. (2000). Assessing credibility in allegations of marital violence in the high-conflict child custody case. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 38, 462-477.
- Banach, M. (1998). The best interests of the child: decision making factors. *Families in Society*, 38(3), 331-345.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanisms in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37, 122-147.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Barton, W. H. (2005). Methodological challenges in the study of resilience. In M. Ungar, Michael (Ed.), *Handbook for working with children and youth* (pp. 135- 147). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Beavers, W. R., & Hampson, R. B. (1990). *Successful families: Assessment and intervention*. New York: Norton.
- Belsky, J. (1980). Child maltreatment: An ecological interaction. *American Psychologist*, 35(4), 320-335.
- Bernardini, S.C., & Jenkins, J. J. (2002). *An overview of the risks and protectors for children of separation and divorce*. Presented to: Minister of Justice, Family, Children and Youth Section, Department of Justice Canada, Ottawa and Attorney General of Canada.
- Bertrand, L. D., Hornick, J.P., Paetsch, J.J., & Bala, N.C. (2001). *The survey of child support awards: Interim analysis of phase 11 data (October 1998 to March 2000)*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, Child Support Team (CSR-2001-2E/2F).

- Block, J., Block, J. H., & Gjerde, P. F. (1988). Parental functioning and the home environment in families of divorce: A prospective and concurrent analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 27, 207-213.
- Block, J. H., Block, J., & Gjerde, P. F. (1986). The personality of children prior to divorce: A prospective study. *Child Development*, 57, 827-840.
- Broden, W. (1992). Narrative perspectives in psychosocial intervention following adverse life events. *Social Work*, 37, 135-141.
- Boss, P. (1987). Family stress: Perception and context, In M. Sussman & S. Steinmetz (Eds.) *Handbook on marriage and family* (pp. 695-723). New York: Plenum.
- Boss, P. (2001). *Family Stress Management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boss, P. (2002). *Family stress management: A contextual approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Booth, A., & Amato, P.R. (2001). Parental pre-divorce relations and offspring divorce well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 197-212.
- Braver, S.L., & O'Connell, E. (1998). *Divorced Dads: Shattering the myths*. New York: Tarcher, Putnam.
- Braver, S. L., Wolchick, S. A., Sandler, I. N., Sheets, V. I., Fogas, B., & Bray, R.C. (1993). A longitudinal study of non-residential parents: Parents without children. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 9-23.
- Braver, S.L., Wolchik, S.A., Sandler, I. N., Sheets, V.L., Fogas, B., & Bray, R.C. (1995). Treatment of marital conflict and prevention of divorce. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21(4), 461-473.

- Bray, J.H. (1999). From marriage to remarriage and beyond: Findings from the developmental issues in stepfamilies research project. In E.M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Coping with divorce, single parenting and remarriage: A risk and resiliency perspective* (pp. 253-271). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bray, J.H., & Berger, S.H. (1993). Non-residential family-child relationships following divorce and remarriage. In C.E. Depner & J.H. Bray (Eds.), *Non-residential parenting: New visits in family living* (pp. 156-181). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bray, J.H., & Hetherington, E. (1993). Families in transition: Introduction and overview. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 3-8.
- Brentano, F. (1973). *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723-742.
- Brooks R.B. (1994). Children at risk: Fostering resilience and hope. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 64, 545-553.
- Bubolz, M.M., & Sontag, M.S. (1993). Human ecology theory. In P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm & S.K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theory and methods*, (pp. 419-448). New York: Plenum.
- Buchanan, C.M., Maccoby, E.E., & Dornbusch, S.M. (1991). Caught between parents: Adolescents' experience in divorced homes. *Child Development*, 62(5), 1008-1029.

- Buechler, C., Anthony, C., Krishnakumar, A., Stone, G., Gerard, J., & Pemberton, S. (1997). Interparental conflict and youth problem behaviours: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 6, 233-247.
- Bruner, E.M. (1984). *Revelation and reason*. Raleigh, NC: Stevens Book Press.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986). Ethnology as narrative. In V.W. Turner and E.M. Bruner (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience* (pp. 139-155). Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burr, W. (1973). *Theory construction and the sociology of the family*. New York: John Wiley.
- Cashmore, J., Parkinson, P., & Taylor, A. (2008). Overnight stays and children's relationships with resident and non-resident parents after divorce. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(6), 707-733.
- Cederblad, M., & Hanson, K. (1996). Sense of coherence- A concept influencing health and quality of life in a Swedish psychiatric at-risk group. *Israeli Journal of Medical Science*, 32, 194-199.
- Chase, A. J., Cherlin, A. J., & Kiernan, K. E. (1995). The long term effects of parental divorce on the mental health of young adults. *Child Development*, 66, 1614-1634.
- Cherlin, A. L. (1998). Marriage and marital dissolution among black Americans. *Journal of Comparative Studies*, 29, 147-158.
- Cherlin, A. J., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1994). Stepfamilies in the United States. *Review of Sociology*, 20, 359-381.
- Cherlin, A.J., Furstenberg, F.F. Jr., Chase-Lansdale, P.L., Kiernan, K.E., Robbins, P.K.,

- Morrison, D.R., & Teitler, J.O. (1991). Longitudinal studies on the effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. *Science*, 252, 1386-1389.
- Child and Family Services Act*, s.s. 1989-90, c. C-7.2.
- Children's Law Act*, s.s. 1997, c. C-8.2
- Chiriboga, D.A. (1982). Adaptation to marital separation in later and earlier life. *Journal of Gerontology*, 37, 109-114.
- Chibucos, T.R., Leite, R.W., & Weis, D.L. (2005). *Readings in family theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clarke-Steward, K.A., & Hayward, C. (1996). Advantages of father custody and contact for the psychological well-being of school aged children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 17, 239-270.
- Cohler, B.J. (1991). The life story and the study of resilience and response to adversity. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1(2 & 3), 169-200.
- Cohler, B. J. (1994). The human sciences, the life story, and clinical research. In E. Sherman & W.J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp.163-174). NY: Columbia University Press.
- Cooksey, E.C., & Craig, P.H. (1998). Parenting from a distance: The effects of parental characteristics on contact between non-residential fathers and their children. *Demography*, 35(2), 187-200.
- Cowan, P.A., Cowan, C.P., & Schulz, M.S. (1996). Thinking about risk and resilience in families. In M. Hetherington, & E. A. Blechman (Eds.), *Stress, coping, and resiliency in children and families* (pp. 1- 38). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Coysh, W.S., Johnson, J.R., Tschann, J.M., Wallerstein, J.S., & Kline, M. (1989).

- Parental postdivorce adjustment in joint and sole physical custody families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 52-71.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cummings, M.E. (1987). Coping with background anger in early childhood. *Child Development*, 58(4), 976-984.
- Davies, P.T., & Cummings, E.M. (1994). Marital conflict and child adjustment: An emotional insecurity hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 116, 387-411.
- Davis, P. (1988). Law, science and history: Reflections upon 'In the best interests of the child.' *Michigan Law Review*, 86, 1086-1120.
- De Haan, L., Hawley, D. R., & Deal, J. E. (2002). Operationalizing family resilience: A methodological strategy. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30, 275-291.
- Dembitz, N. (1974). Beyond and discipline's competence. *Yale Law Review*, 83, 1304-1310.
- Demo, D.H., & Acock, A.C. (1996). Singlehood, marriage, and remarriage: The effects of family structure and family relationships on mothers' well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17, 388-407.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989a). *Interpretive Biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Department of Justice. (2006). *The Federal Child Support Guidelines*. Ottawa: Author.

- DeShazer, S. (1985). *Keys to solution in brief therapy*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV. (2000). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Di Bias, T. (1996). Some programs for children. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 34(1), 112-129.
- Diedrick, P. (1991). Gender differences in divorce adjustment. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 14, 33-45.
- Divorce Act*, R.S.C. 1985 (2nd Sup.), c. 3.
- Doherty, W.J., Su, S., & Needle, R. (1989). Marital disruption and psychological well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 72-85.
- Drozdz, L.M., & Olesen, N. (2004). Is it abuse, alienation, and/or estrangement? *Journal of Child Custody*, 1, 65-106.
- Dupaix, L. (1987). Beyond interests revisited: In search of guideline. *Utah Law Review*, 65 (3), 651-672.
- Durst, R.F., Wedemeyer, N.V., & Zurcher, L.A. (1985, September-October). Parenting partnerships after divorce: Implications for practice. *Social Work*, 423-428.
- Dutton, D. G. (2005). Domestic abuse assessment in child custody disputes: Beware the domestic violence research paradigm. *Journal of Child Custody*, 2(4), 24-42.
- Early, T.J., & GlenMaye, L.F. (2000). Valuing families: Social work practice with families from a strengths perspective. *Social Work*, 45(2), 110-130.
- Emery, R. E. (1982). Interparental conflict and the children of discord and divorce. *Psychological Bulletin*, 92, 310-330.
- Emery, R. E. (1988). *Marriage, divorce, and children's adjustment*. Newbury Park, CA:

Sage.

Emery, R.E. (1994). *Renegotiating family relationships: Divorce, child custody, and mediation*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Emery, R. E. (1998). *Marriage, divorce and children's adjustment* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Emery, R.E. (1999). *Marriage, divorce and children's adjustment*. (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Emery, R.E., & Forehand, R. (1994). Parental divorce and children's well-being: A focus on resilience. In R.J. Haggerty, L.R. Sherrod, N. Garmezy, & M. Rutter (Eds.), *Stress, risk, and resilience in children and adolescents* (pp. 64-99). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Emery, R.E., & Laumann-Billings, L. (1998). An overview of the nature, causes, and consequences of abusive family relationships: Toward differentiating maltreatment and violence. *American Psychologist*, 53(2), 121-135.

Falicov, C.J. (1995). Training to think culturally: A multidimensional comparative framework. *Family Process*, 34, 373-388.

Falicov, C.J (1988). Learning to think culturally. In H.A. Liddle, D.C. Breunlin, & R.C. Schwartz (Eds.), *Handbook of family therapy training and supervision* (pp. 335-357). New York: The Guilford Press.

Farnsworth, J., Pett, M.A., & Lund, D.A. (1989). Predictors of loss management and well-being in later widowhood and divorce. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 102-121.

Fine, M.A., & Kurdek, L.A. (1992). Adjustment of adolescents in stepfather and

- stepmother families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 725-736.
- Forgatch, M.S., & DeGarmo, D. S. (1997b). Confident contributions to parenting and child outcomes. *Social Development*, 6, 237-253.
- Forgatch, M.S., Patterson, G.R., & Ray, J.A. (1996). Divorce and boys' adjustment problems: Two paths with a single model. In E.M. Hetherington & E.A. Blechman (Eds.), *Stress, coping and resiliency in children and families* (pp. 67-105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fortune, A.E. (1994). Commentary: Ethnography in social work. In E. Sherman & William J. R. (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 63-67). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fraser, H. (2004). Doing narrative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3(2), 179-210.
- Retrieved January 2006 from www.sagepublications.com
- DOI:10.1177/1473325004043383.
- Frederick, L., & Tilley, J. (2001). *Effective intervention in domestic violence cases: Context is everything*. Minneapolis, MN: Battered Women's Justice Project.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. & Cherlin, A. J. (1991). *Divided Families: What happens to children when parents part*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. & Kiernan, K. E. (2001). Delayed parental divorce: How much do children benefit? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63, 446-457.
- Furstenberg, F.F., Jr. Nord, C.W., Peterson, J.L., & Zill, N. (1983). The life course of children of divorce: Marital disruption and parental contact. *American Sociological Review*, 48(6), 656-668.

- Galarneau, D., & Sturrock, J. (1997). *Family income after separation. Perspectives on labour and income*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada (catalogue no. 75 -001-XPE).
- Garbarino, J. (1977, November). The human ecology of child maltreatment: A conceptual model for research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 721-735.
- Garbarino, J. (1982). *Children and families in the social environment*. New York: Aldine.
- Garbarino, J. (1995). *Raising children in a socially toxic environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Garbarino, J. (1996). Children and poverty in America. *National Forum*, 76(3), 28-33.
- Garbarino, J. (2001). An ecological perspective on the effects of violence on children. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(3), 361-378.
- Garbarino, J. (2001). Making sense of senseless youth violence. In J. M. Richman & M. W. Fraser (Eds.), *The context of youth violence: Resilience, risk, and protection* (pp.83-95), Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Garbarino, J. (2005). Foreward. In M. Ungar (Ed.), *Handbook for working with children and youth* (pp. xi-xiii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardo, C. (1992). *Children in danger: Coping with the consequences of community violence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 4, 416- 430.
- Gee, J.P. (1991a). A linguist approach to narrative. *Journal of Narrative and Life Story*, 1(1), 15-39.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

- Gerstel, N., Riessman, C. K., & Rosenfield, S. (1985). Explaining the symptomology of separated and divorced women and men: The role of material conditions and social networks. *Social Forces*, 64(1), 84-101.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Studies in social and political theory*. London: Hutchinson.
- Gilgun, J.F. (1999). Mapping resilience as process among adults with childhood adversities. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A. Thompson, A.I. Thompson & J.A. Furtell, J.A., (Eds.), *The Dynamics of Resilient Families* (pp. 41- 79). Resiliency in Families Series, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gilgun, J. F., & Adrams, L.S. (2002). The nature and usefulness of qualitative social work. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(1), 39-55.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. New York: Aldine.
- Gleser, G.C., Green, B.L., & Winget, C. (1990). *Prolonged psychosocial effects of disaster: A study of Buffalo Creek*. New York: Academic.
- Golby, B.J., & Bretherton, I. (1999). Resilience in post-divorce mother-child relationships. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A. Thompson, A.I. Thompson & J.A. Furtell (Eds.), *The dynamics of resilient families* (pp. 237- 269). Resiliency in Families Series, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Resiliency in Families Series, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Goldstein, H.J. (1994). Ethnography, critical inquiry, and social work practice. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work*, (pp. 42-62). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Goldstein, J., Freud, A., & Solnit, A. (1973). *Beyond the best interests of the child*. New York: The Free Press.

- Goldstein, J., Freud, A., & Solnit, A. (1979). *Beyond the best interests of the child*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gove, W.R., & Shin, H. (1989). The psychological well-being of divorced men and widowed men and women: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 122-144.
- Government of Canada (1999). *Government of Canada's response to the report of the special joint committee on child custody and access: Strategy for reform*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, Communications and Executive Services Branch. Retrieved August 29, 2007 from <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/dept/pub/cca/sjcarp02/html>.
- Gray, J.D., & Sliver, R.C. (1990). Opposite sides of the same coin: Former spouses' divergent perspectives in coping with their divorce. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 1180-1191.
- Graybeal, C. (2001). Strengths based social work assessment: Transforming the dominant paradigm. *Families in Society*, 82(3), 233-242.
- Greene, S. M., & Anderson, E.R. (1999). Observed negativity in large family systems: Incidents and reactions. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13, 372-392.
- Greene, S.M., Anderson, E. R., Hetherington, E.M., Forgatch, M.S., & DeGarmo, D.S. (2003). Risk and resilience after divorce. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity* (3rd ed.) (pp. 96-120). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Grych, J.H., & Fincham, F.D. (1993). Children's appraisals of marital conflict: Initial

- investigations of the cognitive contextual framework. *Child Development*, 64, 215-230.
- Haddad, T. (1998). *Custody arrangements and the development of emotional or behavioural problems in children*. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, Applied Research Branch.
- Halabuza, D. (2004). *Family resiliency and post-divorce families*. Unpublished candidacy paper, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.
- Hammersley, M. (1992). *What is wrong with ethnography? Methodological exploration*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hardesty, J. L. (2002). Separation assault in the context of post-divorce parenting. *Violence Against Women*, 8(5), 597-625.
- Hartman, A., & Laird, J. (1983). *Family-centred social work practice*. New York: The Free Press.
- Harris, J. R. (1998). *The nurture assumption: Why children turn out the way they do*. New York: The Free Press.
- Harrison, J., MacGibbon, L., & Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 323-345.
- Hawley, D.E. (2000). Clinical implications of family resilience. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 28, 101-116.
- Hawley, D.E., & DeHaan, L. (1996). Toward a definition of family resilience: Integrating life-span and family perspectives. *Family Process*, 35, 285-298.
- Hendry, P.M. (2007). The future of narrative. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 487-498.
- Hetherington, E.M. (2003). Intimate pathways: Changing patterns in close personal

- relationships across time. *Family Relations*, 52(4), 318- 331.
- Hetherington, E. M. (1999a). Should we stay together for the sake of our children? In E.M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Coping with divorce, single parenting and remarriage: A risk and resiliency perspective* (pp. 93-116). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hetherington, E. M. (1999b). Social capital and the development of youth from non-divorced, divorced, and remarried families. In A. Collins (Ed.), *Relationships as developmental contexts: The 29th Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology*. Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hetherington, E. M. (1993). An overview of the Virginia longitudinal study of divorce and remarriage with a focus on early adolescence. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 39-56.
- Hetherington, E.M. (1989). Coping with family transitions: Winners, losers, and survivors. *Child Development*, 60, 1-14.
- Hetherington, E. M., Bridges, M. M., & Insabella, G. M. (1998). What matters? What does not? Five perspectives on the association between marital transitions and children's adjustment. *American Psychologist*, 53, 167-184.
- Hetherington, E.M., & Chingempeel, W.G. (1992). Coping with marital transitions: A family systems perspective. *Monographs of the Society for Child Development* (Serial No. 227, 57: Nos.2-3).
- Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1982). Effects of divorce on parents and children. In M. Lamb (Ed.), *Non-traditional families* (pp.223-288). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hetherington, E.M., & Elmore, A.M. (2003). Risk and resilience in children coping with

- their parents' divorce and remarriage. In S.S. Luthar (Ed.), *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* (pp. 182- 212). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hetherington, E.M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or for worse: Divorce reconsidered*. New York: Norton.
- Hetherington, E. M., & Stanley-Hagen, M. M. (1999). The adjustment of children with divorced parents: A risk and resiliency perspective. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 40, 129-140.
- Hetherington, E. M., & Stanley-Hagen, M. M. (2002). Parenting in divorced and remarried families. In M. Borstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (2nd ed.) (pp. 287-315). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hook, N., & Paolucci, B. (1970). The family as an exosystem. *Journal of Home Economics*, 62, 315-318.
- Higgins, G.O. (1994). *Resilient adults: Overcoming a cruel past*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress*. New York: Harper.
- Hill, R. (1970). *Family development in three generations*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Books.
- Hunter, G., Douglas, F., & Petersen, S. (2008). *A Question of prosperity: Poverty in Saskatchewan*. University of Regina: Social Policy Research Unit.
- Jaffe, P. G., Crooks, C. V., & Bala, N. (2005). *Making appropriate parenting arrangements in family violence cases: Applying the literature to identify*

- promising practices*. Ottawa: Family, Children and Youth Section, Department of Justice Canada, Research Report, 2005-FCY-3E.
- Jaffe, P.G., Johnston, J.R., Crooks, C.V., & Bala, N. (2008). Custody disputes involving allegations of domestic violence: Toward a differentiated approach to parenting plans. *Family Court Review*, 46(3), 500-522.
- Jaffe, P.G., Lemon, N.K., & Poisson, S.E. (2003). *Child custody and domestic violence: A call for safety and accountability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jelielek, S.M. (1998). Parental conflict, marital disruption and children's emotional well-being. *Social Forces*, 76(3), 905-935.
- Jenkins, J., & Smith, M.A. (1991). Marital disharmony and children's behaviour problems: Aspects of a poor marriage that affect children adversely. *Journal of Child Psychology*, 32, 793-810.
- Jenkins, S. (1981). Book reviews. *Social Casework*, 62, 316-317.
- Johnson, M.P. (2005). Apples and oranges in child custody disputes: Intimate terrorism vs. situational couple violence. *Journal of Child Custody*, 2(4), 43-67.
- Johnston, J. R. (1994). High conflict divorce. *Children and Divorce*, 4(1), 165-182.
- Retrieved on May 10, 2008 from
http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=75590
- Johnston, J.R. & Campbell, L.E. (1993). A clinical typology of interpersonal violence in disputed-custody divorces. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 63(2), 190-199.
- Johnston, J.R., Kline, M., & Campbell, L.E. (1987). Ongoing post-divorce conflict and child disturbance. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 15, 493-509.
- Johnston, J.R., Kline, M., & Tschann, J. (1989). Ongoing post-divorce conflict in

- families contesting custody: Do joint custody and frequent access help? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59, 576-592.
- Johnston, J.R., Lee, S., Olesen, N.W., & Walters, M.G. (2005). Allegations and substantiations of abuse in custody-disputing families. *Family Court Review*, 43, 283-294.
- Johnston, J.R., & Roseby, V. (1997). Children of Armageddon: Common developmental trends in high-conflict divorcing families. *Child Custody*, 7(2), 295-309.
- Juby, H., Billette, J.M., & Le Bourdais, C. (2007). Non-resident fathers and children: Parents' new unions and frequency of contact. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(9), 1220-1245.
- Juby, H., & Farrington, D. (2001). Disentangling the link between disrupted families and delinquency. *British Journal of Criminology, Special Issue*, 41, 22-40.
- Juby, H., Le Bourdais, C., & Marcil-Gratton, N. (2003). *Linking family change, parents' employment and income, and children's economic well-being: A longitudinal perspective*. Ottawa: Child Support Team, Department of Justice Canada Research Report.
- Juby, H., Le Bourdais, C., & Marcil-Gratton, N. (2005b, February). Sharing roles, sharing custody? Couple's characteristics and children's living arrangements at separation. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 157-172.
- Juby, H., Marcil-Gratton, N., & Le Bourdais, C. (2001). A step further in family life: The emergence of the blended family, *Report on the demographic situation in Canada – 2000*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Cat: 91-209.

- Juby, H., Marcil-Gratton, N., & Le Bourdais, C. (2004). *When parents separate: Further findings from the national longitudinal survey of children and youth*. Ottawa: Child Support Team, Department of Justice Canada Research Report, 2004-FCY-6E.
- Justice Canada (2002). *Selected statistics on Canadian families and family law* (2nd Ed.). Child Support Team. Ottawa: Author.
- Kadushin, A. (1974). Beyond the best interest of the child: An essay review. *Social Service Review*, 48, 508-516.
- Katz, L.F., & Gottman, J.M. (1993). Patterns of marital conflict predict children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 940-950.
- Katz, L.F., & Woodin, E.M. (2002). Hostility, hostile attachment, and conflict engagement in marriages: Effects on child and family functioning. *Child Development*, 73, 636-652.
- Kelly, J.B. (1993). Current research on children's post-divorce adjustment. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 31, 29-49.
- Kelly, J.B. (2000). Children's adjustment in conflicted marriages and divorce: A decade review of research. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 39, 963-973.
- Kelly, J. B., & Emery, R. E. (2003). Children's adjustment following divorce: Risk and resiliency perspectives. *Family Relations*, 52(4), 352-362.
- Kelly, J.B., & Johnston, J.R. (2001). The alienated child: A reformation of parent alienation syndrome. *Family Court Review*, 39, 249-266.

- Kelly, J.B., & Lamb, M. (2000). Using child development research to make appropriate custody and access decisions for young children. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 38(3), 297-311.
- Kirland, K., McMillan IV, E.L., & Kirkland, K.L. (2005). Use of collateral contacts in child custody evaluations. *Journal of Child Custody*, 2(4), 95-109.
- Kitson, G.C. (1992). *Portrait of divorce: Adjustment to marital breakdown*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kitson, G.C., Babri, K.B., Roach, M.J., & Placidi, K.S. (1989). Adjustment to widowhood and divorce. *Journal of Family Issues*, 10, 5-32.
- Kitzmann, K. M., & Emery, R. E. (1994). Child and family coping one year after mediated and litigated child custody disputes. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 8, 150-159.
- Kurdek, L.A. (1990). Divorce history and self-reported psychological distress in husbands and wives. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 701-708.
- Kurdek, L.A. (2002). Prediction of the timing of separation and marital satisfaction: An eight-year prospective longitudinal study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 163-179.
- Kurdek, L.A., Fine, M.A., & Sinclair, R.J. (1995). School adjustments in sixth graders: Parenting transitions, family climate, and peer norm effects. *Child Development*, 66, 430-445.
- Labov, W. (1982). Speech action and reaction in personal narrative. In D.Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp.219-247). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

- Lamb, M.E. (2002). Non-custodial fathers and their children. In C.S. Tamis-LeMonda & N. Cabrera (Eds.), *Handbook of Father Involvement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (pp. 169-184). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lamb, M. E. (2004). Role of the father in child development (Ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
Retrieved on November 9, 2008, from <http://vogager.uregina.ca/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=3&ti=1.3Search%5Farg=%20>
- Lamb, M. E., & Kelly, J. B. (2001). Using empirical literature to guide the development of parenting plans for young children: A rejoinder to Solomon and Biringen. *Family Courts Review*, 39, 365-371.
- Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K., & Thompson, K. (1997). The effects of divorce and custody arrangements on children's behaviour. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 35(4), 393-405.
- Lavee, Y., McCubbin, H. I., & Olson, D.H. (1987). The effects of life events and transitions on family functioning and well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 49, 857-873.
- Lavee, Y., & Olson, D.H. (1991). Family types and response to stress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53(3), 786-802.
- Le Bourdais, C., Juby, H., & Marcil-Gratton, N. (2001). *Keeping contact with children: Assessing the father/ child post-separation relationship from the male perspective*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada.
- Lengua, L., Wolchik, S.A., Sandler, I.N., & West, S.G. (2000). The additive and interactive effects of parenting and temperament in predicting adjustment

- problems of children of divorce. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 29, 232-244.
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T.. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis, and interpretation*. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 47. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Long, N., Slater, E., Forehand R., & Fauber, R. (1988). Continued high or reduced interparental conflict following divorce: Relation to young adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 56, 467-469.
- Luthar, S.S. (Ed.) (2003). *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities*. Cambridge, UK:Cambridge University Press.
- Luthar, S.S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*, 71(3), 543-562.
- Lye, D.N. (1999). *What the Experts Say*. In Washington State Parenting Act Study. Washington State Gender and Justice Commission and Domestic Relations Commission. Retrieved on May 2, 2008from <http://www.courts.wa.gov/reports/parent/chap4.cfm>
- Maccoby, E.E., & Mnookin, R.H. (1992). *Dividing the child: Social and legal dilemmas of custody*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Maluccio, A.N. (2002). Resilience: A many-splendored construct? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72(4), 596-599.
- Manning, W.D., & Smock, P. (1999). New Families and non-resident father-child visitation. *Social Forces*, 78(1), 87-116.

- Manning, W. D., Steward, S.D., & Smock, P.J. (2003). The complexity of fathers' parenting responsibilities and involvement with non-resident children. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(5), 645-667.
- Marcil-Gratton, N., & Le Bourdais, C. (1999). *Custody, access, and child support: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth*. Report presented to the Child Support Team, Department of Justice Canada Research Report CSP-1999-3E.
- Marks, S. (1977). Multiple roles and role strain: Some notes on human energy, time, and commitment. *American Sociological Review*, 42, 921-686.
- Marks, N.F., & Lambert, J.D. (1998). Marital status continuity and change among young and midlife adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 19, 652-686.
- Marshall, G. (Ed.). (1994). *The concise oxford dictionary of sociology*. Oxford: University Press.
- Masheter, C. (1991). Post-divorce relationships between ex-spouse: The role of attachment and interpersonal conflict. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 103-110.
- Masheter, C. (1998). Friendships between former spouses: Lessons in doing case-study research. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 28(3/4), 73-96.
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.
- Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcame adversity. *Developmental Psychopathology*, 2, 425-444.

- Masten, A.S., & Coatsworth, J.D. (1998). The development of competence in favourable and unfavourable environments: Lessons from successful children. *American Psychologist*, 53, 205-220.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- McCubbin, H. I., & McCubbin, L. D. (1997). Hawaiian American families. In M. K. DeGenova (Ed.), *Families in cultural context: Strengths and challenges in diversity* (pp. 237-263). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- McCubbin, H.I., & McCubbin, M. A. (1988). Typologies of resilient families: Emerging roles of social class and ethnicity. *Family Life Education*, 37, 247-254.
- McCubbin, H. I., McCubbin, M.A., & Thompson, A. I. (1996). *Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation-inventories for research and practice*. Madison: University of Wisconsin System.
- McCubbin, H.I., McCubbin, M.A., & Thompson, E. (1995). Resiliency in ethnic families: A conceptual model for predicting family adjustment and adaptation. In H.I. McCubbin, M. McCubbin, & J. Fromer (Eds.), *Resiliency in Ethnic Minority Families* (Vol. 1, pp. 3-48). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983a). The family stress process: The double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. In H. I. McCubbin, M. Sussman, & J. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and development in family stress theory and research* (pp.26-47). NY: Hawthorn Press.
- McCubbin, H.I., & Patterson, J.M. (1983b). Family transitions: Adaptations to stress: A

- double ABCX model of family behaviour. In H.I. McCubbin, M.B. Sussman, & J.M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research* (pp. 5-25), NJ: Hawthorn Press.
- McCubbin, H.I., Sussman, M.B., & Patterson, J.M. (1983). The family stress process: The double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. In H.I. McCubbin, M.B. Sussman, and J.M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research* (pp. 1-37), NJ: Hawthorn Press.
- McCubbin, H. I., Thompson, A. I., Piner, P., & McCubbin, M. A. (1988). *Family types and strengths: A life cycle and ecological perspective*. Edina, MN: Burgess International.
- McCubbin, H.I., Thompson, E.A., Thompson, A.I., & Fromer, J.E. (Eds.) (1994). *Sense of coherence and resiliency: Stress, coping and health..* The University of Wisconsin System: A Center for Excellence in Family Studies Pub.
- McCubbin, H.I., Thompson, E. A., Thompson, A.I., and Furtell, J.A. (Eds.) (1999). *The dynamics of resilient families*. Resiliency in Families Series, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCubbin, H.I., Thompson, E.A., Thompson, A.I., Thompson, E.A., Elver, K.M., & McCubbin, M.A. (1994). Ethnicity, schema, and coherence: Appraisal processes for families in stress. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A.Thompson, A.I Thompson & J.E. Fromer (Eds.), *Sense of Coherence and resiliency: Stress, coping and health* (pp. 41- 67). The University of Wisconsin System: A Center for Excellence in Family Studies.

- McCubbin, L. D., & McCubbin, H. I. (2005). Culture and Ethnic Identity in Family Resilience: Dynamic Processes in Trauma and Transformation of Indigenous People. In M. Ungar, (Ed.), *Handbook for working with children and youth* (pp. 27- 44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCubbin, M. A., & McCubbin H. I. (1987). Family stress theory and assessment: The T-double ABCX model of family adjustment and adaptation. In H. I. McCubbin & A. I. Thompson (Eds.), *Family assessment inventories for research and practice* (pp. 3-34). Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- McCubbin, M. A., & McCubbin H. I. (1993). Families coping with illness: The resiliency model of family stress, adjustment and adaptation. In C. Danielson, B. Hamel-Bissell, & P. Winstead-Fry (Eds.), *Families, health and illness* (pp. 121-143). New York: Mosby.
- McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with a single Parent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ministry of Social Services. (2004, March). *Policy and Procedures Manual. Family-Centred Services*. Regina, Saskatchewan: Author.
- Mishler, E.G. (1986). *Research interviewing context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mishler, E.G. (1986b). The analysis of interviews. In T.R. Sabin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct* (pp. 233- 255). New York: Praeger.
- Mishler, E.G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60, 415-442.

- Mishler, E.G. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5, 87-123.
- Morrison, D.R., & Coiro, M.J. (1999). Parental conflict and marital disruption: Do children benefit when high-conflict marriages are dissolved? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 626-637.
- Moyer, S. (2004). *Child Custody Arrangements: Their Characteristics and Outcomes*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, 2004-FCY-3E. Retrieved on May 3, 2008 from
<http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/pad/reports/2004-FCY-3/2004-FCY-3.html>
- Munro, P. (1998). *Subject to fiction: Women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Neander, K., & Skott, C. (2006). Important meetings with important persons: Narratives from families facing adversity and their key figures. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(3), 295-311. Retrieved on May 10, 2007 from the <http://qsw.sagepub.Com> at Univ Regina Library.
- Nixon, K., Weaver-Dunlop G., Tuffy, L., & Walsh, C. (2007, May 31). *A policy analysis of legislation addressing children exposed to domestic violence*. Presentation at Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
- Nock, S. L. (1998). *Marriage in men's lives*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- O'Conner, P. (2001). *The problem of access: Legal approaches and program supports*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, Children and Youth Section (2001-FCY-9E).

- O'Conner, P. (2004). *Voice and support: Programs for children experiencing parental separation and divorce*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada, Children and Youth Section (2004-FCY-2E).
- Olson, D.H. (1986). Circumplex model VII: Validation studies and FACES III, *Family Process*, 26, 337-356.
- Olson, D.H., Russell, C.S., & Sprenkle, D.H. (1983). Circumplex model of marital and family systems: VI theoretical update. *Family Process*, 22, 69- 83.
- Owusu-Bempah, J. (1995). Information about the absent parent as a factor in the well-being of children of single families. *International Social Work*, 38, 253-275.
- Psathas, G. (1973). *Introduction*. In G. Psathas (Ed.). *Phenomenological sociology: Issues and applications* (pp. 1-21). New York: Wiley.
- Patterson, J.M. (1988). Families experiencing stress: The family adjustment and adaptation response model. *Family Systems Medicine* 5(2), 202-237.
- Patterson, J.M. (1993). The role of family meanings in adaptation to chronic illness and disability. In A. Turnbull, J. Patterson, S. Behr et al. (Eds.), *Cognitive coping research and developmental disabilities* (pp. 221-238). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Patterson, J.M. (2002). Integrating family resilience theory and family stress theory. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 349-360.
- Patterson, J.M., & Garwick, A. W. (1994). Theoretical linkages: Family meanings and sense of coherence. In H.I. McCubbin, E.A. Thompson, A.I. Thompson, A.I. & J.E. Fromer (Eds.), *Sense of coherence and resiliency: Stress, coping and health* (pp. 71-89). The University of Wisconsin System: A Center for Excellence in Family Studies.

- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pleck, J.H. (1997) Parental involvement: Levels, sources, and consequences. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The Role of Father in Child Development* (3rd ed.), (pp. 66-103). New York: Wiley.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 417-486.
- Poindexter, C. C. (2002). Meaning from methods: Re-presenting narratives of an HIV-affected caregiver. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(1), 59-78.
- Plummer, L. and Kock-Hattem, A. (1986, October). Family stress and adjustment to divorce. *Family Relations*, 523-529.
- Public Legal Education Saskatchewan. (2007). Minors and medical treatment. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Author. Retrieved in October 2005 from www.plea.org/freepubs/sasstoc.htm
- Reigel, K.F. (1976). The dialectics of human development. *American Psychologist*, 31, 689-700.
- Reiss, D. (1981). *The family's construction of reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rice, J.K. (1994). Reconsidering research on divorce, family life cycle, and the meaning of family. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18, 559- 584.
- Rice, J.K. and Rice, D.G. (1986). *Living through divorce: A developmental approach to divorce therapy*. New York: Guilford.
- Richmond, M. E. (1917). *Social diagnosis*. New York: Russell Sage.

- Riessman, C. K. (1990). *Divorce talk: Women and men make sense of personal relationships*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Riessman, C.K. (1991). Beyond reductionism: Narrative genres in divorce accounts. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1(1), 41-68.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis. Qualitative research methods, Vol.30*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Riessman, C.K. (Ed.) (1994). *Qualitative studies in social work research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Riessman, C.K., & Quinney, L. (2005). Narrative social work. *Qualitative Social Work*, 4(4), 391-412.
- Rosenwald, G.C., & Ochberg, R. (Eds.). (1992). Introduction: Life stories, cultural politics and self-understanding. In *Storied lives: The cultural politics of understanding* (pp. 1-18). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rosiek, J., & Atkinson, B. (2007). In inevitability and importance of genres in narrative research on teaching practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 499-511.
- Retrieved on May 9, 2007 from <http://qix.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/13/4/499>
- Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rutter, M. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57, 316-331.

- Rutter, M. (1989). Temperament: Conceptual issues and clinical implications. In G.A. Kohnstamm, J.E. Bates & M.K. Rothbart (Eds.), *Temperament in childhood*, (pp. 463-479). New York: Wiley.
- Rutter, M. (1994). Family discord and conduct disorder: Cause, consequence, and correlate? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 9(2), 170-186.
- Rutter, M. (1999). Resilience concepts and findings: Implications for family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 21, 119-144.
- Rutter, M. (2002). Nature, nurture, and development: From evangelism through science toward policy and practice. *Child Development*, 74, 1-21.
- Rutter, M. (2004). Intergenerational continuities and discontinuities in psychological problems. In P.L. Chase-Lansdale, K.E. Kiernan, R.J. Friedman (Eds.), *Human development across lives and generations* (pp. 239-276). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work*, 41, 241-336.
- Saleebey, D. (Ed.). (1997). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Saleebey, D. (Ed.). (2002). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn Bacon.
- Sandler, I. N., Tein, J. Y., & West, S. G. (1994). Coping, stress, and the psychological symptoms of children of divorce: A cross-sectional and longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 65, 1744-1763.

- Se'er, A. (1997). Recent or imminent separation and intimate violence against women: A conceptual overview of some Canadian examples. *Violence Against Women*, 3, 566-589.
- Seligman, M. (1990). *Learned optimism*. New York: Random House.
- Seligman, M. (1995). *The optimistic child*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin.
- Seltzer, J.A. (1991). Relationships between fathers and children who live apart: The father's role after separation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 79-101.
- Seltzer, J. A., & Bianchi, S.M. (1988). Children's contact with absent parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50(3), 663-677.
- Shaffer, M., & Bala, N. (2003). Wife abuse, child custody and access in Canada. In R. Geffner, R.S. Igelman & J. Zellner (Eds.), *The effects of intimate partner violence on children* (pp. 253-276). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press.
- Shalansky, C., Ericksen, J., & Henderson, A.D. (1999). Abused women and child custody: The ongoing exposure to abusive ex-partners. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 29, 416-426.
- Shapiro, A.D. (1996). Explaining psychological distress in a sample of married and divorced persons. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17, 186-203.
- Sherman, E., & Reid, W. J. (Eds.). (1994). *Qualitative research in social work*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Simons, R.L., & Associates (1996). *Understanding differences between divorced and intact families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Simons, R. L., & Johnson, C. (1996). The impact of marital and social network support on quality of parenting. In G.R. Pierce, B. R. Sarason & J. G. Sarason (Eds.), *Handbook of social support and the family* (pp. 269-287). New York: Plenum Press.
- Sobel, S.B., & Russo, N. F. (1981). Sex roles, equality, and mental health. *Professional Psychology, 12*, 1-5.
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Statistics Canada, (2000). *Canadian statistics – families, households, and housing, marital status, marriage and divorce*. Ottawa: Census Canada.
- Statistics Canada, (2002, December 2). Divorces. *The Daily*. Ottawa: Author.
- Statistics Canada, (2004, May 4). Divorces, 2001-2002. *The Daily*. Ottawa: Author.
- Retrieved on January 17, 2007 from <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/040504/d040504a.htm> on January 17, 2007.
- Statistics Canada, (2005, July 5). Marriage. *The People*. Ottawa: Author.
- Statistics Canada, (2005, March 9). Divorces. *The Daily*. Ottawa: Author.
- Retrieved on January 17, 2007 from www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050309/d050309b.htm
- Statistics Canada, (2007, January 17). Marriages, *The Daily*. Ottawa: Author.
- Retrieved on January 17, 2007 from www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070117/d07117a.htm
- Steinman, S.B., Zimmelman, S.F., & Knoblauch, T.M. (1985). A study of parents who sought custody after divorce: Who reaches agreement and sustains joint custody

- and who returns to court. *Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 24, 554-562.
- Stets, J. (1992). State-to-state differences in dating aggression: A national study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 165-177.
- Stoltz, J.M., & Ney, T. (2002). Resistance to visitation. *Family Court Review*, 40(2), 220-231.
- Strohschein, L. (2005, December). Parental divorce and child mental health trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67 (5), 1286-1300.
- Sturge, C., & Glaser, D. (2000, September). Contact and domestic violence – the experts' court report. *Family Law*, 615-629.
- Taylor, S. (1989). Adjustment to threatening events: A theory of cognitive adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 7, 127-142.
- Tein, J.Y., Sandler, I.N., & Zautra, A.J. (2000). Stressful life events, psychological distress, coping and parenting of divorced mothers: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14(1), 27-41.
- The Federal Child Support Guidelines: Step-by- Step*. (2006). Department of Justice Canada. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.
- Thomas, W. I., & Thomas, D. S. (1928). *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs*. New York: Knopf.
- Thompson, R.A., & Amato, P.R. (Eds.)(1999). *The post-divorce family: Children, parenting, and society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Towers, H., Spotts, E.L., & Neiderhiser, (2001). Genetic and environmental influences on parenting and marital relationships: Current findings and future directions. *Marriage and Family Review*, 33(1), 11-29.
- Tschann, J.M., Johnston, J.R., & Wallerstein, J.S. (1989, November). Resources, stressors, and attachment as predictors of adult adjustment after divorce: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1033-1046.
- Ungar, M. (Ed.) (2005). *Handbook for working with children and youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ungar, M. (2003). Qualitative contributions to resilience research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 2 (1), 85-102.
- Ungar, M., & Liebenberg, L. (2005). The international resilience project: A mixed methods approach to study resilience across cultures. In M. Ungar, (Ed.), *Handbook for working with children and youth* (pp.211- 226)). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ungar, M., & Teram, E. (2005). Qualitative Research: Contributions and Risks. In M. Ungar, (Ed.), *Handbook for working with children and youth* (pp.149—159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Vandewater, E.A., & Lansford, J.E. (1998). Influences of family structures and parental conflict on children's well-being. *Family Relations*, 47, 323-330.
- Voydanoff, P., & Donnelly, B. W. (1999). Multiple roles and psychological distress: The intersection of the paid worker, spouse, and parent role with the role of the adult child. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 725-735.
- Wadsworth, M. E. J. (1986). Grounds for divorce in England and Wales: A social

- demographic analysis. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 18, 127-153.
- Walker, A.J. (1985, November). Reconceptualizing family stress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 827-837.
- Wallerstein, J.S. (1986). Women after divorce: Preliminary report from a ten-year follow-up. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 56, 65-77.
- Walsh, F. (1998). *Strengthening family resilience*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Walsh, F. (Ed.) (1999). *Spiritual resources in family therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Walsh, F. (2002). A family resiliency framework: Innovative practice applications. *Family Relations*, 51, 130-137.
- Walsh, F. (2003). Family resilience: A framework for clinical practice. *Family Process*, 42(1), 1-18.
- Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Wang, H., & Amato, P.R. (2000). Predictors of divorce adjustment: Stressors, resources, and definitions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 655-668.
- Weick, A., Rapp, C., Sullivan, W. P., & Kisthardt, W. (1989). Towards a strengths model for social work practice. *Social Work*, 34(4), 350-354.
- Weiss, R.S. (1979). Growing up a little faster: The experience of growing up in a single-parent household. *Journal of Social Issues*, 35, 97-111.
- Weingarten, H. (1980). Remarriage and well-being: National survey evidence of social and psychological effects. *Journal of Family Issues*, 1, 533-559.
- Werner, F. S., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds*. New York: Cornell University Press.

- White, M. & Epston, D. (1989). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: Norton.
- White, J. M., & Klein, D. M. (2002). *Family theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- White, S.W., & Mika, K. (1983). Family divorce and separation: theory and research. In H. I. McCubbin, M .B. Sussman, and J. M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research* (pp. 175- 192). Gloucestershire, UK: Hawthorn Press.
- Wolin, S. J., & Wolin, S. (1993). *The resilient self*. New York: Villard Books.
- Wright, L., Watson, W.L., & Bell, J.M. (1996). *Beliefs the heart of healing in families and illness*. New York: Basic Books.
- Zill, N., Morrison, D. R., & Coiro, M. J. (1993). Long term effects of parental divorce on parent-child relationships, adjustment, and achievement in young adulthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7, 91-103.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Parental Interview

I intend to ask as few questions as possible on the following themes. However, I did develop some questions (prompts) in the event that specific information is not discussed in the narrative, which is not to say that I must have all the information in this order. The exact wording will vary to fit the circumstances and context of the parent. These questions are to develop a flow in the interview, and will only be used as needed. The interview will be as unstructured or self-directed as possible.

Marriage & Decision to Separate:

1. What (in your opinion) were the reasons for the marriage break-up?
2. How was the decision to separate made?
3. Who made this decision?
4. What was your initial reaction to the separation?
5. How were the children told of this decision?
6. How did the children react?
7. How would you describe the children's adjustment now?

Problems Associated with Divorce:

1. How did you interpret the divorce? What did the divorce mean to you?
2. What was the most difficult thing for you about the separation or divorce?
3. How did you deal with this difficulty?
4. What was the most difficult thing about divorce for the family?
5. How did you handle this?
6. How were decisions made in the divorce?
7. What were the most important or key decisions made during the separation that you believe enabled positive adjustment?

8. What decisions were the children involved in?
9. What concerns did you have for the children and how were they addressed?
10. How did you keep going on days when you felt you could not do it?
11. To change themes, what are the good things that have resulted for you and for the children after the divorce?
12. What is the most important thing you have learned throughout this process?
13. What family or personal strengths did you uncover?
14. If you could give advice on services, or things that are helpful to families of divorce, what advice would you give?

Resilience Today:

1. How do you perceive your family and yourself to be resilient?
2. What does resilience mean to you?
3. What do you believe fosters resilience in yourself and the children?
4. What are your greatest strengths as a family/ parent?
5. What is your former spouses greatest strength as a parent?
6. What are the current problems today that causes you to be concerned for the children?
7. How would you describe your relationship with your former spouse?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your children? (Better or worst since the divorce?)
9. How do the children get along with their other parent?

Social – Environmental Supports:

1. Who was the greatest help to you when you were going through divorce?

2. How did they help? (What did they do that was helpful?)
3. What was your family's reaction when you told them of the separation?
4. What about people in your neighborhood, church, work or community?
5. What forms of help was the most useful and meaningful to you?
6. What form of help did you find to be the most useful?
7. What form of help was there that you wish you had at the time of the separation?

Family Adjustment & Beliefs:

1. What values or beliefs do you have that you think are most helpful? Prompt: Did you have these traditions before the divorce?
2. What meaning does the divorce have for you now?
3. What values or beliefs helped yourself and the family the most?
4. What kinds of things did you do to help the family adjust?
5. What did you tell the children to help them adjust?
6. What did you believe in to help yourself adjust?

Post-divorce:

1. What kinds of activities/ involvements in the community do you have that are helpful? How about the children?
2. How well do you believe your family fits into your neighborhood?
3. What kinds of supports, or involvement in things outside of the family do you have today that is helpful? How?
4. If there were a service or type of service that you would have found useful, what would it have been?

5. What advice do you have for social workers (or other mental health professionals) to help families going through divorce?

Appendix B

Questionnaire For Children's Interview

These questions will be asked at the family meeting that will comprise the family narrative. The exact wording of these questions will vary depending on the ages of the children.

Introduction for the child interview

- My name is Donalda, I am a social worker who works with kids and families.
- I am here today because I want to learn from your family.
- Today I wanted to talk to your family about your parent's divorce so I can find out how you managed all the changes. This information will be used to help other families and kids whose parents don't live together anymore.
- It is part of a study to understand how social workers and others can better understand and help children and families when there is divorce.
- I will engage with each child by name and possibly chitchat about what they were doing before I came, or some other icebreaker topic (favorite things to do, school).
- I will tell them that I have already met with their Mom/ Dad and learned from their parents, but now I want to learn from the whole family.
- I will tell them that I am here today because I wanted to talk about how well they have done (Or how they were resourceful, overcame problems, were strong) when their parents separated.
- I will tell them "your answers will be used to help other families when parents decide not to live together anymore/ or separate."

- Before we begin, I need to know that you are okay with participating in the family meeting with me. I have a form that you can read, and we can talk about. If you agree with meeting with me, you would sign this consent.
- I will review the consent form with older children (over 12 years of age) and ask them if they know what it means, and if they have any questions.
- I will also tell them that we will be talking about divorce, which may not feel comfortable. “If at any time I ask you something that you do not understand or makes you feel uncomfortable, please tell me.”
- I will also tell them that you do not have to answer a question if they do not want to.
- I will then proceed to follow the interview guide. But will not insist that all questions be asked, as it is an open interview whereby they can tell me what helped.

Resilience/ Strengths Questions

1. What kinds of things do you do, that you enjoy?
2. What are the fun times today as a family?
3. What are the best things about divorce for kids and families?
4. What is the hardest thing about divorce (when parents don't live together) for kids, and for families?
5. Who helps you the most outside of the family? How?
6. What are the best things about your family?
7. If you were going to help another kid go through the experience of divorce, what would you talk to them about? How would you help them?
8. What kinds of problems does your family have today?
9. How are problems solved?

10. Who helps you the most? How?
11. What do you hope will happen to your family in the future?
12. What are the best things about your family?

Family Functioning today

1. Who is in your family/ belongs in your family? Ask them to describe their family to me? (Who is who?)
2. What are the greatest strengths/things about your family?
3. What problems, challenges, or worries does your family have now?
4. How are problems solved?
5. When important decisions need to be made, how are you involved?
6. If you could wish for absolutely anything, what wishes would you have for your family?
7. What wishes do you have for yourself?
8. What are the main rules and routines in your family?
9. What happens if you break them?

Questions on Parent - Child Relationships

1. Who do you go to make important decisions? Or if you had a big worry/ problem who would you talk to?
2. What are the best things about Mom's home? Or What do you like the best about being with your Mom, or being at Mom's home?
3. What are the best things about Dad's home? Or What do you like best about being with your Dad, or being at Dad's home?
4. What are your favourite times with your parents? Mom & then Dad.

5. When you are tired and disappointed, or angry, or sad what do you do?
6. What is the best thing about divorce? Or about your parents not living together?
7. What is the worst thing about divorce?
8. If you had three wishes for absolutely anything, what would they be?
9. What advice would you give to adults/ families going through divorce? Or decide to separate/ not live together?
10. What advice would you give, or how would you help other kids whose parents decide to separate?

Appendix C

Commentary regarding sample recruitment

In total I received 11 inquiries about this study, 3 via information from the Court of Queen's Bench, Judicial Centre of Regina, Saskatchewan, 7 inquiries from individuals who heard of my research through their lawyer and 1 from Collaborative Law. I eliminated 4 of the individuals who inquired because they did not meet the selection criteria. The reasons they did not meet criteria are as follows:

1. One parent did not have her children residing her.
2. One parent was in the midst of legal disputes.
3. Two parents contacted me after I had my sample size.

I concluded that in the future the most viable method of obtaining a sample was through lawyers who contacted former clients, provided information on the study, and at times encouraged their participation. I believe this method was most successful because it gave participants a vote of confidence by suggesting that they would be in a good position to comment on family resilience. All of the participants who contacted me as a result of information from their lawyers spoke of their lawyers in a positive manner. Using lawyers to help with recruitment was successful because of the personal contact and influence. The lawyers I met with appeared genuinely interested in this study and hoped it could contribute to practice in family law because the results have potential to better inform legal services as well as social work services. Several law firms refused to participate. The law firms that did agree to meet with me were ones in which I had a professional relationship with one or several of the lawyers.

Overall, I was surprised at the low response rate from the courthouse. I only received 3 inquiries out of 217 judgments over a six-month period. I do not know the exact reasons for such a low response rate but the Deputy Registrar has told me that many couples did not have children therefore, they were not suitable for a study on *family* resilience. In addition, some of these divorces may not have been the first and my criteria were to select participants who had one divorce. There was no screening prior to sending information on this study. Because I do not work for the Department of Justice, I did not have access to these details, nor was I in a position to investigate the details. Other individuals may have had children from previous relationships but not from that marriage and some parents may not have wanted to have their children involved.

In some respects I wondered if parents who were divorced did not perceive themselves as resilient because of the fact that their marriage did not last. These individuals may have handled the divorce in a commendable fashion but because they experienced divorce, they may not have felt they were resilient as a family. Divorce is a painful experience for adults and children and positive coping is difficult even when one does all the right things - it is still fraught with insecurities and uncertainties. Having lawyers contact former clients and encourage participation may have remedied these insecurities.

Other reasons for a low response rate could be that parents did not want their children to participate. Four individuals who participated stated they did not wish for their children to be involved. Because of the trend for joint or shared custody, several parents may have been reluctant to raise the contentious issue of children's participation in research with their former partner.

These concerns lead to questioning about my research criteria and design. I reviewed the selection criteria and in consultation with my committee decided children's participation would not be a requirement. Children's involvement could be voluntary or not at all. This revision was made and accepted by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. However, the implications were that my research design was changed to consist of interviews with parents only and parents were entrusted to reflect their children's perceptions.

Other reasons for the low response rate may have been lack of time for parents to participate, given that they were single parents after divorce. This consideration was taken into account in my research design in that I offered to interview participants in their home and was flexible to accommodate times when they wanted to be interviewed. The parents who participated found it difficult to arrange for one in-depth interview. Appointments were booked weeks in advance and several telephone calls were required to change dates and times, because of unexpected activities with the children, or because of the parents work. Some participants made it very clear that they wanted to participate but needed several weeks to fit the interview into their schedule.

It took over 6 months to obtain a sample. Interviewing occurred from April until August 2006. All of the parents I interviewed were employed, went to university, or both, plus were full time parents with primary residence of their children. In addition, they were careful to schedule the interview for a time when they were able to respond fully and without distraction. As noted earlier setting up appointments for interviews often involved many phone calls, which proved to be advantageous in establishing rapport. By the time I met with parents, it was apparent that they were comfortable speaking to me,

and were fully informed of the process. One participant asked me to email her my questions in advance so that she could consider the questions and provide a thoughtful response. All of the participants were sincere and genuinely interested in contributing to a study that provided a positive view of divorce transitions.

Appendix D

Guide for Telephone Screening

The first part of the telephone screening consisted of obtaining some demographic information and will serve as a pre-screening for the families chosen for the sample.

Protocol and Script for Conducting Interviews

Prior to the home visit, I will speak with parent who is interested in this research on the phone to screen based on the criteria I have previously outlined. If they are suitable, I will discuss items on the consent form.

- I will also ask them to discuss this research with children to obtain their willingness to participate in the family interview.
- In situations of joint or shared custody, I will ask them if they could discuss this research with the other parent to determine if both are willing to consent to the children being involved.
- Specifically in cases of joint or shared parenting I will ask that the parent who wishes to participate to call me back after they discuss the children's participation in the family meeting with the other parent.
- If the other parent was willing for children to participate. I was prepared to make arrangements to meet with them to describe the research, all ethical considerations and ask that they sign the consent for children under the age of 18 years old. .
- I would ask that that the other parent call me directly or permission to call them.
- If the participating parent said the other parent would not consent, then would involve the children in the research.

TELEPHONE SCREENING (SELECTION OF FAMILIES)

Name of parent: _____

Date: _____

How they heard of the research: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

For how long have you been separated? _____

Occupation of parent: _____

Date of Birth of Parent: _____

Number and ages of children: _____

Where do the children reside? _____

What are the legal custody arrangements? _____

Name of former spouse/ children's other parent: _____

Choice: Do they want the children to be involved in the research? If yes, in a family
interview or in an individual interview? _____

SCREENING QUESTIONS:

Date of marriage: _____

Date of separation: _____

Are you involved in any legal processes right now pertaining to the divorce? YES/ NO

If so, what are they? _____

Do you anticipate any legal action pertaining to the divorce, custody or access? _____

What is the current parenting plan? _____

Have you been previously married, prior to this marriage (and subsequent divorce?) _____

Where do the children reside? _____

What portion of the time are the children with you? _____

What is the legal custody arrangement? _____

If there is joint or shared custody, will the other parent consent to the children being interviewed in the family story of resilience?

Have you spoken to the children about a participation in the family interview so as to determine their willingness to be involved? _____

Have you been involved in any criminal behaviour that involves violence in the past five years? _____

Have you ever considered yourself to be suicidal? Is so, when? _____

Do they have any concerns for the children's ability to express themselves or participate in a family meeting to discuss how they managed (how they coped, what helped, who helped, what supports were most important and other questions in the family narrative) when their parents separated? _____

How would you describe the children's relationship with their other parent?

If they are candidates, review ethical considerations.

Appendix E

Review of Ethical Considerations

- Purpose is to determine their willingness and initial agreement to participate.
- This information will be discussed on the telephone, prior to interviewing, and it will again be included in the consent form.
- I told them, this information is to provide you with some idea about what the research consists of:
 1. That the process consists of a maximum of two interviews, one with you (the parent) and one with the entire family, if the children participate.
 2. That the time commitment will be one to two hours for the first interview and one hour for the family interview, if there is one.
 3. The interviews can occur in a location of their choice, I would offer to visit them in their home, if that is convenient.
 4. Ensure that they know that they have the right to refuse to answer a question.
 5. They are free to ask me questions at any point.
 6. They are free to withdraw at any time without consequences.
 7. The interviews will be taped and later transcribed.
 8. The purpose of taping the interviews and then transcribing them is so that I will have a written record of what participants told me.
 9. The identifying information will be kept confidential. Tapes will be transcribed and then erased from the recorder. Information they share with me will be analyzed to identify themes and patterns. This analysis will lead to the results or conclusions from the research. The transcripts are my data for my research.

10. The tapes will be erased after transcription.
 11. Confidentiality will be maintained by assigning a number to identify each participant's transcript.
 12. Identifying information (names, addresses, and phone numbers) will only be known by me and kept in a location where no one else has access to it.
 13. No identifying information will be released in either the reporting of results or otherwise. I will use pseudonyms to refer to particular people in reporting my results.
 14. I will communicate the results of this research with each family in a manner in which they choose, by mail, email, or otherwise as specified by the family.
 15. After my dissertation committee has approved my research results the identifying information (names, addresses and phone numbers) of each family will be destroyed.
 16. Because I appreciate their time I am offering an honorarium of \$25 to be paid at the end of the first interview. If there are childcare costs for the interview with parents alone, then the parents will be reimbursed.
 17. They will need to sign a consent form prior to the first interview and if the children participate.
 18. All children who are 12 years of age and over will also be asked to sign a consent (accent) form to participate.
 19. Children who are 18 years old will sign their own consent for participation.
- If the family has met all the criteria and are willing to participate, then I will develop a roster of families who will be involved and begin to set up the interviewing process.

Appendix F

Contacts to Obtain a Sample

Recruitment of participants:

1. Courthouse

After I received approval by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (November 2005), I contacted Sharon Pratchler, Registrar of Provincial and Queen's Bench Courts to determine the protocol on how I could obtain the cooperation of the courts to disseminate information of my study to the general public, for the purposes of obtaining a sample. She instructed me that for approval I require permission from the Chief Justice Gerein (at that time).

I contacted Chief Justice Frank Gerein in November 2005 asking that the courthouse distribute information about my research in efforts to obtain a sample. A copy of the letter is at then end of this appendix. This letter was printed on the University of Manitoba letterhead. He called me to discuss the purpose of my research, and determine the exact nature of my request. In late December 2005 he approved my request via telephone conversation and authorized the local registrar and deputy registrar of the Queen's Bench Courthouse to meet with me.

I met with Gord Dauncey, local registrar and Carol Selinger, deputy registrar on February 13, 2006. At this time I discussed the purpose of my research and answered questions. I provided them with a copy of the invitation form that would be sent out with each divorce judgment. Divorce judgments are normally sent out one month after the divorce is granted. On August 23, 2006, I asked that they discontinue sending out information, because I had saturated my sample.

2. Canadian Bar Association, Family Law Division

On February 16, 2006, I attended a monthly meeting of the Family Bar Division, Canadian Bar Association for Regina and southern Saskatchewan at the Saskatchewan Hotel, 2125 Victoria Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan. At this meeting I described my study and provided invitations for the lawyers to distribute to their present or past clients. There were approximately 12 junior lawyers present.

The contact person (at that time) was Mary Lou Senko, MacLean Keith, 2398 Scarth Street, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 2J7.

3. Collaborative Law

I contacted Sherri Cybulski the president of Collaborative Law Lawyers of Saskatchewan. I provided her with a copy of the invitation for participants, which she forwarded to all the Collaborative Law lawyers in the province via email.

A copy of her email is as follows:

April 13, 2006

Donalda:

As per your request of today's date, please find attached the "Invitation for Study" (your original, which was scanned and sent) and the email sent to the Collaborative lawyers.

If you require anything else, please call me.

Lana for Sherri A. Cybulski

----- Original Message -----

From: Gates & Company

To: Lakeviewoffice@accesscomm.ca

Sent: Thursday, March 23, 2006 1:21 PM

Subject: Email to members

Shirley:

I will shortly be sending the revised email that I would propose be sent to our members and a copy of the invitation sheet. Please circulate to all directors, asking that they provide their feedback to (I can't remember if it was you or Connie) by Friday, March 31, 2006. Then, please ensure that on Monday, April 3, 2006, the invitation email and attachment are sent to our members. Obviously, if there are any suggestions for rewriting, we will have to attend to that first.

(We are having problems with our computers, so I have to send two different things on two different emails I am only able to attach the invitation sheet from this computer - sorry about that - Lana)

Lana for Sherri

Please note our NEW email address: gateslawoffice@gates.sasktelmail.com

GATES & COMPANY
Barristers and Solicitors
Avonhurst Plaza
3132 Avonhurst Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4R 3J7

Attachment:

RE: Research Project - "Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce"

Collaborative Lawyers of Saskatchewan Inc. have been approached by Donalda Halabuza, a social worker in Regina, who is completing her PhD. Many of you may be familiar with Donalda Halabuza. She is a mediator, counsellor and prepares Custody and Access Assessments privately, as well as for the Courts.

Donalda Halabuza is currently doing her research dissertation on the topic of *Understanding Family Resilience and Divorce*. Ms. Halabuza advises that this is a qualitative study that involves interviewing families in post-divorce (separation) life (about two years after separation) to determine what resources were helpful and how they were helpful. Specifically, she will be inquiring about resources that existed within individuals, families and communities that enabled positive adaptation to divorce (separation). Ms. Halabuza indicates that she wishes to try to determine what promoted

health of families and fostered growth in children. She is interested in “what worked” to help families overcome problems.

Donalda Halabuza is seeking a means to access families of divorce (separation) to participate in her research. She has, accordingly approached our association to help obtain a sample for her study. She is asking us to pass out the attached Invitation to past or current clients (or personal friends and family) that you believe may be a suitable candidate. If they are interested, they should contact Donalda Halabuza directly. All contact information is on the attached Invitation. She will then complete her own screening for the final participants, based on predetermined criteria.

Donalda also invites you to contact her directly, should you have any questions regarding her research project or require any further information. The information Donalda derives from her study will provide lawyers as well as social workers valuable information about what helped families promote and maintain resilience while going through the painful process of divorce (separation). Hopefully, it will also indicate how Collaborative Law and our legal profession fit in.

Collaborative Lawyers of Saskatchewan Inc.

Per: Sherri A. Cybulski

4. Personal contact with lawyers

I contacted a number of the law firms in Regina who specialize in family law. I made arrangements to meet with them and describe my research. My purpose was to obtain their cooperation in distribution of information about my sample. I asked them to advise clients, past or present that they thought would be a good candidate for this type of research.

The firms I contacted were:

1. Ian McKay and David Barth
McKay & Associates
#800 – 2002 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 0R7
Meeting date: February 23, 2006

2. Michael Scott
KMP Law
2600 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4T 1K2
Meeting date: February, 27, 2006

3. Brad Hunter and Ron Miller
Hunter Miller Law Firm
#600 – 2500 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3X2
Meeting date: February 27, 2006

4. Sherri Cybulski
Gates & Company
3132 Avonhurst Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4R 3J7
Meeting date: March 1, 2006

5. Jim Vogel, Joanne Moser and Charlene Richmond
Richmond Nychuk
100, 2255 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 2V5
Meeting date: March 9, 2006

6. Kathleen Peterson and Jocelyn Hoehn
Balfour Moss
Bank of Montreal Building
700 – 2103 – 11th Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 4G1
Meeting date: April 7, 2000

7. Jeff Brick, James Korpan and David Flett
Kanuka Thuringer
1400 – 2500 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3X2
Meeting date April, 13, 2006

Letter to Justice Gerein

ON UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LETTERHEAD

November 9, 2005

Chief Justice Gerein
Court of Queen's Bench
2425 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3V7

Dear Sir:

Re: Research in family resilience and divorce

I am currently a PhD student in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. I have also practiced social work in Regina for many years and currently hold a term position at the University of Regina, Faculty of Social Work. In a recent conversation with Sharon Pratchler, I was advised to contact you because I am seeking a means to access families of divorce for participants in my doctoral research as part of my dissertation. I am asking if the courthouse would include the enclosed Information Sheet (asking for families to participate) when divorce decrees are mailed from the courthouse. I am not asking that the courthouse reveal any information whatsoever about the people who sought divorces, just that the enclosed Information Sheet describing my research be included.

I will be interviewing families in post-divorce life (about 2 years after separation) to determine what resources were helpful and how they were helpful. Specifically I will be inquiring about resources that existed within the family, the family's community or within individuals that enabled positive adaptation to divorce. This research focuses on families as the unit of analysis, as such I am interested in how families are resilient, not individuals alone. My concentration is on salutogenic aspects of divorce, in that I am trying to determine what helped in positive coping and health, not just in identifying problems, but seeking to understand how problems were resolved in a manner that promoted the emotional health of families and fostered the growth of children. This is a qualitative research project, in that in-depth interviewing will be utilized. I am interviewing families at various stages of the life cycle.

At this point, the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba needs verification of the means in which I will obtain my sample. I also intend to contact lawyers in Family Law as well as ask that information about my research be made available through Collaborative Law. I will not contact families, nor approach lawyers or others to obtain a sample until such time as I receive final approval from the Research Ethics Board.

Please advise me if I can utilize the courthouse to provide information about my research as a means to obtain a sample of people to interview. If you wish to contact me

directly, please do so. My home phone number is ----- and my number at the University of Regina is -----.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Yours truly,

Donalda Halabuza, PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

c.c. Sharon Pratchler, Registrar of Courts, Court of Queen's Bench

Appendix G

Invitation to Participate in a Research Project

Sent out by courthouse, collaborative law email, copies provided by myself when I met with lawyers, and when I attended a monthly meeting of the Family Bar Division, Canadian Bar Association for Regina and southern Saskatchewan at the Saskatchewan.

ON UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LETTERHEAD

Invitation to Participate in a Research Project

“Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce”

You are being invited to participate in a research project on the topic of family resilience in divorce. This study will involve in-depth interviews with a custodial parent to share their stories of resilience in divorce. Parents who have joint or shared custody are included in this invitation. When parents have joint custody, one or both parents can participate. It is not a prerequisite that both parents choose to participate.

This study will explore family strengths that enabled positive coping and adjustment to the changes associated with divorce. The focus of the study is to understand families' perspectives about resilience, what resources helped overcome problems and how parents helped themselves and their children adjust. Of particular interest is to understand family beliefs and that foster resilience. To date, much research on separation and divorce does not highlight the strengths of families even though most families successfully manage this difficult transition and children adjust well.

Donalda Halabuza is conducting the research as part of the requirements for her Doctor of Social Work degree. Ms Halabuza is a very experienced social worker in Saskatchewan who has worked with many families of divorce as well as in a variety of other contexts, such as private counselling, child welfare, and employee and family assistance.

The interview process will involve a total of about 3 hours. An honorarium of \$25 is offered to each family during the last interview. All names and identifying information will be kept confidential, but the results will contribute to understanding how professionals can better help families going through divorce, and how families can help themselves when faced with divorce. Even though Ms. Halabuza is a fully qualified social worker, she will not be in position to provide professional services while doing the research interviews. However, she is in a position to arrange for services, if required. At any point in the research, a family is free to withdraw without any penalty or consequences.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or require further information before making a decision about participation, please contact Donalda Halabuza, Principal Researcher, at phone -----or email address at:.

Supervisor: Dr. Harvy Frankel, University of Manitoba

Phone: (204) 474----- or e-mail:

Appendix H

Consents for Parents in Study & in Pilot Interviews

ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LETTERHEAD

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Research Title: "Understanding Family Resilience Divorce"

Researcher: Donalda Halabuza PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

Sponsor: _____ (Will be arranged after ethical approval)

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I _____ (Name of Participant) understand that the purpose of the study is to understand family resilience in post-divorce families but that the purpose of this interview is to determine if the questions in the research are suitable. In this interview I will be asked how my family was resilient, how we coped, adjusted and overcame the problems associated with separation and divorce. Responses will be used to determine the appropriateness of the questions, not for any other therapeutic, assessment or legal purpose.

I consent to being involved in the research based on the following conditions:

- ◆ That about one to two hours will be involved consisting of meeting with the researcher on one occasion for one personal interview.
- ◆ That this interview can occur at the researcher's office or in my home, which ever is more suitable.
- ◆ That I have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- ◆ That childcare costs I incur because of this interview will be reimbursed, and I will receive an honorarium of \$25 for participating.
- ◆ That should emotional concerns arise for myself, provisions can be made for me to obtain counseling, if I wish.
- ◆ That I may choose not answer some questions.
- ◆ If the subject matter is too difficult, the researcher may choose to discontinue the interviewing process. .
- ◆ That I will receive a summary of the study results by method of my choice, which can include a report mailed to my address, e-mail or a phone call describing the results.
- ◆ That if there are concerns about child abuse or neglect, harm to others or self-harm, the researcher needs to report this information, as per provincial law.

Confidentiality Procedures:

- ◆ That the researcher will take notes and that the interview may be audiotaped.
- ◆ All identifying information will be held in the strictest of confidence.
- ◆ The tape will be erased after the pilot study is concluded.
- ◆ Identifying information will be kept in a locked cabinet of which no one besides the primary researcher (Donalda Halabuza) will have access to.
- ◆ Identifying information will be destroyed after the pilot study is completed.
- ◆ That no one besides the primary researcher will have access to the transcripts, nor can they be used in any other process or legal proceeding.
- ◆ All identifying information (and names) will be taken off the transcripts; a number will code each family's transcript.
- ◆ That the information I provide will not constitute part of the research results, but will be used to determine the wording of questions asked and if the questions are suitable.
- ◆ No names or identifying information will be used in reporting results.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board (P/SREB), University of Manitoba, has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-4444, or e-mail margaret_bowman@unmanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Name of Principle Researcher: Donalda Halabuza, PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

Phone: (306) -----

Position: Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina

Supervisor: Dr. Harvy Frankel

Phone: (204) -----

Position: Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Participants Signature

Date

Researcher and /or Delegates Signature

Date

I wish to obtain feedback on the research results. _____ **YES** _____ **NO**

Appendix I

Consent form for Children's Signature

ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LETTERHEAD

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN'S SIGNATURE

- Children over the ages of 12 years sign for their participation, after parental consent is obtained
- Children over the age of 18 years sign for their participation, independent of parental consent

Research Title: "UNDERSTANDING FAMILY RESILIENCE IN DIVORCE"

Researcher: Donalda Halabuza PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

Sponsor: _____ (To be completed and arranged after ethics approval)

I _____ (Name of Participant) am _____ years old. I understand that the purpose of this research is to understand how my family and I were resilient (strong) and overcame (handled) problems associated (because of) with my parents separation/ divorce.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I agree to being involved as a participant in the research on the following conditions:

- ♦ That I will meet with the researcher on one occasion, when we have a family meeting to discuss family resilience in divorce. The purpose for the interview is to provide information on my family and how we coped, adjusted and managed when my parents divorced, not for any other reason.
- ♦ That this meeting will occur in my home.
- ♦ That the interview will be audiotaped and will be transcribed (typed out) after the interview is finished and the tape will be erased.
- ♦ Everything we say will be held in the strictest of confidence, which means no one, will know who was interviewed or which families were involved.
- ♦ No names or identifying information will be used in reporting the results and our names or identifying information will not be disclosed (told) to others.

- ◆ No one besides the primary researcher (Donalda Halabuza) will know my name or who I am, although what I say may be helpful to other families and children in divorce.
- ◆ No one besides the primary researcher (Donalda Halabuza) will have access to the records of names and the transcripts, which will be locked in a cabinet.
- ◆ All names will be deleted of the transcripts, which will be coded by number and pseudonyms (made up names) used to refer to individual members.
- ◆ That I will not have access to the transcripts, nor can it be used in any other process or legal proceeding.
- ◆ That I have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (no consequences if I choose to withdraw).
- ◆ That should emotional issues (problems or concerns) arise, I will be offered professional help (counseling, groups, or maybe other kinds of help).
- ◆ That I can choose to not answer questions and can say at any time if I do not understand the question.
- ◆ If the subject matter is too difficult for me or someone else in my family, the researcher may choose to discontinue the interviewing process.
- ◆ That if there are concerns about child abuse or neglect, the researcher needs to report this information, as per provincial law. If there are concerns about self-harm or harm to others, this information cannot be kept confidential.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Name of Principle Researcher: Donalda Halabuza, PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

Phone: (306) -----

Position: Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina

Supervisor: Dr. Harvy Frankel

Phone: (204) -----

Position: Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board (P/SREB), University of Manitoba, has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-----, or e-mail margaret.bowman@unmanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participants Signature

Date

Researcher and /or Delegate's Signature

Date

I hereby consent to being involved in the research as a participant in the family interview.

Date: _____

Signature of child: _____

Name: _____

Signature of witness: _____

Name: _____

Witness: _____

Appendix J

Parental Consent Form for Children's Participation In Research

ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LETTERHEAD

To be completed by parents for children under 18 years of age

Research Title: "UNDERSTANDING FAMILY RESILIENCE IN DIVORCE"

Researcher: **Donalda Halabuza PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW**

Sponsor: _____ (To be arranged after ethics approval)

NAMES: _____ **DOB** _____
(Names and birth dates of the children)

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I _____ (Name of Parent) understand that the purpose of the interviews to understand family resilience and to provide information on my family, how my family was resilient, how we coped, adjusted and overcame problems associated with marital separation and divorce, not for any other therapeutic, assessment or legal purpose.

I consent to my children being involved in the research based on the following conditions:

- ◆ **That the time involved for my children would consist of one family interview with the above-mentioned children and the parent whom they live with at least 50% of the time.**
- ◆ That the researcher will meet with my child(ren) on one occasion, during the family interview (meeting). The purposes for the interview is to provide information on our family and how we coped, adjusted and managed the divorce, not for any other therapeutic or legal purpose.
- ◆ That should emotional issues arise, provisions will be made for my children or me to obtain counseling. If the subject matter is too difficult, the researcher may discontinue the interviews with my family. My children may choose not answer some questions.
- ◆ That if there are concerns about child abuse or neglect, the researcher needs to report this information, as per provincial law.
- ◆ That all interviews will occur in my home.

- ◆ That my children or I do not have to answer questions if they feel uncomfortable.
- ◆ That I have the right to withdraw my consent for my children's participation at any time without penalty.
- ◆ That should emotional issues for my children or me arise, provisions will be made for my family or me to obtain counseling, if we wish.
- ◆ That we may also choose not answer some questions.
- ◆ If the subject matter is too difficult, the researcher may choose to discontinue the interviewing process with my family or myself.
- ◆ Each family will receive a summary of the study results by method of their choice, which can include a report mailed to your address, e-mail or a phone call describing the results, if the participants wish.

Confidentiality Procedures:

- ◆ That the interviews will be audiotaped and all identifying information will be held in the strictest of confidence.
- ◆ The tapes will be erased after they are transcribed and the results are analyzed.
- ◆ Identifying information will be kept in a locked cabinet of which no one besides the primary researcher (Donalda Halabuza) will have access to.
- ◆ That no one besides the primary research will have access to the transcripts, nor can they be used in any other process or legal proceeding.
- ◆ Identifying information will be destroyed after the study is completed and the dissertation committee approves of study results.
- ◆ All identifying information (and names) will be taken off the transcripts, a number will code each family's transcript, and pseudonyms will be used to refer to individual members in reporting of results.
- ◆ No names or identifying information will be used in reporting results.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Name of Principle Researcher: Donalda Halabuza, PhD (candidate), MSW, RSW

Phone: (306) -----

Position: Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan

Supervisor: Dr. Harvy Frankel

Phone: (204) -----

Position: Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Psychology/ Sociology Research Ethics Board (P/SREB), University of Manitoba, has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-----, or e-mail margaret_bowman@unmanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I hereby consent to my children _____ (Names) being involved in the family interview as part of the research.

Parent's Signature

Date

Researcher and /or Delegate's Signature

Date

Parent's Signature

Date

Researcher and /or Delegate's Signature

Date

NOTE:

Both parents need to provide consent in situations of joint or shared custody.

This consent will be read and explained to the children, prior to the family interview.

Each parent will be provided with a copy of a signed consent, the researcher retains the original.

Appendix K

Review of Methods of Narrative Analysis

Typologies in narrative analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998)

In their book entitled *Narrative Research*, Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Tamar Zilber (1998) have suggested four dimensions of analysis based on holistic versus categorical and content versus form. Based on these four dimensions, four modes of analysis have been constructed: holistic-content, categorical-content, holistic-form, and categorical-form (Lieblich et al., 1998). All forms of analysis entail re-reading and becoming immersed in narratives until patterns emerge.

Holistic versus categorical

Holistic versus categorical refers to the unit of analysis whether only a section is analyzed or the entire text as a whole (Lieblich et al., 1998). In holistic analysis, segments are interpreted based on the entire text of the interview (Lieblich et al., 1998). In categorical analysis, aspects of stories or content are dissected, or words are put into defined categories and analyzed. This approach is used when “the researcher is primarily in a problem or phenomenon shared by a group of people” (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p. 12).

Content versus form

Content refers explicitly to the content of the narrative, including details such as what happened and who participated and explores what the meaning of the story is: “what traits or motives of the individual are displayed...” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.12). Form analysis refers to “the structure of plot, sequencing of events, its relation to the time axis,

its complexity and coherence, the feelings evoked by the story, the style of narrative, the choice of metaphors or words” (Lieblich et al. 1998, p. 13). The form of a story reveals more information about the participants’ identities. Content analysis is more evident and obvious but the form manifests deeper layers of identity.

While these dimensions are fairly discrete in description, fine distinctions exist in how to interpret and read narrative studies in that “form is not easily separated from the content of a story” (Lieblich et al. 1998, p.14). Understanding the meaning of sections or of stories is often reliant on the entire interview.

Categorical-content analysis is similar to content analysis whereby “categories of studied topic are defined by theory, and separate utterances of the text are extracted, classified and gathered into specific categories (Lieblich et al., p.13). Quantitative treatment of theory-based categories is common. Using categorical-content analysis, categories can also emerge from reading the text as openly as possible to define categories, to sort the subtext into categories, and to generate ideas for additional categories. Sentences in each category can be counted by frequency and subjected to various forms of statistical calculations, or alternatively, content can be described, “to formulate a picture of the content universe in certain groups of people or cultures” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 114).

In the categorical-form mode of analysis, discrete stylistic and linguistic characteristics of defined units are the focus of analysis, such as the type of metaphor or how frequently there are passive utterances (Lieblich et al., 1998). These utterances can be counted and sorted into categories.

In holistic-form analysis, plots or the structure of the story are the focus of analysis based on searching for turning points and climax. Similarly, Gergen and Gergen (1988) identified the progression of narratives as a means of analysis whereby the story advances steadily, regressive where there is deterioration or decline in the progression of the plot, and stable narratives whereby the plot is steady. Riessman modelled her method of analysis on an analysis of plot in her study on divorce (1990, 1991). Narratives of progress, of decline and of no change were examples of analysis of structure or form of the way the plot develops (Riessman, 1991).

Riessman's analysis

Riessman (1993) suggested that it is imperative to include an analysis of how a story is told. Methods of analysis should focus on language, significance, and the context rather than codes for content. Analysis of the structure of the narrative is important to acquire understanding of the identity of the narrator, and interpretation is inevitable because meanings are fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal (Riessman, 1993). In her study on divorce she analyzed the plot of the story.

People relate stories in a variety of genres: some habitual where events happen over and over again; hypothetical narratives that depict events that never happened; and topic centred narratives, which are snapshots of past events and thematically linked (Riessman, 1991, 1993). These accounts pull the listener into the teller's point of view in different ways. How the narrative is told and how it functions to organize the experience is an important consideration in analysis.

Riessman (1993) pointed out that language is not transparent and it can only be understood through interpretation. From the Personal Narratives Group (1989a), "We come to understand them [narratives] only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them" (in Riessman, 1993, p. 22). It is also interpretative as to what to include in the narrative.

In her book, Riessman (1993) compared three forms of analysis and concluded that transcripts must be shown, definitions of narrative must be stated, and the nature of the interaction must be included. Excerpts are not narratives and it is important to state what aspects serve as the basis for interpretation, in addition to "each story having a recognizable beginning, middle and end" (Riessman, 1993, p. 41). She has drawn upon Gee's poetic structure of meaning and has stressed the importance of beginning analysis with the structure of the narrative (Riessman, 1993).

Labov's structural analysis

Labov (1982), a sociolinguist, has described the elements of a complete narrative. Labov's (1982) framework described elements of a complete narrative in which every clause has a function. The text from the interview is transcribed and reduced to fit the model. Labov's model was based on the assumption that stories are stated in the temporal order of events as they occurred in real life. The elements of Labov's analysis included an abstract (summary); orientation (who, what, when, where); complicating action (events, crises, problems); evaluation (significance and meaning); result (outcome, resolution); and coda (relating the story to the present) (Labov, 1982). Using this model, the original narrative is reduced to Labov's elements resulting in only 20% of the original

story included in the re-transcription. The formality and consistency of Labov's model has allowed for generalizability and comparison of stories (Mishler, 1986 b).

According to Riessman (1993), Labov's framework has been considered an essential first step in interpreting narratives. However, this type of transcription does not lend itself to every narrative because people do not always tell stories in the order in which they occurred (Pointdexter, 2002). In this study, some clear stories did emerge, but other times stories were told as the speaker recalled them, in bits and pieces throughout the entire interview. Stories emerged in responses to questions and to elaborate on previous responses.

By radically reducing stories, the context of the interview is eliminated. The context and relationship with the interviewer is important in interpretation (Mishler, 1986b). Researcher comments, questions, and utterances are not included in the transcription or analysis (Pointdexter, 2002). Determining what the story is about is interpretative and is based on an assessment of the full response and context from which the narrative was abstracted. Labov's model is suited to understanding social meanings of actions by analysis of the sequence of narrative clauses. Therefore, Labov's method was not used as the primary method of analysis in this study.

Determining the main point of a story is an investigative problem that requires inference and interpretation (Mishler, 1986b). The context of the interview and the interview process is important to show how interpretations are made by the researcher so that others can assess if the interpretation offered is plausible. Interpretative decisions require justification and to do so they need to be repeatedly tested against the narrative to be plausible (Lieblich et al., 1998). Narrative analysis "relies more on the personal

wisdom, skills and integrity of the researcher” (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p.10). Therefore, self-awareness and self-discipline are required to check interpretations against the text (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Mishler’s typology

In reviewing methods of analysis I examined Elliot Mishler’s (1995) typology for analysis and classification of narratives. Mishler (1986) treated responses to questions as stories and stressed the importance of language. He viewed interpretation of stories in the full context of the interview, which takes into account the relationship with the interviewer (Mishler, 1986b). Because Mishler (1986b) saw context as influencing the construction of stories, he believed the context needed to be considered in the interpretation.

Problems of language, meaning, and context ...are critical to understanding how interviews work (Mishler, 1986b, p. 233-234).

Interviews were regarded as socially meaningful acts where participant stories expressed cultural values and personal identity. Responses to research questions were forms of self-presentation, which formed the context for stories. In a research interview the participant has entered into a limited relationship with me, the interviewer. I was in the dual role of a listener and researcher who was active and present as the stories emerged. Therefore, narrative analysis is both a process and a result ((Mishler 1986b; Riessman, 1990).

The construction and analysis of stories is influenced by the questions asked. It is important to share power with participants in the interview process so that together the

meanings of narratives are understood. It is important that the interview is not overly structured because if respondents are interrupted by other questions, the interruption suppresses natural forms of expression and the creation of stories (Poindexter, 2004).

Therefore, based on Mishler's (1986b) work, narrative analysis needs to consider the overall interview situation and process to arrive at a more adequate interpretation of participant answers to our questions. The researcher controls the aim, structure, flow, and eventual use of interview data (Mishler, 1986b). For stories to emerge, it is incumbent on the researcher to create a climate and context that allows for stories to emerge. The style of interviewing has significant influence on what kinds of narratives appear.

Mishler (1995) has postulated that analysis is not easily distinguished from transcription. How the interview is arranged is a process of testing, clarifying, and deepening our understanding. Therefore, the first level of analysis must include the interview process and the transcription. Analysis in narrative research integrates language, the how and why events are storied, not simply content (Riessman, 1993).

Linguistic analysis

A third method of narrative analysis is based on a linguistic approach that analyzes formal aspects of the story, such as the structure and meaning of sentences, use of voice, tone and language. This method pays close attention to accentuation of pitch glides and pace in speech (Gee, 1991). Linguistic analysis flows from the organization of lines and stanzas that comprise different thoughts or events. Gee (1991) looked at the overall narrative and focused on discrete stylistic or linguistic characteristics of specific units within an overall narrative.

Pitch glides show the focus of the sentence that the speaker wants the listener to pay attention to and information he/ she wants the listener to hear (Gee, 1991). Using this form of analysis, information can be revealed about the interaction between the researcher and interviewee. "Any sentence with one pitch glide is called an idea unit" and each idea unit is signalled with a pause or slight hesitation, or by a shift in the pitch level of the preceding idea (Gee, 1991, p.21). This method considers strophes, which are parts that make the story a whole by including related stanzas (Gee, 1991).

Using this form of analysis the organizational themes can be manipulated by focusing on the language used. Information from a linguistic analysis can be purely descriptive or it "can reconstruct a certain part of a philosophy of life from a particular point of view" (Gee, 1991, p.37) thus manifesting different layers of the identity of the speaker. Aspects of this analysis are pertinent to my research, in that the manner in which a story was told often conveyed meanings. In transcription of the interviews from this research, I noted speech patterns; for example, when the narrative was spoken very quickly on a particular topic, or when the participant changed the flow to speak slowly so as to stress the importance of what he/ she was saying, or to mimic another, in a sarcastic manner.

Gee's method of analysis was similar to the holistic-form of analysis described by Lieblich et al. (1998) in that the progression and cohesiveness of a narrative were analyzed based on plots and structure. Using a holistic-form of analysis there is plot development over time. Various plot typologies are suggested, such as the romance, the comedy, the tragedy, and the satire (Lieblich et al., 1998). Gee (1991) analyzed the structure of narrative, the main line of a plot, and off the main line of the plot. This mode

of analysis was similar to the categorical-form mode suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998) that focused on the development of the plot over time. In the progressive narrative, the story advances steadily; in the regressive narrative there is a course of deterioration or decline; and in the stable narrative, the plot is steady and does not change (Lieblich et al., 1998). The final analysis is the cohesiveness of story. A well-constructed story includes an ongoing plot, a clearly defined objective, a series of events progressing toward that objective, and relations of sequence and causality among those events (Bruner, 1991).

Gee (1991) has referred to cohesion as “the way in which the lines and stanzas of the text are linked or interrelated to each other” (p.28). It is the logic in how parts are fitted together to create a unified and meaningful story.

Other methods of analysis

To analyze cultural themes and personal identity, Agar and Hobbs (1982) have focused on coherence in the ways the account is put together to make a unified and meaningful story. Using this approach, each episode is tied together by successive utterances tied to previous ones by syntactic, temporal, or causal relations, referred to as local coherence (Mishler, 1986b). Another form of coherence is global, which refers to utterances that move forward the overall intent or point of the story through repetition of examples illustrating the same general point (ibid.). Thematic coherence is expressed in utterances about general cultural themes or values. Using this method, the story is analyzed based on the ways it is globally or thematically coherent with the rest of the account, which leads to an analysis of personal identity or cultural values.

In this research, the key organizing principle for a “good” story or a coherent account was the participants’ ability to make sense of the misfortune or manage the meanings arising from adversity (Bruner, 1996). Making sense of adversity is reflected in their ability to integrate their past experience with their present to create a coherent life story (Cohler, 1991). Understanding the problems preceding divorce provided important information regarding the manner in which this adversity was perceived, experienced, and in how it was resolved. Therefore, coherence is the way different parts of the narrative create a complete and meaningful picture.

Appendix L

Approval from University of Manitoba Ethics Board

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

22 November 2005

TO: **Donalda Halabuza** (Advisor H. Frankel)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Bruce Tefft, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2005:056
“Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce”

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Kathryn Bartmanovich, Research Grants & Contract Services (fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

Appendix M

Approval from University of Manitoba Ethics Board

AMENDMENT APPROVAL

24 April 2006

TO: Donalda Halabuza
Principal Investigator

FROM: Bruce Tefft, Chair
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2005:056
“Understanding Family Resilience in Divorce”

This will acknowledge receipt of your e-mail dated April 20 , 2006 requesting amendment to your above-noted protocol.

Approval is given for this amendment. Any further changes to the protocol must be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation.

This will acknowledge receipt of your e-mail dated April 20, 2006 requesting amendment to your above-noted protocol.

Approval is given for this amendment. Any further changes to the protocol must be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation.

Appendix N

Demographic Profile of Participants and their Children

Participant Name	Age at Time of Study	Custody Status	Number of Children	Age of children at the Time of Separation	Ages of Children At Time of Study	Number of Years Married	Time Since Separation	How they heard of Research
1. Sadie	37 years	Sole	1 son	2 yrs. 11 months.	5 years	5 years	3 years	From lawyer
2. Chelsea	38 years	Joint Primary residence	2 sons	7 yrs. 6 mts. 5 yrs. 1 mt.	10 & 8 years	8 yrs. 6 months	3 years	From Courthouse
3. Braiden	38 years	Sole of 1 Joint of 1 with alternating residence	2 sons 1 stepdaughter No contact	8 yrs. 2 mts 5 yrs. 6 mts 13 yrs	11 yrs. in sole custody 10 yrs in joint custody 16 yrs. stepdaughter	8 yrs. 5 months	4 years	From lawyer
4. Lydia	29 years	Joint Primary residence	3 children 2 sons, 1 daughter (oldest)	5 yrs. 3 yrs. 2 yrs. 3 mts.	6, 4 & 2 years	6 yrs. 9 months	1 year	From Courthouse
5. Cindy	40 years	Sole	2 sons	8 days 2 yrs. 6 mts.	18 & 16 yrs	3 yrs., 4 mts.	16 years	From lawyer
6. Cathy	45 years	Joint Primary residence	3 children, 1 son, 2 daughters	12 yrs. 9 yrs. 6 yrs.	16, 14, & 12 years	17 yrs.	4 years	From lawyer
7. Theresa	33 years	Joint Primary residence	2 sons	5 yrs. 3 mts 2 yrs. 7 mts	6 & 3 years	8 yrs. 3 months	1 year	From Courthouse
Averages	37.14 years	3 sole 11 joint	16 children including 1 stepchild	5.95 years excluding the 1 child who was 8 days old	5 years 3 months	8.22 years Excluding Cathy the average was 6.72 years	4.47 years Excluding Cindy the average was 2.66 years	4 from lawyers 3 from courthouse

Range of participants' ages: 29 - 45 years of age

Gender of participants: 1 male; 6 females

Range of years married: 3 years, 4 months – 17 years

Range of time since separation: 1 year to 16 years

Ages of children at the time of the study: 3-18 years old

Ages of children at the time of separation: 8 days – 12 years old

Gender of children: 12 boys and 4 girls

Most frequent age of children at the time of separation: 5 years old (3 children)

Description of participants and their children

The final sample consisted of 7 participants, 4 heard of this research from their lawyers and 3 heard of it from information they received through the courthouse. I interviewed 7 parents, 1 father and 6 mothers. They ranged in age from 29 years to 45 years. Five of the participants were single, 1 woman was remarried and the 1 male participant was in a common-law relationship. The length of marriages ranged from 3 years, 4 months to 17 years with an average of 8.22 years, excluding the 1 participant that was married for 17 years, the average length of marriage was 6.72 years. Three participants were married for 8 years.

At the time of my interview 2 parents were separated for 1 year; 1 parent was separated for 16 years; 2 were separated for 3 years and 2 were separated for 4 years. The 2 parents who were separated for 1 year had concluded all legal proceedings therefore met the selection criteria and were included in the study. On average the participants were separated for 4.6 years but if I exclude the 1 participant who was separated for 16 years, the average time since the separation was 2.66 years.

In total these 7 families had 16 children, including 1 stepchild. Out of the 16 children, I interviewed one child, an 11 year-old boy. There were 12 boys and 4 girls. At the time of the study the children ranged from 3 to 18 years of age, with the average age being 5 years, 3 months. The age of the children at the time of the separation ranged from 8 days to 12 years old with 5 years of age [3 children] being the most frequent age at the time of the separation. Out of the 7 participants 3 parents had sole custody and 4 had joint custody arrangements, with 1 parent having a mixture of custody arrangements, sole

custody of 1 child, joint of another child and no contact with his stepdaughter who resided with her mother.

At the time of my research, 4 children were still under the age of 5 years (2 three year olds, 1 four year old and 1 five year old); 7 were in elementary school (2 children were 6 years old, 1 child was 8 years old; 2 children were 10 year olds; and 2 children were 11 years of age) and 5 were teenagers ranging from fourteen years of age (1 child), 16 years of age (3 children) and 18 years of age (1 child).

There were 4 children in sole custody - 3 with their mother and 1 with his father. All of these children had regular contact with the non-resident parent, except for 2 children. One child had no contact for 1 year at the time of the study and another only saw his mother if she came to watch him in sports activities. One stepchild remained with her mother who was not a participant in this study and had no contact with her father.

Out of the 16 children, there was joint custody for 11 children with 1 child living half the time with his mother and his father, the other 10 resided with their mothers, who were my participants. The 11 children in joint custody had regular parenting times with their fathers which varied from alternate weekends, occasional to two or three days a week. The number of children per parent varied from 1 child (one parent), 2 children (four parents) and 3 children (three parents).

Appendix 0

Letter from Catholic Family Services

Regina, Saskatchewan

8/23/2005

To Whom It May Concern,

Fr: Jim Appleby, RSW Regina Catholic Family Services

Re: Donalda Halabuza

This letter verifies that Regina Catholic Family Services will be prepared to take counselling or group referrals as a result of Donalda Halabuza's dissertation research "Understanding Family Resilience and Divorce."

Jim Appleby, RSW, Interim Executive Director